

# Community Outreach Campaign Exceeds Expectations



# Albuquerque

When the Albuquerque Coalition for Healthcare Quality in Albuquerque, NM, spent \$80,000 for radio and print advertising to launch a public information campaign about how to get the right care at the right time at the right place, it hardly expected to triple its projected reach.

But that's exactly what happened when the AF4Q Alliance's "Is it an emergency or an urgency?" campaign caught on in the Albuquerque media market. The program, which aimed to help consumers determine whether their medical situations warranted a visit to an emergency department (ED) or an urgent care facility, clearly struck a chord with the public and local media alike. Although the Coalition spent more than \$57,000 on radio advertising (about 715 spots), it received more than 1,700 free public service announcements—more than \$150,000 in free radio advertising.

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## Lessons Learned

- Work with a data analyst or workgroup to identify the best sources of data and how to ask hospitals and plans to release the information. After receiving the original set of data, it was clear we could have worked more closely with our analyst to possibly identify other data sources that were appropriate and useful to evaluate the potential results.
- Include primary care in the campaign. Kemp thought if they had done this, it might have created a more well-rounded campaign message.
- Don't reinvent the wheel. This campaign was created by a local public relations and marketing firm in New Mexico for another health system, so the Coalition obtained permission from the original system to use the campaign in the Albuquerque/Bernalillo County area and paid a fee to use already-developed campaign materials, which included posters as well as discs of materials that could be printed or placed in newsletters, or websites.

“There was tremendous uptake in the community with these free spots,” said Jennifer Kemp, senior communications specialist for the Coalition. “It’s clear the media thought this message was worthwhile.”

Additionally, the Coalition received unsolicited feedback from community members about the campaign, further proving that the media push was generating quite a buzz. In fact, the Coalition continues to receive calls and inquiries from the community about the campaign.

For example, after hearing one of the radio spots, the local Air Force Base Commander asked his medical group executive officer to contact the Coalition to get more information about

the campaign and how it might be used with Air Force Base personnel.

The problem at the center of the campaign: Even if they have insurance and a primary care physician, many patients choose to go to the ED for non-emergency purposes—often because they perceive EDs as being more convenient or offering better care. But in Albuquerque, a competitive health care market combined with a shortage of primary care physicians created a concern that treating non-emergency conditions in EDs could tie up resources for patients requiring emergency care. While no one wanted to keep emergency care from anyone who truly needed it, the Coalition believed it was important to help consumers make the distinctions that would enable them to get the “right care at the right time in the right place.”

“We identified a few ‘a-ha!’ moments,” said Kemp. “We discovered the community is very interested in this type of campaign, as evidenced by the media coverage and number of earned radio PSAs. We also learned health plans are not aware their nurse advice lines were not listed on the back of their membership cards. They realized listing those numbers was a small step they could take to help patients get the right care. Employers have seen the project as a way to reduce health care expenditures, and hospitals have supported it because they believe it is a way they can rally around something that will benefit all EDs and the community at large.”

The Coalition received funding for this project through a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation mini-grant for communications. Three local hospital systems—Lovelace, Presbyterian, and University of New Mexico—provided support by allowing the Coalition to employ their brands.

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