Strategic Communication for Environmental Change

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Webinar Objectives

- **Develop** clear messages connecting social problems to environmental factors.

- **Utilize** events and data to call community, legislators, and policymakers to action.

- **Engage** technology to paint clear pictures and activate viewers/readers.
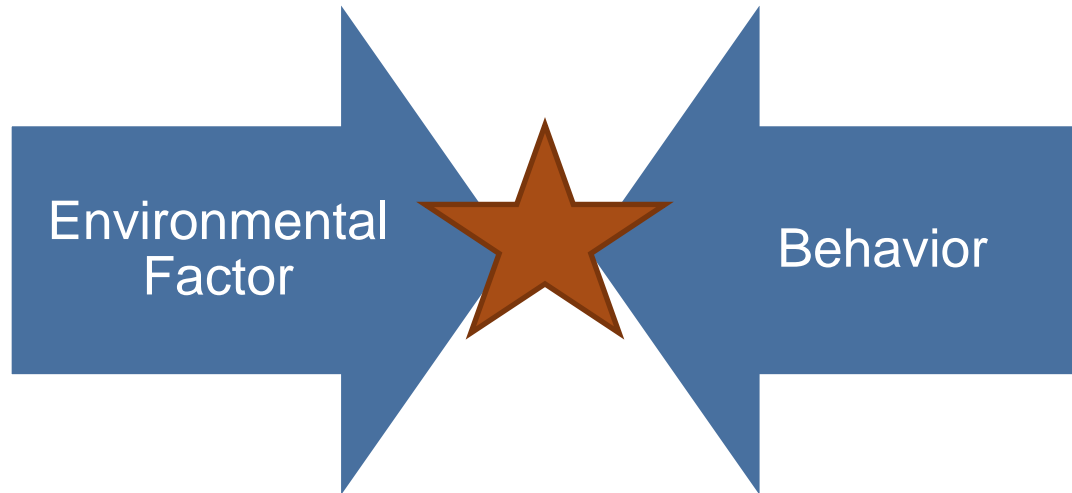
Environmental Behavior Theory

- Environmental factors either encourage/enable or discourage/disable individual behavior.

Individual Behavior

Group Behavior

Surrounding Environment
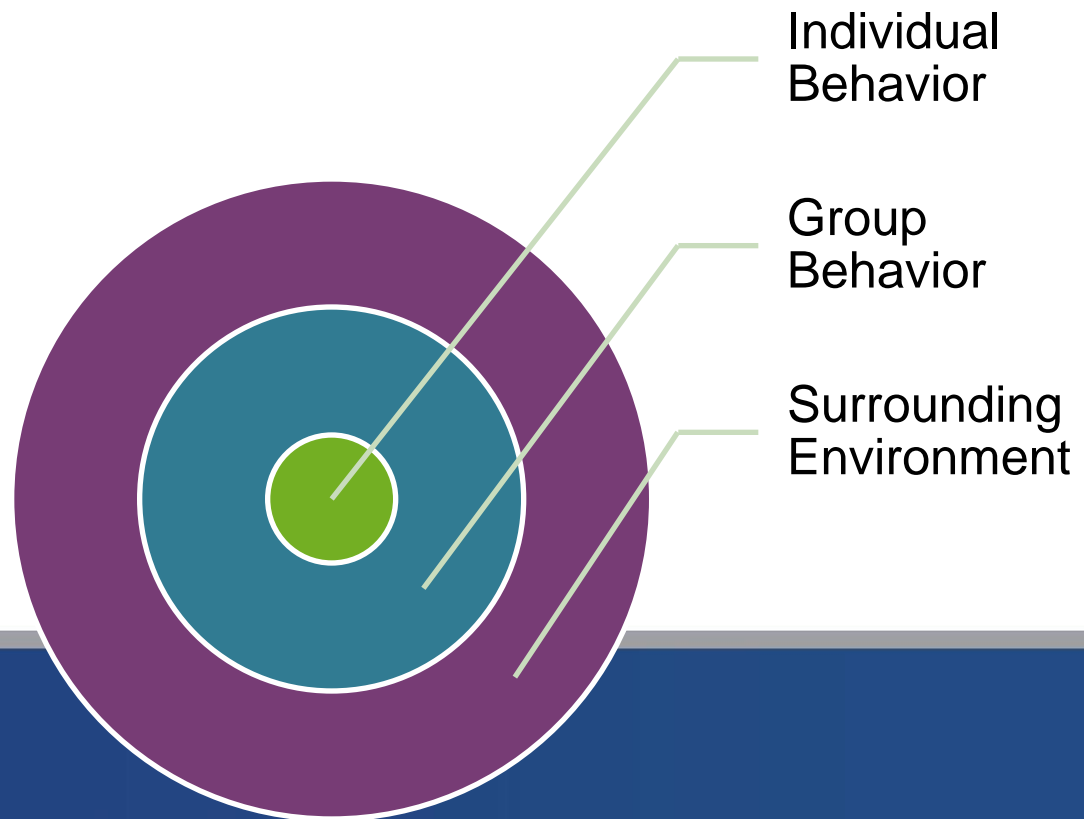
Environmental Messaging

FOCUS of message is on LINK between:

Environmental Factor

Behavior

5 Keys to Environmental Messaging

1. SHOW the environment and its effects – make it visible.
2. CONNECT the current environment to key mechanisms that explain its effects.
3. BUILD a solid argument for how the mechanisms can improve the environment's effects.
4. DEMONSTRATE how these mechanisms have worked in other communities.
5. FOCUS on the benefits of an improved environment – what's the win for all?

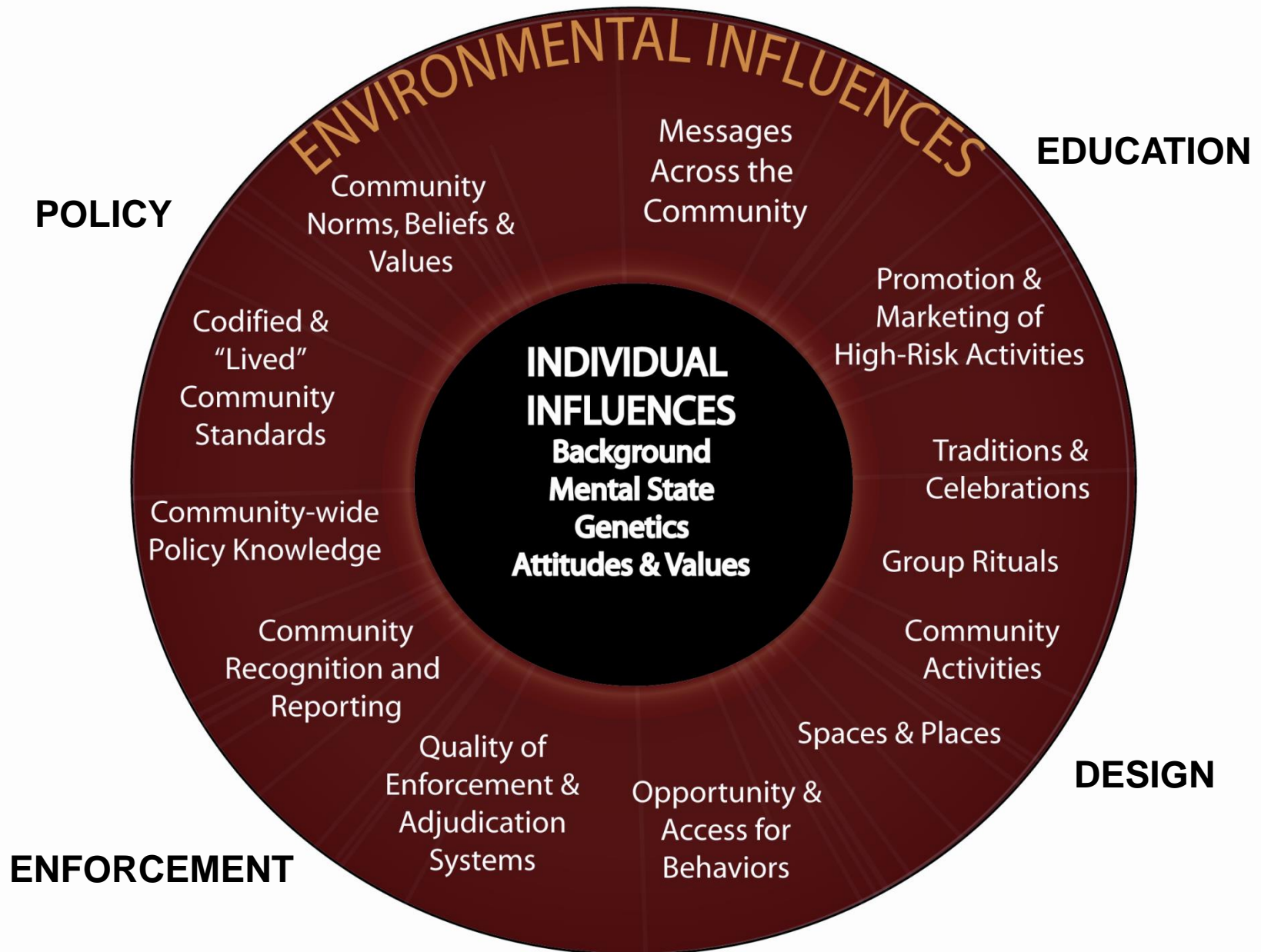AIR®
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Avoid at all costs!

- DECLARING WAR against an environment.

- BLAMING the current environment on individuals.

- ASSIGNING motives to stakeholders who are entrenched or profit from the existing environment.

- STOPPING at the community's recognition that something in the environment is problematic.

- ACCEPTING that a current environment is the result of "culture" and therefore cannot change.

- COMMUNICATING that you are "fixing" the environment.

Step 1: Identify the Environmental Factors linked to Behavioral Outcomes

- What is encouraging or enabling unwanted behavior in your community?

- START WITH THE DATA: Tie a SPECIFIC behavior to a SPECIFIC factor.
  - Assaults/drunken behavior at concerts
  - High-risk drinking/underage drinking on weekends
  - Marijuana use in certain neighborhood or public space.

- Focus on the MECHANISMS that enable this factor to exist.

Toward a Broader Environmental Framework for Student Health & Safety

EDUCATION

POLICY

ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES

Community Norms, Beliefs & Values

Messages Across the Community

Codified & "Lived" Community Standards

Promotion & Marketing of High-Risk Activities

INDIVIDUAL INFLUENCES
Background
Mental State
Genetics
Attitudes & Values

Community-wide Policy Knowledge

Traditions & Celebrations

Group Rituals

Community Recognition and Reporting

Community Activities

Quality of Enforcement & Adjudication Systems

Spaces & Places

Opportunity & Access for Behaviors

DESIGN

ENFORCEMENT

What can we show?
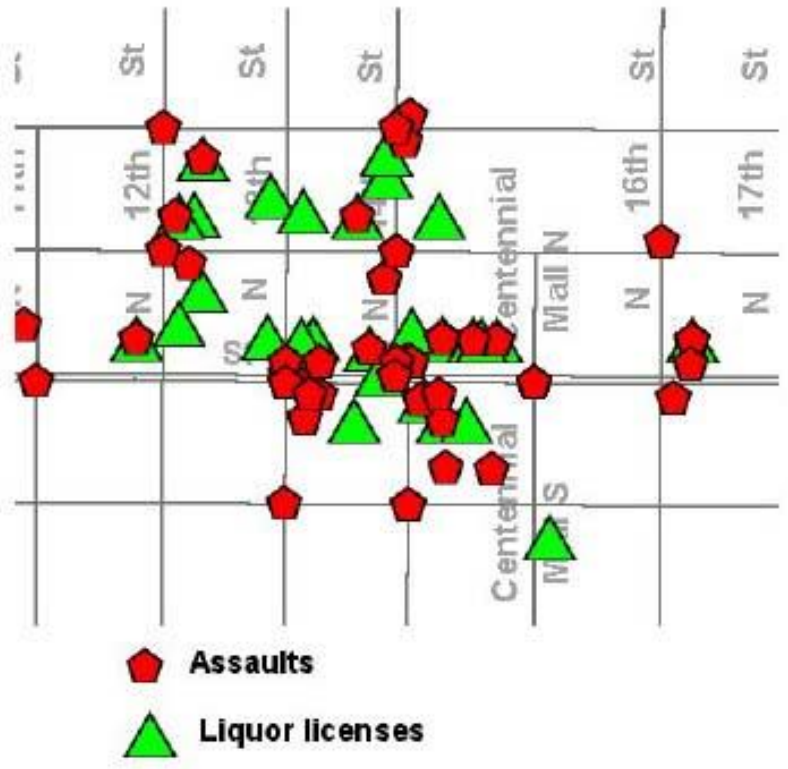
- DATA.
  - Mapping assaults, calls for service, vandalism to addresses/locations.
  - Using self-report data to build a case about a place/space.
- IMAGES.
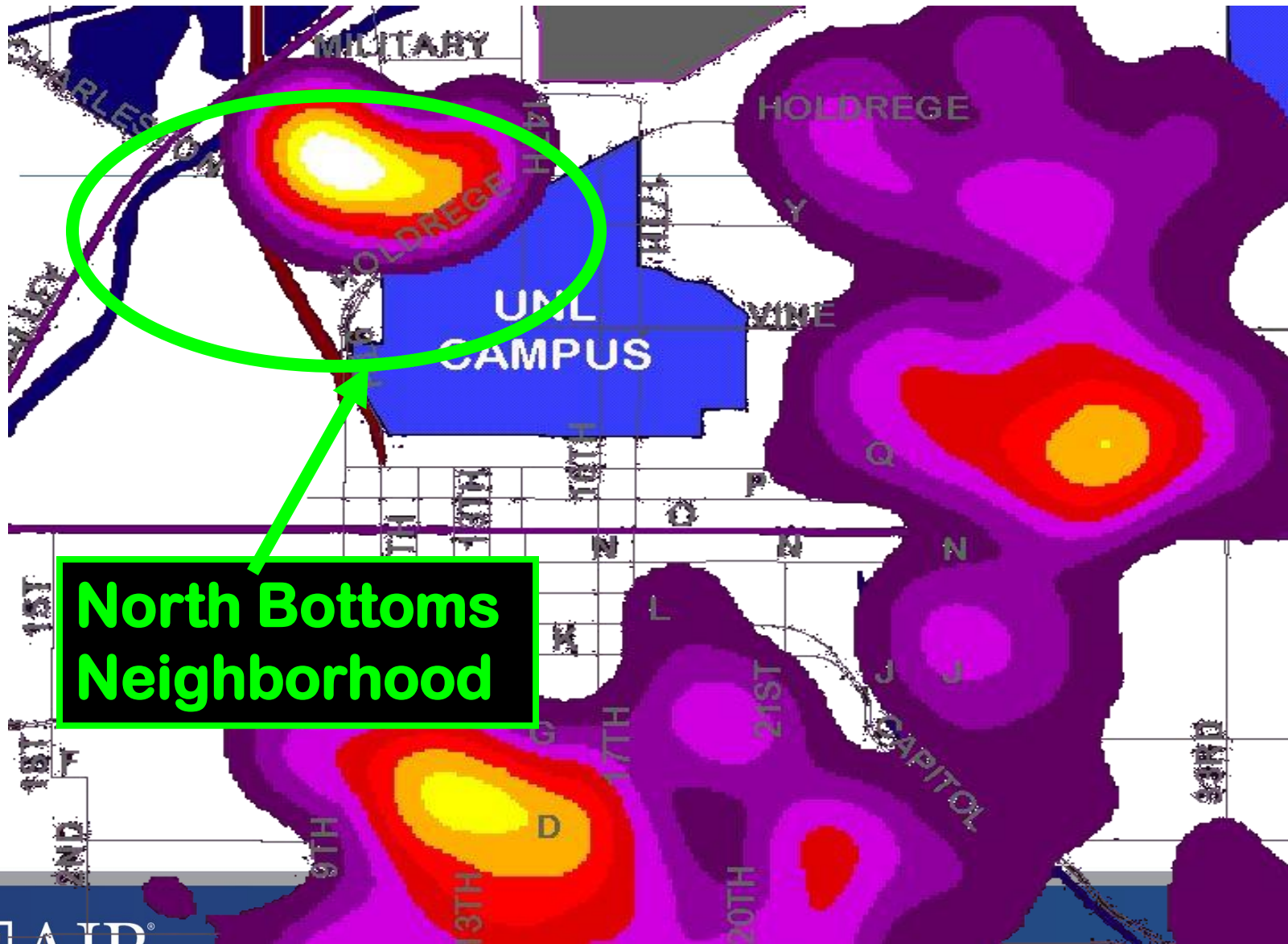 - Photo/video of a party out of control, an illegal sale, service to intoxicated, intoxicated behavior

Showing, Not Telling

Assaults

Liquor licenses

Graphic Information Systems

- "Mapping" crime, police call for service, or medical rescue data by address.

- Shows "hot spots" of activity by location.

Density of Party Complaints Near Campus

North Bottoms Neighborhood

Step 2: Communicate the mechanism that resolves the problem

- THE PROBLEM IS THE SOLUTION.
  - The mechanism that leads to harms can be reversed to improve outcomes.

- MECHANISMS must be employed to be effective – don't forget about the implementation details.
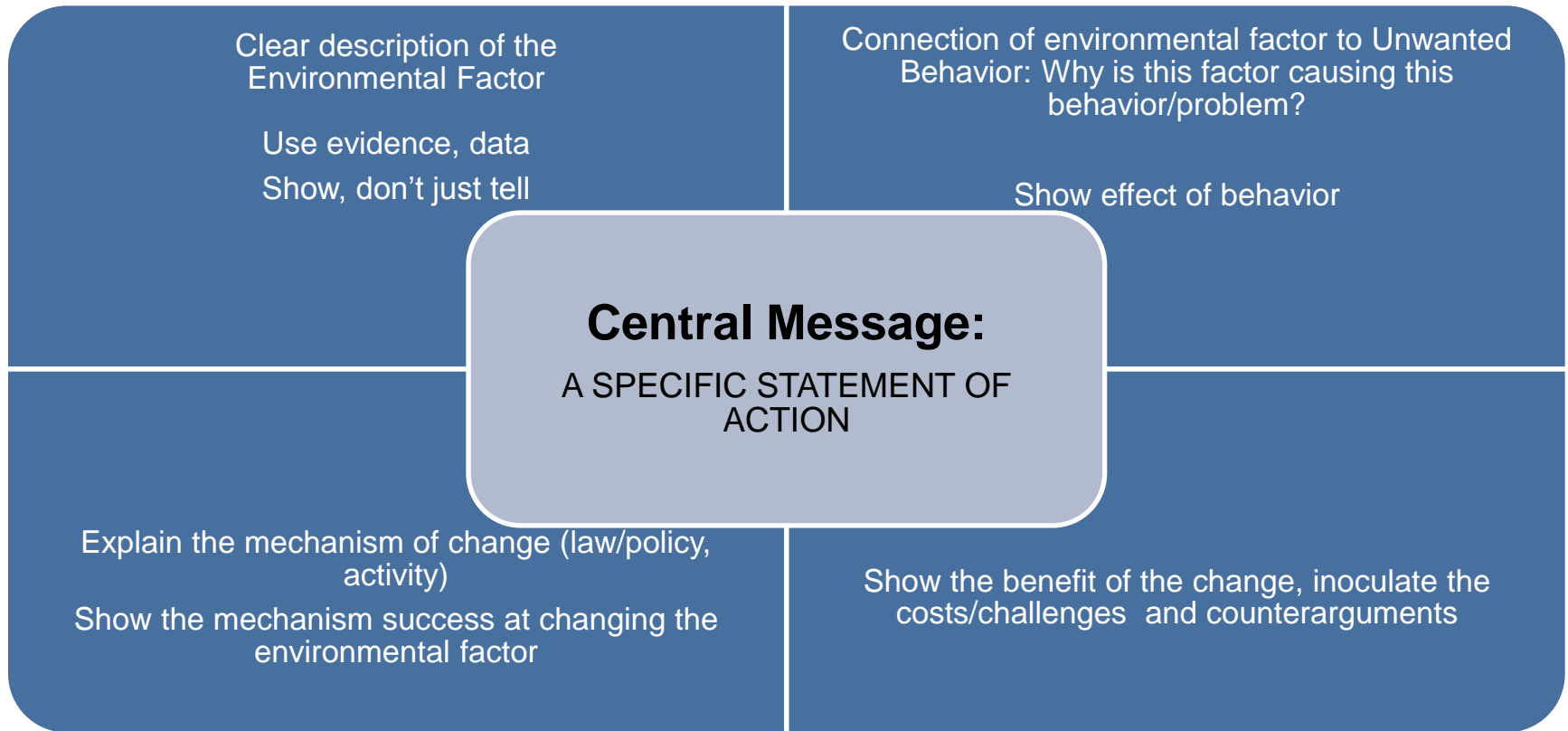
Example 1: Wild Parties

- **Parties become "wild" when responsible social host policies are not communicated, enforced, or practiced, especially in neighborhoods where students assume no one cares.**

- **The result is increased crime, noise, trash, vandalism.**

- **The mechanisms to address this are:**

  - A clear policy in our community about disruptive parties.

  - A focused effort to communicate the policy to students and landlords.

  - A consistent effort to enforce the policies and provide meaningful consequences to those who violate it.

  - An effort to improve: the quality of the neighborhood, the quality of student rental housing, and the interaction between student and permanent residents.

Example 2: Overservice

- Alcohol overservice at bars and restaurants occurs when servers are not able to identify intoxicated patrons or refuse service to clearly intoxicated patrons.

- The result is public intoxication, and the potential for drunk driving, assault, and other harms.

- The mechanisms to address this are:
  - Management policies and procedures to avoid overservice.
  - Training for servers about refusing service to intoxicated patrons.
  - Management support of staff refusing service to intoxicated patrons.
  - Enforcement of liquor laws prohibiting overservice in licensed establishments.

Step 2: Build the Message

Clear description of the Environmental Factor

Use evidence, data

Show, don't just tell

Connection of environmental factor to Unwanted Behavior: Why is this factor causing this behavior/problem?

Show effect of behavior

Central Message:

A SPECIFIC STATEMENT OF ACTION

Explain the mechanism of change (law/policy, activity)

Show the mechanism success at changing the environmental factor

Show the benefit of the change, inoculate the costs/challenges and counterarguments

EXAMPLE

Wild parties have led to a large number of issues in our neighborhoods including noise, trash, assaults, vandalism, high demand for police intervention.

Police can break up these parties, but can't stop them from occurring; there is no accountability for those hosting parties

WE NEED A SOCIAL HOST ORDINANCE

A social host ordinance holds the host or landlord responsible, penalizing those who do not engage responsible social host practices

With consistent enforcement, the ordinance gets at the root cause of the problem and enables the community to promote good social host practices

Step 3: Communicate!

- **Use all available forms of communication.**
- **NEVER underestimate the power of conversation.**
- **TRAIN ALL stakeholders about the central message and key points, BUT --**
- **ENABLE stakeholders to speak from their individual perspectives as neighbor, parent, faculty, police, etc.**

Help the news media get the story right

- Press Kit
  - Press release
  - Fact Sheet
  - Interview Contact list
  - Images/video/graphics
- Interaction with reporter
  - Explaining the story
  - Exploring the angle

Don't stop with traditional media

- Bar or Neighborhood Walk for new coalition members/stakeholders.

- ID check test at special lunch.

- Post-event trash pick-up.

- Social media posts of photos and video.

Key Partners

- Police Department: GIS maps, crime data, alcohol-related crime tracking, expert testimony

- Hospitals: Emergency room data, alcohol-related health information, expert testimony

- Responsible Hospitality Association: expert testimony, access to businesses

- Neighborhood Associations: Experiences, testimony

Measure Your Success

- Track the community dialogue:
  - Are people talking differently about the issue than they did before?
  - Are they focusing on mechanisms?
  - Are they seeing the connections?

- Measure the level of acceptance and resistance
  - Note especially key issues that need resolution
  - Focus on the WIN for all stakeholders

Contact

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National Center for Safe and Supportive Learning Environments

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