

January 29, 2014

CVSO COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Our goals are simple, yet vitally important — to increase veterans’ awareness of their County Veterans Service office, and application for, the military benefits they have earned, and rightfully deserve, for their dedicated service to our country.

We will carefully implement the following tactics in order to achieve these goals, and ultimately help improve the lives of the men and women who stand in defense of our country, both at home and abroad.

TACTICS

800-Number

We will set up a toll-free number that veterans or their families can call to be connected to their “home” County Veterans Service Office (CVSO). We like the County of San Luis Obispo’s suggestion that callers be able to enter their zip code to be connected to the office closest to them. However, we will also explore a few additional options for callers as well — for those who don’t know their zip code, , or who would prefer to speak with a live person from the start.

This number will be featured in all of our outreach and will be recorded in both English and Spanish. However, we will need to discuss whether every CVSO is prepared to handle Spanish speaking callers, and if not, how the 800-Number message could be used to address this.

In order to program this type of a system, we will need a database (or at least a list) of every participating CVSO in the state, with their corresponding zip code(s) and telephone number.

Message Development

We will work with the CACVSO and CDVA to develop messaging that resonates among those who have served in our military (“veterans”) across different generations, gender, ethnicity, rank, military branches and types of service — to ensure that every veteran understands that they are entitled to certain benefits.

As part of this process, we would like to review existing outreach materials, as well as any data on their effectiveness (especially demographic breakdowns). And if available, we would also benefit from reviewing any survey or focus group research that has been done in California involving veterans and veteran benefits.

For example, our initial internet research located a national survey of veterans, active duty service members, demobilized national guard and reserve members, and family (U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, October 2010), that indicates most veterans:

- Are over 55 years of age or older
- Own their own homes
- Are generally married
- Only about one-third have combat experience
- More recent cohorts (Sept. 2001 or later) report a greater understanding (60.5%) of their military benefits than those who served longer ago
- The majority access the internet (72.3%) and are willing to use it to obtain information about benefits and services (68.8%) — although this varies by age
- Older cohorts, such as WWII veterans (85+), reported less use of the Internet (33.5%), although those who do use it are frequent users, with close to 85% reporting use at least weekly.

While these numbers *may be generally* true for California (albeit slightly out of date already), some current, state-specific research would be more accurate and valuable as we try to develop just the right messages and tone to really connect with the 1.9 million veterans living here in our 58 counties.

However, we are fully capable of producing highly effective and persuasive messages without benefit of research, if necessary. But we would then likely draw more heavily on the collective knowledge, experience and expertise of the various veteran partners during this phase.

Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

Once messaging is finalized, we will begin working on creative concepts and proposed scripts for two 30-second television and two 60-second radio

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) that will be used for multiple purposes, including:

- The basis for media partnerships that promote the PSAs' airing on targeted cable and network stations statewide (TV and radio)
- Shown on the websites and in the lobbies of CVSOs and other offices, such as mental health, social services, and medical services agencies across all levels of government (TV)
- Featured in website advertisements (TV)
- Shared in social media outreach (TV)

Our creative process is collaborative and inclusive. We will seek the County's and other designated stakeholders' input through initial brainstorming opportunities to ensure that we're working toward a common goal with regard to PSA theme and storyboards.

We very much appreciate that the County is able to provide us with actual veterans to appear in the PSAs, and will work with the appropriate representatives on casting and production schedules, as well as locations, if any involve actual CVSOs.

Once the filming and editing is complete, we will submit the PSAs to the County and other appropriate stakeholders for approval prior to any public use and/or distribution.

Media Partnerships

At one point in time, broadcast stations were required by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to “give away” a certain amount of airtime to public service, however this is no longer the case. The FCC has relaxed this standard and left PSA “requirement” to be dealt with by the local broadcast association. As such, competition for PSA time has grown fierce, and many non-profits have begun looking at alternatives.

Establishing a media partnership is just such an alternative — combining a true PSA (worthy of “free” media) with both a partnership opportunity for the station to earn goodwill with their viewers and a financial incentive. You get discounted broadcast time for a TV or radio ad promoting your message in exchange for the station having the opportunity to publicly support the men and women who have served our country with honor. It’s a win-win.

We will first work with the County of San Luis Obispo to prioritize the state’s media markets for our efforts — likely using concentration of veterans as a basis. We will then use any survey research we may have to further prioritize media markets, based on demographics and other factors.

We will then set internal financial boundaries for the partnership dollars — dividing the Media Partnership budget among our priority markets and setting figures above which we do not want to go when negotiating with media outlets for these partnerships.

We will then prepare partnership “kits” to be used at these meetings with media outlets, as well as training for the local CVSO representatives that will participate — alongside McNally Temple Associates representatives for the

initial meetings, to get the ball rolling.

These media partnership kits will include background on CDVA, and more specifically the CVSOs and their services; information on the types of challenges faced by veterans and their families (i.e., why the services are needed, quotes from veterans about the services, etc.); statistics on how few veterans are actually collecting the benefits they're entitled to; specifics of the partnership opportunity; copies of and/or links to the PSAs.

As to the training, we can offer two training conference calls and/or webinars for CVSO employees to provide an overview of the program, introduce them to the PSAs and the partnership kits, provide "pitch" training and public speaking tips, and answer any questions they may have. We'll also at that time ask if any of the CVSO representatives have existing relationships with their local media. If so, these would likely be the best places to start.

Finally, we would begin contacting the stations to request and scheduling meetings.

Collateral Materials

In addition to the PSAs, we will draft and design new resource materials using our new messaging, and likely carrying over the theme(s) from the PSAs. These materials will be made available for download on the Department's website, as well as through the CVSOs and other government offices. These materials would highlight some of the most common benefits veterans are eligible for, and provide information on how to connect with the local CVSO to access the benefits or get more information. We will also craft versions that are specific for some of our key demographic targets — such

as women, LGBT and victims of sexual assault — who may require a slightly different messages or unique targeting.

Paid Advertising

Internet IP Advertising

Internet advertising is a very efficient and cost effective tool to get our message out to veterans — and with new technology, we can target ads by IP addresses, meaning directly to an individual's computer (almost like direct mail).

In addition, studies show that Internet advertising, in combination with broadcast video — such as recommended with our media partnership program — drives up the “views” of the broadcast video.

We have access to a list that will allow us to target 151,000 veterans statewide. The list was compiled using a combination of voter registration and consumer lists, where individuals self-identified as military personnel (past or present). The list is accurate, but obviously incomplete, in that it is but a small percentage of the total number of veterans in the state. The demographics of this list indicate that 90% are male and the great majority (115,000+) are 70+ years of age. Another 23,500+ are 50-69 years old, about 6,500 are between 30-49 and less than 1,000 are 18-29. There are another 4,700 in the database with unknown ages.

We will target the “cookies” of 75,000 of these veterans' IP addresses, who we know have video-viewing capability, with ads featuring our TV PSAs (which highlight the 800 #), and allowing them to click-thru to whichever is

the primary website for this effort. Each one of these 75,000 would see the video approximately five times.

Print Advertising

Over the past years there has been a rise in digital media and a decline in traditional media. First, people would just rather go online for free than subscribe to a magazine or newspaper, so advertisers tend to follow the consumer. In addition, print advertising can be very expensive. However, for a target audience that includes a respectable number of people who are not Internet savvy — such as military veterans — print advertising must still be a consideration.

For this reason, we are including a modest amount of print advertising to supplement our Internet Advertising. We will work with the County of San Luis Obispo and other stakeholders to determine our best outlets for print advertising — choosing among veteran publications, such as GI Jobs (with a circulation of 360,000, targeting transitioning veterans), as well as mainstream community newspapers surrounding California's largest military bases.

The ads will mirror the look and feel of our PSAs and Internet ads, further reinforcing these messages for greater impact and retention.

Social Networking

Social networking (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.) is in the same family as earned media, in that it's a cost-effective and timesaving method of communicating your message. We recommend that every CVSO that has a Facebook page use it (or start one) to spread the word about these benefits

— including linking to the PSAs and new materials — while also encouraging individual veterans to do the same on their own social networking sites. This would apply to websites, LinkedIn accounts, blogs and other social media that all related groups (the County of San Luis Obispo and its partners) have access to.

However, we strongly believe that there should be only one primary website, Facebook page and Twitter account for this program — otherwise, our efforts will be diffused and diluted. People will become confused and our activities disjointed. In addition, since we will likely use these outlets to a smaller degree in our success metrics, we will want to direct everyone to the same site or our numbers will be skewed.

It would appear that the www.calvet.ca.gov website would be the most obvious as the primary website. CalVet also has a Facebook page with 3,984 Likes. But while I found a Twitter account focusing on veteran benefits held by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, I did not find one for CalVet.

Earned Media

While the use of earned or “free” media carries no guarantee that the information will appear in the press, it’s extremely cost-effective. However, working to identify or create unique “hooks” that make our veterans messages more timely or relevant can help increase the perceived newsworthiness of our news releases or story pitches, thus increasing the likelihood that they will be picked up by the media.

We will work with the County of San Luis Obispo, the CACVSO and its other partners — as well as local CVSOs — to identify newsworthy information

and engaging opportunities to generate earned media. For example, Veterans Day itself is a good hook, but so is a statistic showing that only half of veterans in a given county (or state or region) are getting the benefits they are entitled to — or a comparable (and accurate) statistic. Likewise, a real-life, local story of a veteran helped in a significant way by his or her local CVSO to get the assistance needed would be another good “hook.”

Using hooks like these we will then draft attention-grabbing news releases to raise general awareness of veterans benefit issues, and help direct more veterans (and their families) to the appropriate place(s) to get the benefits they deserve.

“Emerging Demographics” Outreach

In addition to the general outreach outlined above, we will also undertake a specific effort focused on the military’s various emerging veteran demographic groups, such as LGBT and victims of sexual assault.

As to our LGBT outreach, we propose to connect with this demographic via a number of voluntary groups, associations and publications, such as OutServe-SLDN, The American Military Partner Association, American Veterans for Equal Rights, *Gay Military Signal* (publication), Knights Out, Military Partners and Families Coalition, and Transgender American Veterans Association.

We will reach out to these groups to provide materials on benefits — including the PSAs and guest articles — that they can post on their websites and encourage them to also distribute to their membership via e-blasts and/or regular newsletters. We will also offer representatives from the state’s 56+

CVSOs and our other partner entities to come speak at one of their meetings about benefits and resources.

In addition, we understand that victims of sexual assault may be another unique group requiring special outreach. We presume that this group is self-identified and highly sensitive regarding confidentiality. They also likely do not subscribe to a common publication or website. Typically, using a broader net to reach such a hard-to-reach population might be the answer. However, we would not suggest placing ads or other information for general public consumption that “highlights” sexual assault in the military. For this reason, we are seeking the advice of the County of San Luis Obispo, the CACVSO and other stakeholders — as well as those within the military who specialize in working with victims of sexual assault — as to the best methods for reaching this audience without causing undue harm either to them, or to the military’s reputation.

Measuring Success

The first rule to measuring success is to define — up front — what success is. Based on the purpose statement of the RFP, we are defining overall success as “increasing the awareness among all veterans of the CVSOs and the variety of assistance available through them, and how and where to access those benefits through the CVSOs.”

In order to gauge the effectiveness of the above communications plan within the budget provided, we propose using the following metrics.

1. Overall Objective:

- a. — Increase awareness among veterans of assistance available to them through the CVSO's and how to connect with them to access benefits.
- b. Connect veterans to needed services/benefits

Measureable Indicator of Success:

- a. — Compare number of veterans that obtained services and benefits through CVSOs in 2011-12 vs. 2013, after our program is implemented (we also recommend that CVSO offices ask and make note of all of the places veterans say they have heard about services over the past six months);
- b. Conduct two Internet polls to our veterans list (before and after our Internet advertising)

2. Media Partnership Objective: Free or discounted airing of our TV and radio PSAs

Measureable Indicator of Success: Any airing of our PSAs among the media outlets we contact is considered success, as there are currently no PSAs running

3. Internet Advertising Objective: Increase awareness of services and use of benefits among veterans viewing our Internet ads

Measureable Indicator of Success: We will use the a) Impression rates and b) Click-through rates on our ads to gauge our success. These are ranked on a “better than typical” versus “worse than typical” scale.

4. Earned Media Objective: Increase interest by and coverage of veterans’ benefit issues by the media

Measurable Indicator of Success: Increased number of stories on veteran benefits issues in the media, as assessed by conducting a statewide Lexis-Nexis search of veteran benefit related articles during 2012 versus 2013 (after our program is complete).

5. Emerging Demographics Outreach Objective: Increase awareness of services and use of benefits by emerging demographic veteran groups, specifically LGBT

Measureable Indicator of Success: Acceptance of and/or agreement to run and/or distribute our materials/articles/information by LGBT (or other emerging demographic) sources. Given the somewhat sensitive nature of the LGBT (and other emerging) communities, we would not rely on the answer to the CVSO’s question “How did you hear about the CVSO or your benefits?” to be 100% forthright.

6. Social Networking Objective: Increase awareness of services and use of benefits by veterans (and their families) who use social networking sites

Measurable Indicator of Success: Specific question on Internet survey, as well as determined by CVSO's asking veterans all of the places they have heard about services over the past six months

Timeline

Jan. 27 – Feb. 7, 2014

- Gather and review all existing County, CACVSO, and CalVet collateral materials, survey research, statistics, etc.
- Begin 800# set up — scripting, database coding, etc.
- Schedule Message Development and Media Strategy meeting /conf. call with County, et. al

Feb. 10 – 21, 2014

- Finalize Message Triangle
- Begin creative concepts for PSAs
- Submit scripts for PSAs
- Begin developing/edits on general collateral materials
- Begin developing Media Partnership Kit
- 800# operational

Feb. 24 – Mar. 7, 2014

- Approve scripts for PSAs
- Identify talent and locations for PSAs

- Schedule filming for PSAs
- Begin identifying “emerging demographic” groups and contacts
- Begin identifying targeted publications for print advertising
- Begin earned media outreach
- Begin social media outreach
- Finalize and post general collateral materials
- Submit February Status Report

March 10 – 28, 2014

- Film, edit, finalize PSAs
- Produce Media Partnership Kids
- Schedule Media Partnership Training(s)
- Begin developing print advertising
- Begin outreach to “emerging demographic” groups
- Begin any targeted “emerging demographic” collateral materials
- Begin scheduling and holding meetings with targeted media outlets
- Continue earned media outreach
- Continue social media outreach
- Submit March Status Report

April 2014

- Conduct first (pre-outreach) Internet survey (tentative)
- Develop and launch Internet advertising (using existing PSAs)
- Continue scheduling and holding meetings with targeted media outlets
- Continue earned media outreach
- Continue social media outreach
- Submit April Status Report

May 2014

- Continue Internet advertising
- Continue scheduling and holding meetings with targeted media outlets
- Continue earned media outreach
- Continue social media outreach
- Submit May Status Report

June 2014

- Continue Internet advertising
- Continue earned media outreach, possibly use “Flag Day” as a hook
- Continue social media outreach
- Submit June Status Report

July 2014

- Continue Internet advertising
- Continue earned media outreach
- Continue social media outreach
- Submit July Status Report

August 2014

- Continue Internet advertising
- Continue earned media outreach
- Continue social media outreach
- Submit August Status Report

September 2014

- Continue Internet advertising
- Continue earned media outreach
- Continue social media outreach
- Submit September Status Report

November 2014

- Big re-launch and re-pitch of PSA to stations not already running it
- Big earned media push surrounding Veterans Day
- Conduct second (post-outreach) Internet survey near end of month (tentative)
- Continue social media outreach
- Submit November Status Report

December 2014

- Continue re-launch/re-pitch of PSA to stations not already running it
- Hard pitch of “heartwarming” benefits stories for earned media surrounding the holidays
- Continue social media outreach
- Submit December Status Report
- Submit Project Wrap Up Report