STRONG foundations

How-to Guide
for the
#B25
Social Media Campaign





The concept for this project was developed by Child Trends, the Maine Children's Alliance, and the Arizona First Things First organization.

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What is the #B25 Strong Foundations social media campaign?

An effort to spread research-based messages via Facebook and Twitter in order to increase awareness about the benefits of early childhood policies and investments. The aim of the campaign is to focus on the importance of building strong foundations during early childhood which will not only improve children's outcomes but reduce societal costs later.

Goal

Use research-based messages to elevate the importance or early childhood policies and investments.

Who can participate?

Anyone who wants to help inform state discussions about early childhood programs who is willing to use social media (like Twitter or Facebook)

What do we do?

1. **Tweet and Facebook post about #B25!** During February, the Birth to Five Policy Alliance partners, and anyone else wishing to participate, are encouraged to post research-based messages on Twitter and Facebook that link back to short descriptions of the research with citations on the Alliance website. We've drafted some sample tweets and Facebook posts for you (see Appendices A and B).

2. **Directly message opinion leaders, and/or tag them in your posts.** Every state has its own set of opinion leaders and stakeholders in the field of early childhood, usually a mix of policymakers, advocates, parents and reporters. Some states might consider tagging these opinion leaders (simply by typing the "@" symbol followed by their user name on either Facebook or Twitter, and/or by directly messaging them to alert them to the #B25 Strong Foundations effort.) More ideas on this outreach can be found later in this guide.

3. **Twitter Town Hall.** You may want to also consider doing an "ask the experts" town hall for policymakers, the media and the public in your state. Child Trends would be happy to help f you want to plan a 2-hour Twitter town hall and can assist in fielding any questions related to the research.

What should we say?

Child Trends, a research partner to the B25 Policy Alliance, has developed a set of research-based talking points (and accompanying tweets/Facebook posts) on early childhood topics. The messages are each labeled with a #B25 hash tag to unify the campaign and so we can track all who participate. Each organization is encouraged to pick messages from the topics that are the greatest priority in your state, and adapt the recommended tweets/posts to your state's policy environment.

Every post should reference #B25, but please add your own tag as appropriate. For example, Arizona might choose to label its posts #B25 #AZ, Maine might add #B25 #ME, etc.

We encourage participants to supplement the #B25 research messages with additional messages that make sense for your state. For example, any relevant news articles, activities, or ongoing policy discussions. If you have identified stories of stakeholders who have benefited from early childhood investments, now would be a great time to point to those stories, and to combine the research-based messages with narratives that can be equally, and in some cases, even more persuasive or compelling.

When do we do this?

The #B25 Strong Foundations effort will run in February 2012. However, these research-based messages can also be used on an ongoing basis throughout the year.

How often do we tweet or post to Facebook?

Please post 2-3 times a day to Twitter and at least 3 times a week to Facebook. See tips on timing later in this guide.

Reach out to decisionmakers and opinion leaders

Many policymakers, opinion leaders and reporters are now on Twitter and Facebook. You can send these individuals direct messages via Twitter, or post on their public Facebook pages.

Who are the decision makers?

You may already know who key decision makers are in your state and if they are using Twitter or Facebook. If you haven't had time yet to identify those handles and pages, now might be a great time to put together an excel spreadsheet list of them.

National policymakers

National policymakers using Twitter may be listed on this resource:

http://www.tweetcongress.org

Reporters

In addition to policymakers, the media and reporters continue to be an important audience for research-based messages on early childhood issues. Some tips for reaching out to reporters can be found here:

Reporter outreach: When to tweet a reporter, (and when not to) - http://www.ereleases.com/prfuel/when-to-tweet-a-reporter-and-when-not-to/

Reporter directories: Some reporter directories for twitter are being developed, but these may or may not have the right reporters for your state or issue. You may be able to find reporters on Twitter or Facebook by checking your local newspaper's website for listings.

Find a reporter here: http://journalisttweets.com

TIPS for Twitter

1. **Keep it to 120.** You have 140 characters, but shoot for 120 so that your tweets can be retweeted with your handle (eg. @Birth2FivePolicy) included.
2. **Short but clear with action verbs.** Keep it short but don't over abbreviate, it makes it hard for people scanning quickly to read and understand. (And scanning is what Twitter is all about.) Use action verbs to increase clicks on your links.
3. **Link and connect.** Point to credible links either on the Alliance or your own website, or to specific news sources. A Tweet without a link is an opportunity lost.
4. **Use hashtags (e.g., #).** Hashtags help users interested in your issue find your content. Please use #B25 for every tweet related to this campaign. Some common hash tags for early childhood issues include: **#ECE, #PreK#Infants, #Toddlers, #HeadStart, #Kindergarten, #Childcare.**
5. **Always credit your source** (if you are retweeting.) However, the sample tweets in Appendix A can be used as is, with your organization as the source. Please just include #B25!
6. **Be chatty, be witty.** Twitter is a conversation. Respond to messages, be friendly, and be conversational. It's okay to be funny and engaging. Twitter is a non-stop exercise in learning how to write good headlines that lure people in…
7. **Use Twitter buzz words to increase clicks.** Use words like: Check, via, and please to increase clicks on your tweets.

When should we tweet?

Try to send out the most important tweets in the morning around 11 am Eastern and between 2 and 5 pm Eastern. Send no more than 1 tweet an hour.

If I tweet it once, is it okay to tweet it again?

Absolutely. In fact, you'll likely increase both your retweets and your followers, if you post the same message in a couple of ways over time, just don't do them all at once.

How many tweets should we tweet?

The people who get the most retweets, tweet as many as 20 times a day. Most non-profits don't have the time to tweet that much, but if you do, you'll grow your followers more quickly. Remember, it is ok to say the same thing a couple different ways.

Is there an easy way to schedule tweets?

Why yes, there is! Try Hootsuite or Tweetdeck, which are both online platforms that allow you to schedule a series of tweets over time, direct message followers, and monitor your twitter feeds. You can even download aps to your smart phones to monitor twitter activity on the go…

TIPS for Facebook

1. **Easy does it.** Much easier to over post on Facebook, try to limit your posts to once every other day.

2. **Weekends are better.** Turns out that posts on the weekends are more likely to be shared than those posted during the week. So if you can, put up that interesting content on Saturday morning.

3. **Early birds catch the worms.** Posts earlier in the morning get more shares. (especially ones between 1 and 3 am.) You may want to figure out a way to schedule those posts, unless you are an early bird or a night owl. Eitherway, HootSuite may be a good platform for you.

4. **The best Facebook posts are interactive.** Ask a question or poll. Respond to other posts on your page or on your feed. Ask followers to share stories.

Encourage Facebook Interactions through Questions and Quizzes

There are a couple ways you can make interactive questions on your Facebook page, the easiest is using the questions feature.

1. **Ask short, yes/no (True/False) questions.** Ex. Do you know a child under the age of five who would benefit from an early childhood program such as Head Start?

2. **True or False.** Connections in the brain that are not used and stimulated during the early years are pruned, and this loss is irreversible after the early years.

3. **Or try multiple choice or fill in the blank questions.**

Want to learn more?

Here are some great online resources:

- Some **tools to help you identify when to tweet and post** specific to your community of followers. http://www.hypebot.com/hypebot/2011/06/twitter-tools-tweetwhen-timely-when-to-tweet.html
- **Hootsuite or Tweetdeck** are both great ways to schedule and manage your social media platforms. Note: It's better to use the bit.ly abbreviator rather than either of these.
- **Reporter outreach:** When to tweet a reporter, (and when not to) - http://www.ereleases.com/prfuel/when-to-tweet-a-reporter-and-when-not-to/
- **Find a reporter here**: http://journalisttweets.com
- **www.Tweetcongress.org:** Though the #B25 Strong Foundations campaign is a state based effort, there may be some overlap and desire to reach out to Congress as well.
- **Ten tips for non-profits on Facebook** - http://www.buddymedia.com/newsroom/2011/07/ten-tips-for-non-profits-on-facebook/
- **From Facebook-Tips for Nonprofits:** http://www.facebook.com/nonprofits?sk=app_149255468478339

State-by-State Early Care and Education Resources

Child Well-Being

KIDS COUNT - A project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT profiles the status of children on a national and state-by-state basis and ranks states on 10 measures of well-being.

http://www.aecf.org/MajorInitiatives/KIDSCOUNT.aspx

National Center for Children in Poverty: Improving the Odds for Young Children - State-specific profiles that integrate data about an array of policies that affect early childhood development in three categories: health and nutrition, early care and learning, and parenting and economic supports.

http://www.nccp.org/projects/improvingtheodds_stateprofiles.html

CLASP-In the States - Links to an index of state-specific CLASP publications or resources on topics such as child care and early education, child welfare, poverty and opportunity, temporary assistance, and youth.

http://www.clasp.org/in_the_states/

CLASP Early Childhood Policy Agenda Data Tool - Intended for state advocates and policymakers to use as they work to develop a state early childhood agenda. Includes a series of key questions to understand the context and conditions of young children, birth to six, in the state. Questions include data on demographics and program participation (such as health and nutrition programs), as well as the details of child care and early education settings in the state.

http://www.clasp.org/babiesinchildcare/publications?id=0010

Birth to Five Policy Alliance Early Care and Education State Budget Actions - Provides state-by-state information on child care, pre-kindergarten, home visiting, and other early childhood appropriations.

http://www.birthtofivepolicy.org/Policy/Policy/tabid/64/Default.aspx

Child Care and Licensing

National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA): In the States - State-by-state resources (including fact sheets) on child care and child care licensing.

http://www.naccrra.org/public-policy/in-the-states

Health

Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health - State data snapshots on children's health collected through the National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) and the National Survey of Children with Special Health Care Needs (NS-CSHCN). Includes child obesity state report cards.

www.childhealthdata.org/

State Health Facts - Customizable state profiles on children's health indicators using data from the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured

http://www.statehealthfacts.org/children.jsp

Infants and Toddlers

ZERO TO THREE Baby Fact Sheets - Show how babies are faring in each of the 51 states and the important role federal programs play in supporting their healthy development.

http://www.zerotothree.org/public-policy/state-community-policy/infant-and-toddler-state-fact-sheets.html

ZERO to THREE *Baby Matters: A Gateway to State Policies and Initiatives! Baby Matters* **-** A searchable database that contains resource information on state policies and initiatives that impact infants, toddlers and their families. The policies and initiatives are searchable by category, state, or keyword. A detailed description of each policy or initiative is provided, as well as links to additional related resources.

http://policy.db.zerotothree.org/policyp/home.aspx