



# Before-and-After Messaging Guide: Messaging to Members

A research-based guide for NCA staff to engage member CAC leaders and staff using messages that matter based on their feedback

November 2020

## What messages matter to NCA member CAC staff and leaders?

NCA's 2019 branding and messaging project included quantitative research on the "value drivers" of key audiences, or the moral and strategic values those groups tend to report as being comparatively important to them. NCA developed before-and-after messaging guides for three of these key audiences CACs work to reach to drive them to action: Caregivers, both of clients and parents and family members in communities; Community Partners, meaning the professionals such as teachers, school counselors, pediatricians, and law enforcement personnel most likely to refer cases to CACs; and Donors and Activists, a broad category both made up of those who have personally donated to our movement and of those who have engaged with us in other ways.

NCA Members and their MDT affiliates (collectively identified in our research as "CAC Affiliates") have some attributes in common with Community Partners ("Professional Referrers" like teachers, law enforcement, counselors and doctors) in terms of their value drivers, but they have some key differences, so be careful to review the value drivers below. Importantly, NCA Members have their own unique value drivers that transcend their attitudes toward child abuse in regards to their relationship with NCA, where on the one hand we are their leadership network, but on the other hand, they are our clients. It's a special relationship with its own challenges and opportunities, and it's worth learning by heart what drives them, because it is the core of our mission.

### Critical messages to emphasize with NCA Members

For the NCA Members audience, the **Critical Drivers** that were rated as most important, and therefore effective, were **Expert Care** of children we collectively serve, meaning that we are as compassionate and expert as they are, and **Continual Leadership**, which shows that we are thinking ahead into the future and already working to make it happen. NCA Members told us they are primarily driven by messages you care about the mission as much as they do, and that NCA has the answers. Emphasize messages that show you and your team deeply care about what happens to every child they serve, and that even if you don't know the answer to their questions, you know who does.

Your "**Delighters**," messaging opportunities to delight and surprise them, include messages about our **Membership Benefits**, the material good we provide them, and our **Extensive Reach** that demonstrates their place in a powerful national network. These things aren't necessarily top of mind for them, but they tend to respond positively when we bring up related free resources they might use or mention impressive work happening in another part of the country and suggest beneficial networking connections.

Less effective messages to de-emphasize with NCA Members

Messages that are less effective, but that may be useful in certain situations, include those about our role as an **Active Convener** of experts and CAC professionals, as well as those about **Proven Outcomes**. They tend to care much more about the end resources than they do about who made them, and they know the CAC model works because they put it into action to heal kids every day. These messages are “**Expected**,” this audience considers these topics just a part of our work and aren’t likely to impress them.

Messages found to be **Unimportant** are related to our **Underserved Coverage** of populations that don’t always have their needs met. While these are not thought to be damaging messages, our hypothesis is that many CAC leaders simply feel maxed-out to serve the kids they are already reaching. However, as always, this is a leadership area for NCA, so while it’s not always going to be the most compelling messaging to generally forge better relationships with our members, there are times, as with our Tribal and Military projects, where it’s our job to convince CACs that they can and must reach new populations to achieve our mission to serve all kids. Use these messages appropriately and strategically.

About this guide

The messages below are based on both hundreds of survey responses from a national representative sample of these audience members, as well as on our three Voice Principles (Passionate, Collaborative, and Bold). The voice principles were developed by our Brand Positioning Project Steering Team comprising NCA, Chapter, Large CAC, Academic Institutional, and Philanthropic representatives during visioning sessions held in 2019.

This guide is not intended to be exhaustive in its coverage of every possible situation an NCA staff professional may encounter in working with a Member CAC, nor should it be used as an in-the-moment reference in one-on-one conversations where you don’t want to appear to be leafing through a playbook, but listening attentively. Furthermore, you know your own voice best, and hopefully, you know something about the audience member you’re trying to reach. The purposed of this resource is to help you more generally reframe your messages, speaking habits, and “elevator pitches” to this specific audience. With a little practice, and the principles in this guide, it should become second nature, in your conversations with key audiences, as well as in the materials you write and in the culture of your agency.

In this situation...	Instead of saying...	Try...
"I feel like you don't understand what we go through at the local level."	We have a different job than local CACs, and we all need to focus on our roles.	You know, so many of our team here at NCA are people who have worked at local CACs and Chapters at every level. And all of us, whether we've done direct service or not, care about this mission as much as you do. So tell me, what can we do for you?
NCA seems to be encroaching on our work as a Chapter/Regional/CAC.	Oh, we could never do what you do!	You are the critical response in your state/region/community. But there is only one national leadership network, and we want to make sure that every community has the resources and know-

In this situation...	Instead of saying...	Try...
		how that you have. How could we create a better common understanding of our roles?
"Sometimes I don't see the value of being a member of NCA at all."	Well, the resources we provide would be a lot more expensive as a non-member!	I can understand that, but I'd really like to help you get the most out of your membership. There are a lot of benefits you may not know you have access to. Let me share a link to our member benefits page and connect you with our Membership team to see if they can help you find something you need.
"I feel like we're in this alone."	Not at all! We're with you every step of the way.	You know, one of the really great things about being part of a national network like NCA is that we have nearly a thousand CACs working on every imaginable project and applying their own creativity. Can I ask around and connect you with another CAC/Chapter who's been through the same situation and might be able to help guide you?
NCA should go back to making direct guaranteed grants to members. / NCA doesn't need those resources, CACs do.	Hey, we have to pay our staff, too.	Our membership has grown so much at a time when overall federal funding has remained flat or down, that we made a strategic decision to make need- and project-based grants rather than issue smaller and smaller checks. At the same time, did you know the pot of federal funds we've won for CACs has nearly doubled over the last five years?
Member becomes abusive.	I'm sorry, we'll try to do better.	I can see you're very upset right now and it may be time to end this conversation and return to it when you're ready. When would be a good time to reconnect later this week?
"Hey, thanks for your help. It seems like you really do care."	Of course!	Truly. I know I don't see what you do on the day-to-day, but this mission is deeply personal for all of us. We don't hire people who aren't passionate about this cause. When we care as much as you do, kids win, and that's the bottom line for us.
CAC is under investigation / other critical incident	Oof, good luck with that and let us know if we can help.	Hey, have you filed a critical incident report yet? It's the only way we can get a full read on the situation and help you with media response, accreditation issues, and anything else you need. And it's required under your membership/accreditation agreement.

In this situation...	Instead of saying...	Try...
		Let me connect you with Membership to get that started so we can help.
"I can't find Xresource."	Oh, let me find that for you.	You know, since we moved everything over to NCA Engage, a lot of the resources people are looking for are in a big resource library where you can search them and find them permanently, or else we have them saved somewhere on the learning portal. Do you have an Engage account? Let me share my screen and walk you through how to locate these resources.
Doubts about the value proposition of NCA. <i>(This is seldom expressed in so many words, but you will see it come up.)</i>	Hey, you just have to have a national network. How would anything get done otherwise?	CACs are the community's expression of care for its children. We are the movement's expression of care for you, and we are here to support that vision and make that future come true. Just like when we dropped everything to put out emergency COVID guidance, or pioneered a decade-long drive to make mental health services just a normal part of the CAC process, it takes national leadership, but with this network you are a part of that with us. <i>(Specific examples of our indispensable role help here.)</i>