



**12%**  
 DECREASE IN DEATH  
 BY SUICIDE RATES  
 IN FRESNO  
 COUNTY



# THE FRESNO COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

WHERE HOPE AND HEALING UNITE

**Timing:** April 2019 - June 2023

**Cumulative Budget:** \$3,890,000

## BACKGROUND

The Fresno County Department of Behavioral Health (FCDBH) leverages its network of resources to enhance the health and well-being of all residents, whether it's raising awareness to end the stigma around mental health or promoting treatment

opportunities for substance use disorder. With nearly 75 funded partners spread out across the region, the Department maintains a thorough system of care to serve the diverse population in Fresno County. However, even though FCDBH financially supports a number of programs and services

across the area, there was little to no public distinction of how the Department was making an impact on the community. It was time for FCDBH to start making connections with the community by speaking directly to individuals with a unified voice to uplift and inspire people toward pathways for hope, healing, and resiliency.

## OBJECTIVES



Identify and analyze target audiences to drive insights and strategy.



Build on brand impact by implementing tactics to raise public reach and engagement, integrate and cross-promote messages, and ensure the Department is recognized as a voice of the community.



Increase public education and awareness of services provided by FCDBH with clear and consistent messaging aligned with the Department's mission statement and prioritizing mental health and substance use disorder wellness and recovery.

## AUDIENCE(S) REACHED

### All Fresno County residents



### Hard-to-Connect (HTC) audiences



African Americans, young people in rural areas, young adults (ages 14 - 26), LGBTQ (age 18+), older adults (age 55+), families and friends of individuals with mental illness, Hmong and Spanish speakers.

## WORK PERFORMED

### Qualitative Research

To better understand the needs, preferences, and demographic influences impacting our target audience, we began gathering and analyzing qualitative market research in the form of focus groups. Our team was able to facilitate a total of eight homogeneous focus groups (seven in English and one in Spanish) with 78 total participants.

The stakeholder feedback solicited provided a deeper understanding of how vulnerable, unserved, and underserved audiences think. We collected information on how they preferred to consume content, gauged their knowledge of and trust in FCDBH, and lastly, asked how they personally define mental health based on their unique backgrounds. These insights helped shape our strategy for a comprehensive communications plan and were later applied to our messaging and distribution tactics to reach vulnerable, hard-to-connect audiences effectively.

Not only was this research the cornerstone of our strategy, but it was also an ongoing measurement of the impact of our work. Over the course of three years, HYPHEN (formerly JP Marketing) continued to provide qualitative insights for both our internal team and FCDBH to reflect upon as our messaging and placement strategies evolved.

## Communication Strategy

To encourage clear and cohesive correspondence of FCDBH both internally and externally, our team established a communications plan. The goal for this tool was to establish a roadmap for how the Department would inform the community, staff, partners, and stakeholders of its involvement in programs and initiatives in Fresno County. It was to act as an approved reference for FCDBH to

guide all public-facing products and services, from websites and digital videos to signage, fact sheets, and business cards. Setting the standard for all FCDBH communications produced by employees, contractors, and other partners supported our goal of maintaining messaging continuity, preserving brand identity, and facilitating the timely and efficient use of any and all resources.

Our work on this plan started amidst the global pandemic, so it was vital that everything was relevant and ready to be implemented but could also adapt and grow based on their ever-changing needs. Therefore, the plan identifies practical and modern approaches to deliver messaging and maximize public outreach and participation.



## Creative Development & Production

Our research indicated a clear need to form connections directly with the community. We found that many people didn't know there were a number of resources supported by FCDBH available to them because they didn't know the Department existed, let alone why they existed. When it came to mental health and substance use disorder, there was a clear theme that emerged during our communication plan phase: hope and healing. When the community is rooted in hope,

anything is possible. That's where we started building the foundation of their brand identity.

We started with the bright green color that FCDBH had already started to weave into their branding, but we amplified it. We wanted to paint the county green, telling everyone everywhere about the mission of the Department of Behavioral Health. Fittingly, green evokes feelings of comfort, compassion, health, and wellness. It's also the international color for mental

health awareness. Next, our team formally welcomed the tagline "Where Hope and Healing Unite." Our Art Director isolated the word "Hope" and created a hand-illustrated typography that could be used seamlessly throughout a number of campaigns and branding materials. The script font style signified the threads of connection FCDBH works to intertwine through our community.

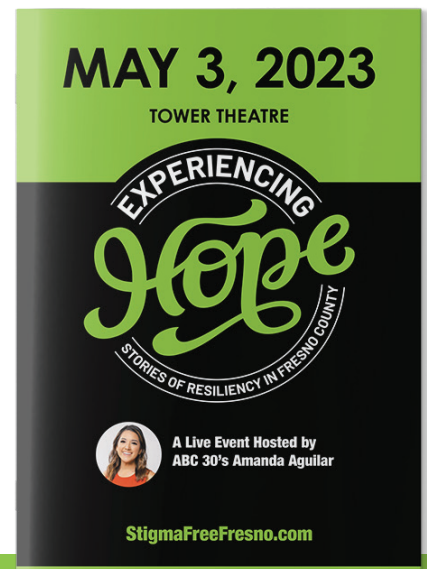


Now that we had all the pieces—color, typography, and a memorable tagline—we started to design a campaign specifically around awareness. These creative elements worked overtime to represent FCDBH on the public stage, spreading the word about the Department of Behavioral Health. Later on in our contract, we even introduced an airplane into the mix. We saw an airplane as a recognizable figure that connects people far and wide, similar to the work of FCDBH, connecting residents to resources. Furthermore, airplanes often fly around in plain sight, but when they're traveling around from place to place, they're rarely noticed. Last but not least, the airplane acts as a subtle reminder always to look up. From this point on, each campaign we produced would link back to their new and improved brand identity.

# DELIVERABLES

## Experiencing HOPE Event

HYPHEN (formerly JP Marketing) pitched this Ted Talk-style event as an intimate storytelling experience for members of the community to share their stories of Hope. Our team was in charge of planning, executing, and promoting this event with just a few months of lead time in order to tie in with Mental Health Awareness Month in May.



## Car Wrap

To further extend the awareness into the community, we solicited local car dealerships who would be willing to donate a car that we could wrap and have people take action by signing their support for suicide prevention. This car wrap was a tool we introduced to take our awareness efforts to the next level with a highly visible public engagement campaign that would raise awareness, provide resources, and normalize the conversation around suicide prevention.



## Sidewalk Stencils

Spreading messages of hope throughout the community, we created a chalk stencil to apply mental health awareness messaging to the sidewalks throughout Fresno County.



## Spoken Word Poetry with the Fresno Poet Laureate

Spoken word poetry has a certain cadence, emotional pitch, and a deeply personal connection. For Recovery Month, we used real stories shared with us throughout the country and integrated them into spoken word poetry. Throughout this process, we worked closely with Bryan Medina, the former Fresno Poet Laureate, to bundle those shared experiences and feelings into beautifully composed lines of poetry resulting in two creative industry awards.



# MEDIA PLANNING & BUYING STRATEGIES

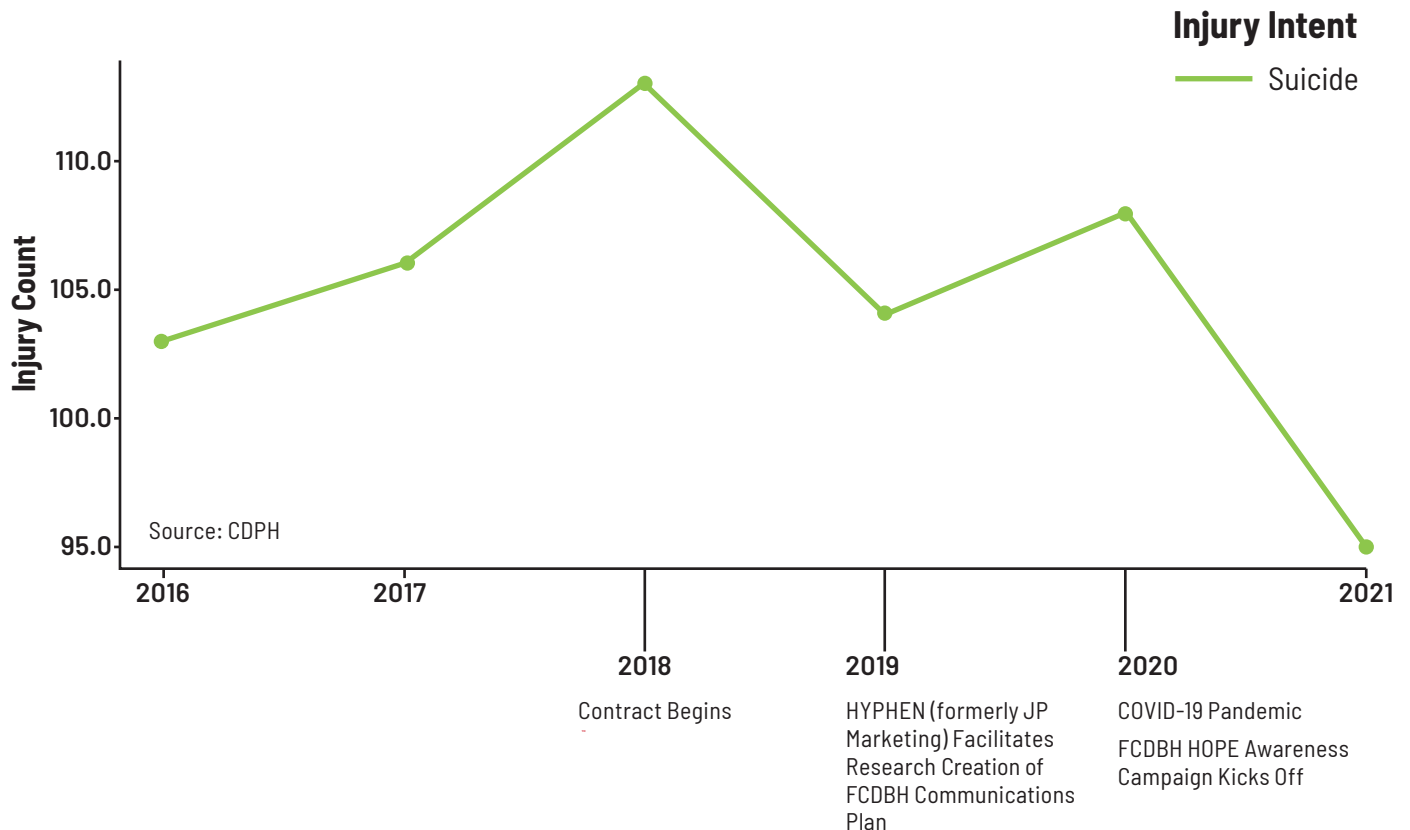
In Fresno County, our strategy is often a balance between traditional and digital media. Seated in a six-county DMA, non-zip code-bound media in Fresno County, like radio and television, often spills over into other counties. To reach more targeted demographics and connect them with relevant resources, we use the expertise of our digital media team to coordinate what makes sense for each individual campaign.

## Results Achieved

In each of our campaigns, we were able to generate millions of impressions, create opportunities for outreach events, and bring awareness to the services and support of FCDBH. However, it would be remiss of us not to mention the human impact of our work. The Department of Behavioral Health works day in and day out to end the stigma around mental health in Fresno County. They give residents hope for a better future. But don't just take our word for it, the story is in the data.

According to the California Department of Public Health, deaths by suicide are steadily declining in Fresno County. In fact, many counties statewide

experienced a spike in death by suicide rates due to the pandemic; however, Fresno County reported a five-year low at the end of 2021. It was during that time we were working nonstop to spread messages of hope and healing throughout our communities. We were encouraging people to make connections to valuable resources while we were all social distancing. Even though we know many of the factors that play into mental health are difficult to measure, we know for certain we are saving lives, and that makes it all worth it. Our campaigns brought brightness into the darkest of days.





“My team and I want to thank you for all your work, support, and efforts around our products. You and your team have worked hard and have really helped DBH shine and also help the public. You’ve done some outstanding work, and we are grateful for all your help. Thank you.”

Ahmad Bahrami, MBA  
Division Manager-Public Behavioral Health/Ethic Services Manager  
Fresno County Department of Behavioral Health