



# Marketing and Communicating Physical Activity Initiatives to Mothers



Marketing directly to and communicating effectively with your target audience is essential if you are going to attract them to your programs and services. When targeting mothers, here are some things to consider.

## Communicating Programs and Services

**Photos:** It is important for mothers to see themselves as well as children of different ages highlighted in graphics, photographs and illustrations. This helps normalize physical activity participation for the mothers and helps them understand that children/families are welcome. Ensure the photos show women from different cultures participating on their own and with children so that mothers can understand that different options exist. CAAWS' photo DVD provides a variety of photos you can use.

**Testimonials and stories:** Including testimonials and stories is an excellent technique that helps mothers understand what is possible by reading about the experiences of others. Be sure to include a range of testimonials from everyday women with a focus on how they have overcome challenges, how they feel as a result of getting more active, and how they have been supported by agencies, family and friends through subsidies or childcare.

**Describe:** Provide mothers with more information than just the time and place to help them make informed decisions. Outlining the expected skill level, social opportunities, what to wear, what to bring, childcare and/or transportation options, and available subsidies is helpful. Remember that mothers usually have to take many other things into consideration when planning for activities, so the more information they have the better.

**Communicate Solutions:** Anticipate any potential barriers that might prevent mothers from participating, and present positive solutions, activities or tools with contact information (e.g. available childcare options).

**Build capacity:** Developing effective marketing techniques and communication materials requires dedicated effort. Provide staff training on advertising, slogans, messages, social marketing and how to work with media.

**Provide information on Children's Activities:** If children and youth programs are taking place at the same time, be sure to include that in your marketing. Knowing their children have a fun activity to do while they are also being active is an added incentive for mothers to be active as it benefits the entire family, solves childcare issues, and makes them feel less guilty for taking time out for themselves.

## Spreading the Word

**Invite:** Instead of sending out generic flyers, invite mothers to attend (verbally or in writing). Being invited adds a personal touch and makes everyone feel welcome. It also allows mothers to ask any additional questions they might have before making the decision to commit.

**Word of Mouth:** Word of mouth is the best way to communicate opportunities to mothers. Peer recommendations carry a lot of weight, so encourage your current participants to bring friends or spread the word to others about your programs or services.

**Demonstrations:** Encourage mothers to learn more about your programs and services by offering free demonstrations. These taster sessions should be fun, interactive and include registration options so they can sign up right away if they are interested. Try combining adult and children's activities so that mothers can also sign up their children at the same time.

**Outreach:** To ensure your message reaches mothers, make an effort to go to them. Offer to speak at community or association meetings, set up displays in grocery stores, workplace lobbies and/or during well-baby clinics, and provide information sessions in prenatal classes, churches or community centres.

**Media:** Mothers access information in a variety of different ways, so plan to structure communications with this in mind. Develop communications for TV, radio and print; utilize local newspapers where possible as these are well-read; develop websites where information can easily be found; use social media sites such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter; and, send out personal invitations by mail or email. If possible, translate communications and promote available activities in the languages prevalent in your community.

## Marketing and Communications Partnerships

- Motherhood is a time that often mobilizes women to develop healthier habits for themselves and their families. Take advantage of this opportunity by linking with community associations or health professionals families frequent to encourage physical activity as a healthy option.
- Partner with media outlets to increase positive coverage of physical activity and sport involvement by mothers, highlighting how they have overcome barriers and the positive impact participation has had on them and their families. This will inspire more mothers to be active and increase their profile as active, healthy members of society.
- Work with partners to ensure materials are translated and distributed in many languages.
- Host health fairs with stakeholders from various sectors (health professionals, pharmacists, recreational workers, etc.) to communicate programs and services.
- Offer to be a guest speaker at events involving mothers and families.
- Develop and provide physical activity information (including how to register) to all stakeholders to distribute to mothers. Hearing the same message from different partners has an impact.

## Wording No Nos

- Use the word 'fitness' instead of 'exercise'. Women see the word exercise and feel it will be just like the gym class that they hated as children.
- Use words such as 'introductory' or 'learn to' instead of 'beginner' to describe skills development or classes for totally new participants. Beginner classes are often filled with experienced people that like the time or pace but are not beginners - this can be intimidating for new participants.

## Catchy Titles

- Mom's in Motion
- Strollercize
- Mom's Making the Move
- Mom's on the Run
- Diaper Fit
- Mommy and Me Bootcamp
- All-star Mommy Fitness
- Moms on the move
- Sporty Moms
- Stroller Moms

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For more information on CAAWS' *Mothers in Motion* project, please contact [caaws@caaws.ca](mailto:caaws@caaws.ca) or visit the website at [www.caaws.ca/mothersinmotion/e/](http://www.caaws.ca/mothersinmotion/e/).

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