

MATERIAL DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

Creating Effective Materials for Low SES Populations

One fourth of California's population is defined as Low Socio-Economic Status (Low SES), including those with limited income, limited education and limited economic opportunities. These underserved populations are made up of multi-ethnic, multi-cultural communities. The majority of adults living in these communities are employed but still living below the poverty level.

When you know how to reach this population, you can create an effective tool for real change.



Topics in this guide

- Developing your message
- Choosing a format
- Writing text that's easy to read
- Creating an effective design



Tip

Did you know TECC offers free help with every step of the development process? Contact our team today for assistance with writing, design, printing or adapting materials.



Developing Your Message

Include your target audience in the early planning stages, whenever possible. You can use surveys, interviews and focus groups to learn about their needs and concerns.

See our [Sample Audience Research Questions](#) to get started.

If this type of direct research is not possible due to time or budget issues, information can also be gathered through the [Rover Resource Library](#) or other organizations working with similar audiences.

Key Message Points

Keep your messages short and easily understood.

“Secondhand smoke is a real health risk.”

Focus on family, especially children.

“Kids who breathe secondhand smoke get sick more often.”

Use clear and friendly language, free of blame.

“Learn how you can protect your family.”

Focus on realistic actions and achievable goals.

“Ask family members and friends to step outside to smoke.”

Emphasize benefits of adopting the behavior.

“When you make a smoke-free rule at home, your whole family will breathe easier.”

Acknowledge barriers (social and financial) and provide ideas to overcome them, when possible.

“Let them know it isn’t about smoking, it’s about keeping your family healthy.”

Include free or low cost resources for help, such as a local cessation clinic or the California Smokers’ Helpline.

“The California Smokers’ Helpline offers free help to quit smoking. Call 1-800-NO-BUTTS (1-800-662-8887) or visit them online at www.nobutts.org.”



Tip

The California Smokers’ Helpline is a great free resource to include on all materials. They offer:

- Cessation help in multiple languages
- Special help for tobacco chewers, pregnant smoker and teens
- Free counseling & materials

1-800-NO-BUTTS
(1-800-662-8887)
www.nobutts.org



Choosing a format

The right format is also critical so think beyond the brochure. Short postcards, fact cards and posters convey information without a lot of text.



Postcard

Works well for:

- Handing out at big events and fairs
- Mailing to community members
- Adding your personal message or information



Fact Card

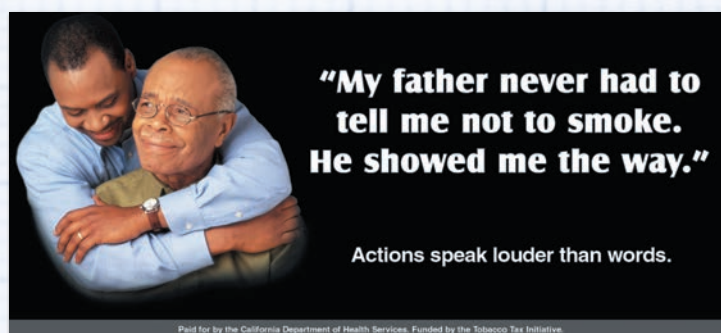
Works well for:

- Handing out at community events
- Including in give-aways and packets
- Distributing at health clinics and community centers

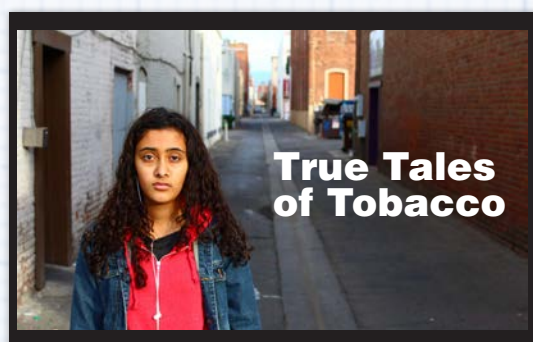
Poster

Works well for:

- Reaching a wide audience
- Health campaigns
- Public Service Announcements



Many low SES populations use oral tradition to pass on ideas and stories between generations. Videos and presentations using visual aides work great for a variety of groups.



Video

Works well for:

- Featuring members of your target audience
- Showing at community events
- Embedding in a website or social media



Graphic Presentation

Works well for:

- Complex messages and ideas
- Presentations at community meetings
- Use by health educators in the classroom



Writing text that's easy to read

Engage your reader

- Keep the message short and simple. Don't include lots of statistics or share everything you know.
- Speak directly to your audience and use "you" and "your" where possible.
- Maintain an adult perspective. Be careful to avoid assumptions about people who read at a low level.
- Include examples and personal stories from the community to engage your reader.

Tip

Headlines that ask the reader a question help draw them in.

Example: "Is tobacco smoke making your child sick?"

Organize for impact

- Start and end with the most important information.
- Structure the material logically. Step-by-step, chronological, question/answer and problem/solution formats are easy to follow.
- Use shorter sentences in general.
- Break up longer content with headlines, short paragraphs and bulleted lists.

Choose the right words

- Avoid "health educator speak."
- Write in an active voice using vivid verbs.
- Replace statistics where possible, with words like "most," "many," and "half."
- Use numbers and symbols when possible rather than words.
- Write in a conversational style using common words.
- Keep text to a 4th–6th grade reading level.

Text Makeover

Before

"20% of Hispanic adults smoke in their home or vehicle. This causes their families to suffer the effects of secondhand smoke exposure."

After

"When you make a no-smoking rule in your house and car, your whole family will breathe easier."

Text Makeover

Before

"Today only 12% of Californians smoke. Smoking is linked to increased illness and risk of lung cancer and heart disease. Quitting smoking is possible with our free cessation help."

After

"Most people in California don't smoke. If you smoke you will be sick more often. You will also be more likely to die from lung cancer or a heart attack."

You can quit smoking. Call us today for free help to quit."



Creating an effective design

Good design is important for engaging your audience and making your information accessible. Don't let poor design obscure your message.

Avoid these common design mistakes

Graphics that are poor quality (e.g. images pulled from the web)

Juvenile images used for adult audiences

Fonts that are hard to read

Distracting backgrounds and too many colors

Single spaced fonts

Font size smaller than 12 points (for low SES audiences)

All caps or italics used for more than one word or phrase

Too many styles for headlines and text

Design Makeover: Before



PROTECT YOUR CHILD FROM SECONDHAND SMOKE

Breathing secondhand smoke will make your child sick more often. They will have more breathing problems and are more likely to get diseases when they are older. How you can help:

- *Ask family and friends not to smoke near your child.*
- *Don't allow smoking in your home or car.*
- **ASK SMOKERS WHO VISIT YOU TO GO OUTSIDE TO SMOKE.**
- *Put up a sign to tell people your home is smoke-free.*

Call 1-800-NO-BUTTS for free help to quit smoking.



Creating an effective design (continued)

A great design will appeal to your audience and provide information in a way that is clear and easy to read. If you don't have a designer on staff, invest in a professional design contractor or call TECC for design assistance.

Tips for great design

Graphics that are high quality (*stock photos or illustrations, or a professional photo shoot*)

Attractive images that reflect your audiences

Fonts that are easy to read

Wide spaced text

Font size at least 12 points (*for low SES audiences*)

Simple background and limited number of colors

Lots of clear or “white” space around text

Consistent styles for headlines and text

Design Makeover: After



Protect your child from secondhand smoke

Breathing secondhand smoke will make your child sick more often. They will have more breathing problems and are more likely to get diseases when they are older. How you can help:

1. Ask family and friends not to smoke near your child.
2. Don't allow smoking in your home or car.
3. Ask smokers who visit you to go outside to smoke.
4. Put up a sign to tell people your home is smoke-free.

Call 1-800-NO-BUTTS for free help to quit smoking.

