

Systems Approach Workbook: Communications Tools: Sample Key Messages

Why Key Messages?

Developing a series of key messages will help you ensure that all persons asked to speak on behalf of the project tell the same story. It will also help align messages in all your communications products.

The following are generic, overarching key messages about the Systems Approach that you can use as a starting point. You will want to refine these and possibly develop your own key messages as to why the Systems Approach is important in your jurisdiction and what your next steps will be.

Note: Your key messages will change and evolve as the project moves from planning to implementation. Therefore, it is important that someone is tasked with overseeing the messages throughout the project.

Reasons for Adopting a Systems Approach: The Rationale for Change

- The harmful use of alcohol and other drugs and substances costs Canadians \$40 billion a year, \$8.8 billion of which is incurred in direct healthcare costs alone.
- Substance use problems drive health and social costs beyond the addictions treatment field through contributions to chronic disease, acute injury and lost productivity.
- People face considerable gaps in service and barriers to accessing the help they need. Treatment works. The social and economic benefits of evidence-based services and supports outweigh the initial investment.
- *A Systems Approach to Substance Use in Canada: Recommendations for a National Treatment Strategy* was released in 2008 to improve the quality, accessibility and range of options to address harmful substance use. Treatment is one of 13 priority areas identified under the *National Framework for Action to Reduce the Harms Associated with Alcohol and Other Drugs and Substances in Canada*.¹

Add your own jurisdictional messages, with a focus on linking to priority issues that will resonate with your target audience.

About the Systems Approach

- The Systems Approach report was developed by a working group of more than 40 substance use stakeholders from across the country, including federal, provincial and territorial governments; First

¹ For more information about this priority area of the National Framework, see <http://www.ccsa.ca/Eng/focus/national/Pages/default.aspx>

The original template text for this file, as well as other useful material, is available in the Tools & Templates section of the Systems Approach website (<http://www.nts-snt.ca/Eng/topics/Treatment-and-Supports/Systems-Planning/Pages/default.aspx>). Production of this material has been made possible through a financial contribution from Health Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada.

Nations and Inuit; non-governmental organizations; academia; agencies and service providers; people who access services and supports; family members; and community members.

- The Systems Approach provides a framework for a comprehensive approach to substance use that reaches beyond specialized treatment services. Using a systems lens means looking not just at the component parts, but also at the interconnections between them.
- The Systems Approach report provides recommendations for improving the accessibility, quality and range of substance use services and supports through action in the following areas:
 - Developing a comprehensive continuum of services and supports;
 - Knowledge exchange and the promotion of best and emerging practices;
 - System measurement and monitoring;
 - Research advancing knowledge and identifying what works; and
 - Leadership and evaluation to move the recommendations ahead.
- A key recommendation of the Systems Approach is the creation of a tiered continuum of services and supports to improve care, coordinate services and make better use of existing investments.
- When implemented, the comprehensive continuum of services and supports for substance use problems will improve client outcomes.
- Based on common principles and guiding concepts that can be applied to any context, the Tiered Model is flexible enough to respond to the particular needs of Canada's jurisdictions and populations.
- To identify system strengths and gaps, the Tiered Model can be applied as an analytical lens at either the population level or the level of services and supports.
- A guiding concept of the Tiered Model is that people may enter the system through any access point (e.g., doctor's office, specialized treatment facility) and may move to a different level of service as required and without difficulty.
- The Tiered Model promotes a client-centred approach to services and supports, based on principles that include the following concepts:
 - No wrong door: A person can access services and supports through any of the tiers and coordination is the responsibility of the system, not the individual.
 - Choice and eligibility: A person should be able to choose among services and supports for which he or she is eligible.
 - Matching: A person should be matched to services and supports appropriate to his or her needs and strengths.
 - Flexibility: A person should be referred from a lower tier to a higher tier or from a higher tier to a lower tier as appropriate to his or her needs.
 - Responsiveness: As a person travels along pathways and through the lifespan, he or she should be given the help needed to shift the focus to services and supports in lower tiers.

- Collaboration: A person's journey should be facilitated by collaboration between providers of distinct kinds of services and supports, and should always include the person seeking help.

Steps Required to Implement the Systems Approach

Note: These messages should be customized according to the jurisdiction's plans.

- Taking a change management approach when implementing the Systems Approach will increase the likelihood of success and sustainability. For example, a key component of change management is proactively identifying possible barriers and developing strategies to prevent or overcome them.
- To apply the Systems Approach locally, we will be [identifying areas of the system that are working well and those that require improvement, putting together an assessment of requirements, exploring opportunities for partnerships with xxx, developing a strategic implementation plan, creating a Systems Approach liaison committee, using CCSA's online Systems Approach Workbook to help us identify next steps, etc.].

CCSA's Role

The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA) is undertaking a number of activities to support implementation of the Systems Approach at the jurisdictional level, including the creation of a web-based Systems Approach Workbook and the development of national treatment indicators, and leading a national knowledge exchange network called SystemAction. Please visit <http://www.nts-snt.ca/Eng/topics/Treatment-and-Supports/Systems-Planning/Pages/default.aspx> for more information.