



CAP TIPs is a series of periodic messages to assist in the planning and implementation of NCVRW Community Awareness Projects. Please feel free to send your individual questions or requests for assistance to Anne Seymour at [annesey@atlantech.net](mailto:annesey@atlantech.net)

## **CAP TIP #12**

### ***To Improve Public Awareness***

#### **How to Plan and Implement an Effective Billboard Campaign**

##### **Introduction**

Billboards offer a great venue for publicizing 2013 National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) and its theme, your agency or organization, and/or the services you provide that help victims and survivors of crime. Many 2013 CAP recipients included the use of billboards in their proposed public awareness activities.

Today, victim assistance organizations have the option of producing traditional billboards or electronic (digital) billboards, both of which are addressed in this CAP Tip.

With effective placement of billboards, literally thousands of people can be exposed to your message on a daily basis. It's important to remember that *you usually have only a few brief moments to impart a message that viewers remember!*

An effective billboard campaign involves five important steps:

1. Determine if you want to promote your message via a traditional billboard, digital billboard or both.
2. Determine the message you want to include on your billboards.
3. Determine the artwork and design you want to incorporate into your billboards.
4. Secure billboards at the best locations to meet your objectives, and at the most cost-effective rate possible.
5. Get your billboards up to promote NCVRW.

## Determine Your Billboard: Traditional or Digital Formats

Both traditional and digital billboards have the capacity to reach large audiences during the period they are up. Issues to consider include cost, location and potential number of people who will view your billboard.

Traditional billboards are static in nature, i.e., once your message is up, it cannot be changed without completely “re-doing” the message and artwork. However, such permanence results in a large, diverse audience who continually view your message over the designated time period.

Digital billboards allow for more flexibility, including the option of rotating different messages at different times. In “How Do Electronic Billboards Work?” published by Ezilon Infobase, the benefits of digital billboards are described as follows:

“This new concept for billboards has developed with the aim of attracting potential customers’ attention for a longer time span. There have been studies which have demonstrated that electronic billboards are more than six times more effective than traditional billboards, which remain static. The promotional message on traditional billboards remains the same with a fixed image, while the electronic billboard changes the image and message of the advertising, rendering the advertisement more interactive.”

The cost of digital billboards can *sometimes* be less expensive than traditional billboards, and requires only design, layout, message and the expense of digital billboard equipment. One challenge is that your specific message may be in rotation with other advertisements that have nothing to do with victim assistance or public safety.

## Determine Your Message

Your message will be based upon the objectives of your billboard campaign:

- Do you want to reach the most number of people possible?
- Do you want to target high-crime, rural-remote, or other specific geographical areas?
- Is your message specific to 2013 NCVRW, or more general in terms of victims’ rights and services or community safety?
- Would placement of a digital billboard in a high-traffic area (such as a police station or courthouse) help reach a more targeted audience than a traditional billboard on a street or highway?

It’s important to engage your NCVRW Planning Committee to determine your objectives, and then to make sure that the outdoor or digital advertising company with which you contract completely understands your objectives.

It’s also important when deciding upon your message that you *keep it simple*, and *limit the number of words* on the billboard. Professional billboard companies generally advise to limit your message to “ten words or less.” Digital billboards allow for more flexibility in messaging, but the “less is more” adage still applies. The most effective billboards are those that have a concise message, and offer a telephone number or website URL to contact “for more information.”

## Determine Your Artwork and Design

The NCVRW Resource Guide includes a CD with artwork which you may be able to adapt for use in billboards. The graphics are provided in PDF, JPG, and Adobe InDesign and Illustrator formats, although only the Adobe formats use vector graphics that can be enlarged for use in billboards. The artwork can also be downloaded from OVC's NCVRW website at [http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw2013/camera\\_ready.html](http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw2013/camera_ready.html). (The artwork is NOT available on the NCVRW CAP Subgrantees website.)

You should work with the billboard company to determine the most effective pieces of Resource Guide artwork that you can incorporate into your design, and/or to develop your own personalized artwork and design. Many billboard companies have departments that can help you with your artwork and design, or can refer you to a reliable local company that provides this service.

For traditional billboards, your artwork and design will depend on the size of the billboards you are renting. Typical billboard sizes are 14-by-48 feet; 12-by-24 feet; and 5-by 11 feet.

Some general tips for design of traditional billboards include the following:

- Find a partner and drive around your community and view billboards. Take notes about those whose messages are most powerful and memorable, and that incorporate designs and fonts that you like.
- Your lettering should be at least two-to-three feet in height.
- Listen carefully to the design advice of the “experts” at the billboard company or design firm, but also don't hesitate to speak your mind and offer your opinions! Make sure that you provide the company with a *written copy* of the overall objectives for your billboard campaign.
- Carefully review the artwork, design and lettering *prior* to having it displayed on actual billboards. It's helpful to have at least two people in this important review phase, and be sure that all *spelling* and *contact information* are correct!
- You should work closely with the outdoor advertising company and be very clear and concise about:
  - Your objectives and message.
  - Your concepts for the overall design.
  - Use of the 2013 NCVRW theme artwork or original artwork you provide
  - The theme colors you want to incorporate (the 2013 NCVRW colors are **midnight blue** and **orange** (please visit [http://www.ovc.gov/pdfxt/2013NCVRW\\_Palette.pdf](http://www.ovc.gov/pdfxt/2013NCVRW_Palette.pdf) for color palette)

For digital billboards, it is very simple to develop a message and accompanying graphic design/artwork using the camera-ready artwork in the 2013 NCVRW Resource Guide. You can work with the digital billboard company to determine its preference or recommendation for presentation software to design your digital message (such as PowerPoint), and it's fairly simple to eliminate the cost of graphic design by doing it yourself.

Some general tips for design of digital billboards include the following:

- Keep your message clear and concise.

- Use contrasting colors in your artwork and fonts (again, **midnight blue** and **orange**).
- Use fonts that are easy to read (the company with which you contract can provide guidance about the best fonts to use).
- Avoid using more than ten words per board.
- Recognize the capacity to “mix and match” messages, i.e., develop and design digital billboards that feature multiple public service advertisements.

**Former CAP recipients who conducted NCVRW billboard campaigns advise that:**

- It’s important to engage your NCVRW Planning Committee members in a discussion about the billboards’ message, theme and design. Get input and creative ideas from *as many people as possible*.
- The sample artwork included in the NCVRW Resource Guide is easily adapted to billboards.
- Consider using local leaders, such as your Attorney General, Mayor or District Attorney, in your artwork or message.
- Many billboard companies will work closely with you to develop your concept and design; meet your budget limitations; and in some cases, even monitor the amount of traffic that passes by the billboard.

### **Secure Billboard Locations**

You can easily identify outdoor and digital advertising firms in your area by simply typing “digital billboards, (city or zip code)” or “outdoor advertising, (city or zip code)” into any internet search engine. It’s a good idea to seek and secure bids from more than one company (if more than one is available).

Some considerations for location include sites that are:

- In high-traffic areas to increase the number of people who will view your message.
- In high-crime areas to target populations who can directly benefit from your message.
- In specific locations that can increase outreach to traditionally underserved or un-served victim populations.
- The most cost-effective in relationship to your budget.

In many communities, the placement of digital billboards includes both outdoor and indoor options (your local digital advertising agencies can provide specific information about their range of locations).

**Former CAP recipients who conducted NCVRW billboard campaigns advise that:**

- Negotiate carefully on both *location* and *price*!

- Ask the outdoor or digital advertising company if it has data on the amount of traffic that goes by a specific billboard location on a daily or weekly basis. This information will help inform your decision about location.
- Some outdoor advertising companies will work out a deal in which you pay for a certain number of billboards, and then they provide a certain number as a pro bono contribution (which requires documentation of their “donation” from a nonprofit organization affiliated with the NCVRW billboard campaign).
- Many outdoor advertising companies offer a discounted price for non-profit organizations (or a deal such as “buy one, get one free”), so be sure to specifically ask if such a rate is available.
- The more empty billboards an outdoor advertising company has, the more likely they are to negotiate with you on price and location. It’s a good idea to drive around your community and take note of the number and location of vacant billboards.
- Many empty billboards are located in high-crime areas, which offer an excellent venue for your messages.

### **Get Your Billboards Up!**

One of the most important decisions you’ll have to make is the *timing* of your billboard displays. Most billboard companies offer monthly rates. The timing of your billboard displays should be based upon the following considerations:

- If you are publicizing *a specific NCVRW event*, plan on placement that begins one month or two months prior to the event, depending upon your budget.
- If you have a *more general message* about crime victims’ rights and services, contracting for the entire months of March and April is a good idea.

Make sure you carefully review your billboards once they are up to ensure that they meet both *your contract and your expectations!* Again, ask in advance if the outdoor or digital advertising company can provide you with data that document the level of traffic that goes by your billboard.

### **For More Information**

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