Fluoride Campaign Strategies and Resources

70th Anniversary Fluoridation Celebration and Symposium

September 11, 2015
About OHCO

• Oral Health Colorado (OHCO) is a non-profit network of advocates that represent a wide range of public, private, and non-profit organizations committed to advancing oral health, and ensuring health equity throughout Colorado.

• OHCO creates strategic connections with individuals, organizations and partners to achieve collective impact for improved health.
What do we do?

OHCO develops and promotes strategies that achieve optimal oral health for all Coloradans:

• Develop and support public policy initiatives that lead to health equity
• Educate coalition constituents and the public
• Increase access to comprehensive oral health care
• Support strategies that increase provider access
• Share best practices in a variety of provider settings
Into the frying pan.....

Summer 2014 with proposed ballot initiative to ban fluoride statewide
Colorado’s Rapid Response Team

• *Oral Health Colorado* - activate the advocacy network

• *Colorado Dental Association* - activate dental professionals, communications expertise

• *CO Department of Public Health & Environment, Oral Health Unit/State Dental Director* - provide the FACTS
RRT Purpose

- Identify threat/opportunities
- Reach out to local stakeholders
- Provide technical assistance to develop and implement strategy
- Access to resources
Colorado Context

• Home rule state
• Vast geography
• Differing politics
• Ballot initiative
• Water is already controversial
• Birthplace of fluoride
Technical Assistance

• Identifying community values
• What are current politics? How impact?
• Who are the voters?
• What are the messages?
• How communicate the messages?
• Who is the messenger?
• What influencers need to be involved?
• The role of the press
• The need for financial resources
Case Study
YAY!
DENVER!
Denver Water Background

• Provides drinking water to some 1.3 million Coloradans
• Policy in place for more than 60 years to fluoridate water as a way to fight tooth decay
• Denver Mayor/Council appointed Water Commissioners
• Fluoride was “under debate” after the federal government announced new standards in April
• Denver Water has used the lower dose since 2011
Process

• Because of new standards, several community groups asked Denver Water to re-examine current policy on fluoride

• The Denver Water Board hosted a public forum to discuss the policy of adding fluoride to public water

• Each side was allowed three speakers
The Teams
The Strategy

• Reviewed the background of the Water Commissioners and the Commission
  – What message will matter?
  – Who should be the messengers?
  – Who needs to be engaged?
Activating the Network

• Identified/activated *individuals* in OHCO’s advocacy network that had personal relationships with the Commissioners- and the Mayor of Denver

• Activated high profile organizations to submit letters of support- **HEALTH** was key

• Provided samples of messages- health equity was important
Engaging the Press

• Used existing relationships which led to:
  – Denver Post editorial
  – Colorado Public Radio piece
  – Colorado Statesman interview
After the decision

• Joint press release
• Action alert asking for “thank you”- video campaign
• Denver Business Journal Poll
• Follow up editorial
Other Communities

• November ballot initiative
• Reversing decisions of local water boards
• Expanding fluoride

➢ Same process of analysis and engagement
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