



2005 Advertising Campaign Key Messages

1. The goal of this campaign is to prevent the sexual abuse of children.

These ads focus on the person in the best position to prevent the sexual abuse of a child—the person who is having sexual thoughts toward or being sexual with a child.

To be effective, the ads need to speak to our target audience. These ads are based on research and have been tested with the target audience.

This is a ground-breaking approach that fits with Stop It Now!'s focus on preventing the perpetration of child sexual abuse and the important role of adults, including adults who have sexually harmed a child, in stopping child sexual abuse.

People who receive specialized treatment for child sexual abuse can and do learn to control their behavior. Minnesota is respected nationwide as a leader in successful treatment for sexual behavior problems.

Adults at risk of this behavior are often productive, well-liked and respected members of our community—fathers, brothers, mothers, community leaders, business people. This is a family and community health issue—getting help for people who sexually abuse children, the children they harm, their families, their communities.

2. The ads are based on extensive research.

The purpose of the research was to understand the target audience so we could craft effective messages that resonate with them so we can prevent future abuse.

The ads are hard hitting because our target audience said “be direct.”

The ads focus on five common themes identified in our research: fear of discovery; the feeling of being miserable and out of control; role of child pornography; incest; and clearly identifying sexual attraction to children as harmful.

The ads focus on the perspective of our target audience.

- A majority said they said they wanted to stop but didn't know how. They also said they were afraid to reach out for help. The ads direct them to our website and our helpline—where they can get confidential information and referrals to help.
- They said they felt “miserable and out of control” so the ads emphasize that with help, they can get control.
- The target audience said they felt alone and couldn't talk with anyone about their sexual feelings towards children. The helpline is a safe and confidential resource.

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- They said they needed to know that people who understand the struggle are ready to help. They needed to know that it was possible to change with treatment. They wanted the helpline to be a safe and confidential place to get information so they could take the first step toward ending the behavior.

The research is also being used to make changes to Stop It Now! Minnesota's program (web site content, helpline hours) and to develop public policy recommendations (policies that might encourage people to turn themselves in and stop the behavior).

3. We have community support for this effort.

Stop It Now! Minnesota is a collaborative effort. We worked closely with community stakeholders including survivors of child sexual abuse, law enforcement and corrections, treatment providers and victim advocates, to test the content of the ads.

4. We expect the ads to provoke conversations.

The secrecy and shame surrounding the sexual abuse of children makes it harder for someone to ask for help. We want people to know help is available and how to access it. Child sexual abuse is a source of painful family turmoil, and it is important for families to help prevent abuse by discussing the topic, even though it is difficult.

We understand that children may see the ads and may ask questions about the content of the ads.

- Our media placement strategy has tried to minimize the potential that children will see the ads.
- Our web site has tips for parents about how to talk to your children.
- Parents and survivors who participated in the research said that it was more important to end the secrecy around the topic than to avoid a difficult conversation—in fact, they felt it was important for parents and children to discuss it.

5. The ads are part of Stop It Now! Minnesota's comprehensive approach to preventing the sexual abuse of children.

Prevention is vital to protecting children.

We have educational materials and resources for adults concerned about someone else's behaviors towards children and for parents concerned about their children's sexual behaviors.

We provide workshops and training for professionals on what adults can do to prevent child sexual abuse.

We do research, like this, to identify policy- and systems-level changes that have the potential to reduce the sexual abuse of children.

6. We are realistic about the potential impact of the ads.

The ads are designed to reach people who know that sexually abusing children is wrong and who are feeling anxious and remorseful about their thoughts or actions.

The ads have the potential to provoke anxiety in people who have experienced sexual abuse. The ads were tested with survivors of child sexual abuse who felt strongly that the potential benefits of the ads (ending abuse and elevating the public discussion) outweighed the potential negative impact on survivors.