

Program Services: Education and Outreach



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9. Program Services: Education and Outreach

While this chapter addresses our Program's education and outreach efforts collectively, education and outreach are embedded in, and form an integral part of, most of the individual projects that we undertake.

9.1. Past Education and Outreach Efforts

From the Program's inception, education and public outreach have been a part of its foundation. In the early days of the Program, education and public outreach were separated into staff work aimed at three distinct audiences. Those audiences included the adult general public, children and teachers in schools, and businesses.

Education focused on the adult general public included media campaigns targeted to HHW waste streams and informed by HHW surveys. As the Program advanced, these campaigns focused on used motor oil, household paint waste, and outdoor household pesticides. The methods employed included advertising on the sides of buses, on the radio and television public service announcements. The Program also developed outreach messages for particular audiences, such as gardeners and people who mow their own yards. Training of point-of-purchase sales staff in retail stores was also conducted by Program staff.

Some specific and targeted materials that were produced included a *Consumer Reports* type guide that rated name-brand products, called *Buy Smart, Buy Safe*. A companion to that guide, known as *Grow Smart, Grow Safe*, was developed. It was focused on yard and garden products. General fact sheets and other materials were developed for distribution at our HHW collection facilities and services, as well as fairs and other events. These materials were also used in mass mailings. Over time these materials became more specific and sophisticated, including fliers and other materials on oil recycling, paint use and disposal, and indoor and outdoor pesticides. We developed and distributed a Green Cleaning Kit containing safer/alternative home cleaning products and sent hazardous waste disposal information to people moving into and out of homes. We also began providing information on our Web site, through a public household hazards information telephone hotline, and developed and used an interactive exhibit at public fairs and events.

The Program initially provided classroom training to school children and their teachers. The in-school education effort targeted children in grades 4 through 12 and focused on label reading, safer alternatives, and proper disposal. Over the years the emphasis has shifted from proper waste



disposal and environmental impacts, to more of a focus on health impacts. Materials for this target population included hands-on teaching activities for use in classrooms and school events. They also included teacher trainings using a teacher guide created by our staff called *Hazards on the Homefront*. Program staff also provided information at school sciences fairs and to Girl Scout troops and other youth groups.



Business education and outreach activities included door-to-door, direct contacts with businesses in commercial parks and other concentrated areas. That effort was undertaken to introduce our services and discuss best management practices for handling small quantities of hazardous wastes. Business site visits targeted Program-selected priority industries. These included autobody shops, general auto repair shops, dry cleaners, dentists, machine shops and many others. We developed hazardous waste fact sheets and other guidance documents for used by businesses in those targeted industries, as well as SQG businesses in general. Business site visits were also made in response to individual requests for help on technical problems, and to provide best management practices in specific cases. In addition to delivering information to these businesses individually, staff also tried to address these businesses by participating in business trade fairs and industry association meetings. For several years, a Waste Information Network fair was held to showcase best management practices. Additional efforts to assist businesses were undertaken through the development of business-specific content for our Web site.



Over the years, our Program's education work has garnered numerous local and national awards. However, in the mid to late 1990's, staff began to search for stronger evidence that the way we were pursuing this work was actually changing behaviors. This questioning led to the development of a detailed behavior change strategy based on social science research known as Community-Based Social Marketing. This methodology, as well as changing trends and emerging issues like environmental justice, multicultural education, outreach to underserved populations, outreach to non-English speakers, and outreach related to chemical exposures and health issues, rather than waste disposal, all caused shifts in our outreach efforts. One manifestation of these shifts was the development of behavior change guidelines for both our business and

general public audiences¹. Others included recommendations on Program services to underserved groups, establishment of the Environmental Justice Network in Action project (EJNA) to serve the needs of immigrant communities and other underserved groups, and, for the first time, consistent, key educational messages were developed and we simplified some of our more complex outreach materials.

Part of this shift in Program focus includes periodic re-evaluation of which hazardous waste streams or materials pose the greatest threat to the public and environment. Changes in priorities may result in shifts in the targets of the Program's outreach efforts. Shifts in those targets included identifying which audiences were most vulnerable, the biggest users of hazardous products, and what might help the Program attain its goals. The conclusions drawn from these evaluation processes changed the direction of the Program's work. Some of these changes in projects included targeting pesticides, solvents, strong cleaners, and products containing mercury and lead, as well as pharmaceuticals. Children, parents and families, underserved groups, and at-risk populations were identified for targeted focus. Worker and public exposures potentially affecting health were raised in priority to complement our work focusing on the reduction of hazardous waste. Sensitive environments, such as groundwater/aquifer recharge zones and well-head protection areas, flood plains, and areas with on-site sewage treatment systems, were identified as priorities for our business outreach services.



The Program also began to look at different ways to effect change, such as the promotion of product stewardship; seeking legislative and regulatory actions; the enhanced use of strategic partnerships with government, NGOs, business associations, etc.; increasing our liaison work with elected officials, businesses and business associations; and more focused public education.

9.2. Current Activities

In 2006, the Program's education and outreach work was further restructured to reflect the need for a more integrated and systemic approach, and to react to new research. That new research revealed information about health effects from exposure to hazardous products, which was not available

¹ Frahm, Annette, *Changing Behavior: Insights and Applications: Behavior Change Project Final Report* (Seattle: Local Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County, 1995).

when the Program first began. There was a growing body of health research suggesting that young children and pregnant women were at higher risk of toxic exposures than was the general population. Additionally, new sources of health and environmental exposures were being identified. Some of those included personal care products as hazards to individuals, pharmaceuticals as hazards to the environment, and endocrine disrupting chemicals as hazards to both people and the environment.

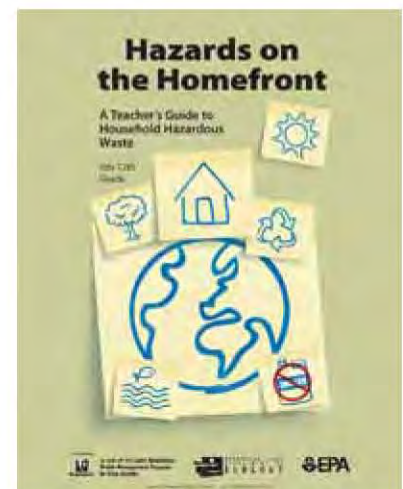
One of the first projects to reflect this new adaptive work structure was aimed at serving child care providers. Traditionally our Program would have addressed this as a business project, to be screened as to whether it was a priority industry. It would then have been served with site visits from a business field team. However, its clients were children, which we traditionally had addressed through our public education and outreach efforts. And, this issue focused on reducing human health risk factors,



which our Program had not traditionally addressed. Through our business outreach, we had emphasized reducing environmental exposures by managing waste. This new child care project team deliberately included Program educators and business staff, from two different Program Partner agencies, as well as agency staff from outside the Program. Those outside staff included County nurses, who served child care facilities, and regional child care facility regulators.

The team currently focuses on education of child care facility staff, provides technical assistance, incentive funding to help them reduce toxic exposures, and works toward improving regulations that affect their work. The school and youth educators shifted away from their focus on older children in schools, and joined forces with business staff to form a new Young Children's Team. This team focuses more directly on reducing toxic exposures to young children, such as exposure to lead. It includes the child care project staff. Its staff also created a regional, collaborative working group that is focusing on young children's environmental health issues. This working group recently convened and hosted a regional, professional educational conference on children's environmental health issues.

Other staff members outside the Young Children's Team are also providing education and outreach not only to vulnerable populations, but also to historically underserved populations that are exposed to hazardous products and chemicals. For example, Program staff continue to reach students by training teachers about household hazards. They provide technical and educational support to science and arts teachers to help them reduce student exposures to lab and art hazard exposures. And they teach parents through presentations to parent groups and pre-school cooperatives.



Some of our formerly business-oriented staff are doing outreach to underserved and vulnerable populations. These populations include nail salon workers, workers at small landscaping businesses and janitorial workers. Much of the outreach to address these workers involves working with immigrant and English-as-a-second-language (ESL) communities, such as Latinos, Vietnamese, Koreans, and other ethnic and cultural groups. These new outreach efforts are supplanting our past, generic business approaches, which were more focused on individual business site visits.

Shifts in the past have come from new trends and new thinking. Concepts like the Precautionary Principle, sustainability, and green chemistry are current examples of new trends and research interests that will influence the Program's work and focus into the future.

9.3. Future Directions

The Program will continue to provide outreach to the general public through traditional media such as print, audio and video, and through our web site and customer service phone lines and e-mail. We will also seek to explore and experiment with new information technologies, including social media. We will work to improve our outreach to historically underserved and vulnerable populations.

9.3.1. Historically Underserved Populations

In terms of historically underserved populations, we should assess whether to focus on exposure, as opposed to risk. Exposure is contact with a substance by swallowing, breathing, or touching the skin or eyes. It may be short-term (acute), of intermediate duration, or long-term (chronic). Risk is the probability that something will cause injury or harm. We may not know enough about these populations to be able to accurately characterize their risk levels to hazardous substances. Also, because of language barriers, these populations may not be getting the information they need to have a clear understanding about what substances are toxic, and their personal and their family's level of risk from those substances. Using exposure as opposed to risk is a more conservative and precautionary approach.

We will also need to explore the use of media that are relevant to specific target groups. These media may be technologies like cable TV or video messages in a target group's language. It may mean using social media approaches. Or, it may entail using government channels that may convey more authority with some of these populations.

Another issue that is bound up with language barriers is the complexity of our Program messages. A simplified message or means of delivery, such as the use of graphic or visual depictions, animation of actions or messages, stories, or hands-on training might help convey what we now are attempting to convey with terminology that requires higher-level English reading comprehension. Involving target populations in the creation of our messages could be another method of connecting with a target



Working with Casa Latina to spread the word.

population on their own terms, and in relation to their own interests.

In terms of the groups that we need to address, we may need to expand the number we are trying to reach. While we are reaching out to a wide variety of ethnic communities, such as the International District Housing Authority, Casa Latina, and New Futures, there are others that we could engage. In addition to established organizations, there are some communities that may either have multiple organizations, with none being completely representative, or other communities that do not have formal

organizations established. Some ethnic communities that we should engage more include Asian Pacific Islanders, those from the Horn of Africa, and the Khmer community. Another population that our Program must work to address is the differently-abled/ disabled populations including the hearing impaired, sight impaired and others.

In citing groups that we should build relationships with, it would be prudent to focus our work first with groups that are ready and able to deliver our messages. In other words, attempting to provide our messages at the same level to all groups equally would not be strategic. The fact is that different communities will have vastly different interests depending on the issues that they are attempting to address. Some groups will be focused on very primary issues, like homelessness, hunger, poverty and basic subsistence issues for their population. Others will have moved from those basic concerns to other issues and may have some concerns that overlap our Program's arena of work. Those are the groups that would be a better choice for more attention sooner, while other groups continue to build capacity. This does not exclude the possibility that our Program can aid that capacity building. However, it does suggest that we be very strategic in our assistance, and make sure our commitments are sustainable over time.

In terms of where to try to deliver our messages, we should focus on getting our messages to populations where they are. This could be at work, or in combination with some of our work with businesses that employ historically underserved workers. The theory here is that a worker, in addition to learning about the proper use and storage of hazardous materials at work, would also take that knowledge home and transmit it to his or her family. It could be service delivery at multi-family complexes. This might mean localized collection events, or community training about household hazards. Or it could mean a focus on educating school children, particularly K-8, who have parents that are not fluent in English. Those children may be a primary translator and shopper for their

parents. They also bring home local cultural norms to their immigrant/ESL families.

In exploring new ways to deliver Program services, more formal partnering, directly with community groups, might be an option. A foundation already exists within our Program for this co-delivery of services. It is being done now with the Environmental Coalition of South Seattle. This model could achieve a number of benefits for our Program. Those might include a more effective delivery of our message and concomitant behavior change. It could also increase our staff's cultural sensitivity and capacity by working closely with community staff. The benefits for the community organization might include increasing the long-term stability for that particular organization. It would build environmental expertise and knowledge within the organization. It could build capacity within the community itself as the interest in our issues grows and the relevance of those issues becomes clearer. Finally, the Program must invest in the training of our own staff, and in structural methods that can increase staff sensitivity to the needs and interests of the target populations that we are attempting to serve.

9.3.2. Outreach to Businesses

Another distinct population that our Program targets for service is the business small quantity waste generator. We have addressed this service population directly since the start of the Program in 1990. And, our Program has changed to meet changing business needs over time.

We continue to offer our Hazardous Waste Directory, also known as the Yellow Book, technical assistance visits, financial incentives and the EnviroStars business recognition program. In addition, we are now allowing qualified conditionally exempt small quantity generators to use the Program's collection facilities. Our Program is placing more emphasis on reaching out to businesses through business associations and community organizations. We are providing better information on-line, and are providing more materials in languages other than English.

In preparation for this Plan Update, we recently held a series of business focus groups to provide additional information to better serve the business community. Those focus groups had a variety of suggestions that we will consider in our future work with the business community. Those suggestions included the desire by businesses to have our information customized to their specific industry, and to have our assistance to them similarly customized. They urged us to simplify our messaging to the greatest extent possible, to communicate our messages through as many means as possible, and to use technology to the greatest extent possible. They recommended using trade and industry groups, and working with their vendors, suppliers, and consultants to get our message delivered



indirectly. In addition to messaging they advocated for us to provide hands-on demonstrations and training on site, at technical colleges and at trade shows. Other ideas included developing video pieces for u-tube; creating electronic posters, guidelines and checklists; and using targeted TV advertising.

The focus group members also strongly encouraged us to use voluntary, non-compulsory approaches to compliance. They did not support additional regulations. And, with regard to current regulations, they desired a single source of regulatory information that would span all levels of government, and that would help them interpret the rules. The suggestion of using and expanding third party certification, such as EnviroStars, as well as providing incentives, was also urged to obtain compliance. With regard to those incentives, there was a desire for our Program to look as broadly as possible at potential incentives. Finally, in looking at business compliance more strategically, the focus group participants suggested that the Program try to work with new businesses in their start-up phase, and try to discourage bad management practices with hazardous substances at the outset. They also believed that businesses should pay user fees for disposal and those were just a part of legitimate cost of doing business!



While many of these suggestions offer insight into what can aid business, our Program must work within our legal authority, mandate and resource constraints while trying to the greatest extent possible to address and remove hazardous materials, chemicals, products and wastes from the environment.



Program specialist celebrates success with a small business owner.



Starbucks receives 2004 EnviroStars Recognized Leader Award