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Preparing Clients for Success:

Prevent Child Abuse Arizona Two Year Advocacy Strategy 2015-2017

A Snapshot of The Challenge and the Plan that Provides Solutions

The issue: Position child abuse prevention as a lead strategy in Arizona's statewide child safety system.

In just six years (2009-2014), Arizona saw a 44% increase in the number of reported cases of child abuse and neglect; today there are over 18,000 children living in foster care in Arizona, and thousands more cases that have been left unclosed or uninvestigated. The threat of child abuse and neglect for Arizona's children and families is of great magnitude, and as Prevent Child Abuse Arizona seeks (PCA Arizona) to elevate prevention as a solution to that threat, the number of reported child abuse and neglect cases and the number of children living in foster care in Arizona, continue to grow.

The ACS approach: In 2015, ACS assisted PCA Arizona to develop a two-year advocacy strategy to further their goal to position prevention as the lead approach in the child safety system in Arizona. This strategy includes:

1. Communication

- Messaging: ACS helped PCA Arizona develop a comprehensive messaging framework that consists of core messages, audience-specific messages (media and policymakers), an elevator speech (quick version of the core messages), and a boilerplate message document (that could act as a basis for additional audience messaging). Messaging for the media focused on positioning child abuse prevention alongside remediation in the discussion and coverage of child safety issues. Messaging for policymakers positions the topic of prevention within the statewide child safety conversation and proposes prevention as a solution to the current child safety emergency in Arizona. These core and audience-specific messaging help set the foundation and acted as a guide for PCA Arizona leadership, staff, and board members.
- Influencing the Media: ACS assisted PCA Arizona in building a media engagement strategy, and developed ready-to-use tools to allow PCA Arizona to be successful in their efforts. These tools included a local, state, and national press list, a template Op-Ed, a template Letter to the Editor, and specific direction on how to develop press kits, convene editorial boards, and build strategic relationships with the media. Combined with the messaging documents, PCA Arizona had the ability to start their work immediately.

2. External Capacity Building: ACS helped PCA Arizona expand its capacity for engagement with the media and the state government through a champion engagement strategy. This strategy includes a targeted effort for PCA Arizona to develop and leverage a core group of champions to enhance its media outreach and advocacy efforts. Specifically, identifying what organization could help to advance and/or buttress their ultimate goal of shifting the conversation to the issue of prevention.
3. Advocacy: ACS worked with PCA Arizona leadership to determine the best approach to direct advocacy with the child safety leadership within the Executive branch via the Governor's office and the Department of Child Safety (DCS), and the Arizona state legislature. While prevention is slowly becoming a priority in the statewide conversation among the media, this advocacy strategy will help PCA Arizona work with both branches of their state government to position prevention as the long-term solution to the current crisis the state is facing.

The result: A two-year advocacy strategy document has allowed PCA Arizona to be efficient in its effort to elevate the conversation of prevention and leverage its internal and external staff capacity, resources and partners to begin to change the dialogue about and related to prevention in Arizona among the media and state legislators.

Specific Future Outcomes:

Communication

When PCA Arizona implements messaging fully it will achieve the following outcomes:

- All staff and PCA Arizona leadership talk about prevention and PCA Arizona in a clear and consistent way.
- Prevention messaging to the media is consistent and relevant to the statewide context.
- Prevention messaging to policymakers is consistent and relevant to the statewide context.

In conjunction with the messaging, the media outreach strategy will allow PCA Arizona to achieve the following outcomes:

1. Major statewide publications will begin talking about prevention in discussions of child safety.
2. The topic of prevention and the work of PCA Arizona will become well known among key members of the media.
3. As the media begins to talk about prevention more, policymakers and other statewide leaders will begin to consider the impact of prevention and consider prevention as the primary solution to overcome challenges within the state's child welfare system.

External Capacity Building

When PCA Arizona develops and leverages a core group of champions to leverage its media outreach and advocacy efforts, it will achieve the following outcomes:

- Multiple people and organizations will be talking about prevention in the media.

- The media will begin covering prevention alongside child safety issues.
- The media will begin reaching out to PCA Arizona and its' partners as a trusted source of information about child abuse prevention and Arizona's statewide child safety strategy.
- The topic of prevention will be elevated in the statewide conversation.

Advocacy

As PCA Arizona builds relationships at these various levels within the Arizona state government, statewide political leaders begin to realize the following outcomes:

- Prevention will become part of the conversation on strategies to decrease the amount of children in foster care in Arizona.
- Policymakers will consider continuing and expanded support for evidence-based programs like Healthy Families AZ.
- PCA Arizona will develop relationships within the Arizona government that can withstand the instability of agency leadership.

Learn more about PCA Arizona at www.pcaaz.org