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**Campaign:** Public Service

Weed Facts

Ingham County and Barry-Eaton County health departments

[www.knowtheweedfacts.com](http://www.knowtheweedfacts.com)

With the proliferation of medical marijuana use and legalization of recreational marijuana, health departments throughout Michigan were challenged with educating residents on safe and responsible use. Through competitive bid, both the Ingham County and Barry-Eaton County health departments selected Edge Partnerships to create an impactful public education campaign that accomplished the following objectives:

* Educate medical marijuana patients and others about safe storage
* Educate medical marijuana patients and others about the dangers of driving while under the influence of marijuana
* Increase perception of risk for adolescent marijuana use

The grant-funded campaign had to be researched, created and implemented within an aggressive six-week window between Aug. 1 and Sept. 15, 2019.

**Research**

While Edge understood the common perceptions – and misconceptions – related to both medical and recreational marijuana consumption, it was essential that we heard directly from area residents. More than 75 tri-county residents participated in three focus groups where they shared their thoughts on both medical and recreational marijuana use.

Focus group participants represented a broad demographic and socioeconomic range. The moderated groups discussed an array of issues and provided important feedback on campaign images and messages. The qualitative information gathered from the focus groups, along with county-specific data from the health departments, provided the foundation for the creative development and implementation of the public education campaign.

With this important research in hand, Edge was able to develop the most relevant and impactful content and graphics as well as deliver them on media that would reach the intended recipients.

*See focus group results in Supporting Materials*

**Planning**

With a very short timeframe of eight weeks from bid award to full campaign implementation, Edge greatly condensed its typical workplan. Health department representatives met regularly with Edge staff representing marketing, public relations, social media, advertising and design.

While all tri-county residents were targeted for the education campaign, Edge used a mix of traditional and digital media as well as earned media to reach as many residents as possible with a limited budget. Special focus was also placed on reaching adolescent teens to achieve the goal of alerting this demographic to the adverse risks of marijuana use.

Edge faced a unique challenge with using broadcast (television and radio) advertising due to FCC rules. While marijuana was legalized in Michigan, it was still considered an illegal controlled substance by the federal government. Thus, dollars budgeted for broadcast were reallocated to other media platforms that did not fall under FCC regulations.

Specifically, Edge allocated the $35,000 advertising budget as follows:



**Execution**

With two weeks to research, plan, develop and implement, Edge had to carefully orchestrate each campaign deliverable with the county health departments. The summarized workflow below provides an overview of activity flow and tactical implementation for the eight-week project:

**Weeks 1-2:** Client objectives identified

Coordination and completion of three focus groups (research)

Summary of focus group findings

**Week 3:** Creative development of all campaign elements, including design and messaging for each targeted group (print, digital, collateral materials, outdoor)

Copywriting for news releases, social media and landing page

Advertising budget and plan

**Weeks 4-8:** Execution of all campaign tactics

**Week 8:** Audits, reporting and evaluation

*See campaign elements in Supporting Materials*

**Evaluation**

The budget did not allow for pre- and post-quantitative research to determine changes in awareness and public perception. Edge used website, digital, social analytics and earned media as metrics for campaign impact.

The landing page, [www.knowtheweedfacts.com](http://www.knowtheweedfacts.com), had 646 unique users with 721 sessions between Aug. 5 and Sept. 15. The majority of users were Ingham County residents who accessed the landing page by mobile (56%), desktop (29%) or Tablet (15%). A digital advertising buy on the MLive network generated 65% of users while 29% came to the site directly prompted by calls to action on other campaign materials and advertisements.

The geotargeted MLive digital buy served 442,663 impressions and 501 clicks for an above-average CTR of 0.11%.

Although the Lansing DMA is a relatively small media market, the campaign was featured on television, newspaper and radio reports when it launched in August 2019. Since then, both counties have provided positive anecdotal feedback and, in December 2019, submitted proposals for additional grant funding to continue and enhance the campaign. Both the Ingham County and Barry-Eaton County health departments have selected Edge as their agency partner for the continuation of this public education campaign.

Of special note is the positive reception of this campaign by public health officials, marijuana users and area residents. This stands in stark contrast to a recent campaign by the Michigan Department of Community Health and Human Services which recently ran a campaign that maligned marijuana users, portraying them as “burnouts” and further perpetuating the stigma.