

Case Illustration

An example from a well-known advocacy organization, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), presents a clear illustration. Since its incorporation in 1980, MADD has made dramatic progress in shaping state and local legislation to support traffic safety and victims' rights. Simultaneously, public norms have shifted so that drunk driving is no longer socially accepted and a robust infrastructure of local MADD chapters (more than 400 nationwide) stand ready to influence public policy. While deaths from motor vehicle accidents still occur at tragic levels, the percentage of alcohol-related fatalities has markedly decreased from 60 percent in 1982 to 39 percent in 2004.⁴ Can all progress in these areas be attributed to MADD? The unequivocal answer is "no." Has MADD contributed to these changes in public policy and social behavior? The answer is "yes, it is highly probable."

Armed with its mission to stop drunk driving, support the victims of violent crimes and prevent underage drinking, MADD provides a clear example of how intentional advocacy strategies aimed at effecting public policy and, ultimately, social change, can result in concrete changes. Growing from its origins as a grassroots advocacy organization, MADD carries out a multi-pronged approach to effecting change, including providing educational programs, lobbying, compiling and communicating credible and compelling data, developing local and state chapters, reaching out to youth, creating public education campaigns and monitoring judicial hearings. A review of MADD's activities suggests that the group's combined efforts, along with other aligned strategies and initiatives, have effectively contributed to significant changes, including changes in public knowledge, changes in public concern for the issue of drunk driving, changes in public will to address the issue through public policies, changes in the support of policy makers and increased capacity to advocate for policies that would prevent drunk driving. A simple theory of change model illustrates how MADD's efforts connect with the outcome categories advanced in this guide (see figure below).

Alcohol Alert. Scottsdale, AZ. ⁴ <http://www.alcoholalert.com/drunken-driving-statistics.html>. Retrieved December 20, 2006.

Theory of Change "Outcome Map" for Mothers Against Drunk Driving

