

# INCREASING USE THROUGH A DISCOUNT COUPON PROGRAM

A booster seat discount program has been a key component of the Washington campaign. Many families and organizations have called the toll-free hotline, visited the web site, or contacted us simply because we offer coupons. From 2000-2002, we offered a \$10 discount toward an Evenflo® low-back booster seat that was sold at Fred Meyer, a local retailer with stores throughout the state. This coupon brought the price of a booster seat to under \$20 – an affordable range for many families according to our focus group testing. In 2003, we began offering a new coupon, good for \$5 off any Cosco® brand booster seat sold at Target Stores, a national retailer with a statewide network of stores. The coupon allowed families to purchase a low-back booster seat for approximately \$12 and a high-back booster seat for \$25.

## WHY USE A COUPON PROGRAM?

Increasing access to booster seats is the most important reason for including a coupon program in a campaign. Even though some booster seats are priced affordably for families, the seats are still too expensive for many. Focus group research has shown that cost is one of the biggest barriers for parents. A discount coupon helps remove, or reduce, this barrier for low-income and middle-income families. Many families have told us that they appreciate the information provided on the coupon and that it made a difference in their decision to purchase a seat.

Booster seat coupons also help promote booster seat use by drawing attention to booster seats. The coupon encourages families to consider buying a booster seat. Doctors, child-care providers, and public safety officials may be more likely to distribute information to parents if they see a benefit for the family in the form of a discount coupon.

Because coupons attract attention, a discount program can help you reach more families with your message and educational materials. The reverse side of our coupons included brief information about which children need booster seats and why booster seats are needed. If a parent picked up only the coupon, she or he would still get exposure to our key messages.

A booster seat coupon also benefits your campaign by helping you build relationships with community businesses. When discussing a coupon program or when surveying the neighborhood to find out what stores offer booster seats, you convey to the store owner/manager that booster seats are important products to offer. If store owners know this, they may be willing to help you with a coupon program or with an educational program. Fred Meyer and Toys ‘R Us supported a number of car seat checks during the campaign.

Fred Meyer Coupon



Target Coupon



## SETTING UP A COUPON PROGRAM

Setting up a booster seat discount program is a challenging task, but the rewards for your campaign and for families are worth it. It takes time and energy to make contacts and build relationships with community businesses. It also takes time to sell your idea to the business and, if successful, design, print and distribute the coupons. Below is a checklist to follow in creating a coupon program for your community.

- Find out what stores sell booster seats in the community and where retail stores are located.** Are they accessible to the communities you want to help? Do the stores market to your audience and does your audience shop there? Do they carry a wide selection of booster seats? Are their prices reasonable so that a discount will be enticing and helpful for families?
- Determine what your ideal discount coupon would offer.** Consider the type of seats your target families need, what discount would be enticing, and how long the coupon program should last. Focus group testing can help provide some of these answers.

- ❑ **Find partners to help with the costs of printing and distributing coupons. Plan who, how, and when to deliver these to families.** The retailer may agree to print the coupons or another community partner may be able assist. Some partners may just wish to have their logo printed on the coupon in exchange for free printing services.
- ❑ **Approach the regional or corporate office of booster seat retailers and manufacturers about your program.** Write an introductory letter and include an executive summary of your overall program. Describe how the coupon program would benefit the communities you serve. Share how your booster seat education program can benefit the retailer or manufacturers. If a company representative is interested, provide a list of the key components of a coupon program. Many coupons involve a shared cost arrangements between the retailer and the manufacturer.
- ❑ **Arrange for booster seat educational information to appear on the reverse side of the coupon.** As discussed above, the back of the coupon is an excellent avenue for delivering your message. For families who do not receive other educational information, the coupon may be the only written information that they see.
- ❑ **Ask your company contact to educate their employees about the coupons.** To help this effort, offer to provide your contact with an information flyer that can be displayed in company workrooms. Provide them with booster seat educational materials in case managers wish to empower their sales representatives with knowledge. A knowledgeable sales staff are better positioned to answer parent questions and sell the right product.
- ❑ **Discuss how the company can help the campaign by providing redemption information to track coupon program and overall campaign effectiveness.** Raw sales data may be difficult to obtain as this information is often confidential. The retailer may be willing to share how many coupons were redeemed per store. Consider coding and tracking coupons by distribution method to determine which channels are most effective. Tracking codes may be an additional burden for the company, however, so this may not be possible.

- ❑ **Acknowledge and thank your coupon partner.** Issue a press release to recognize your partner's support in keeping children safe and send thank you letters. Ask coalition members to act as community ambassadors by thanking their local store branch.
- ❑ **Encourage coalition members and other community distributors to alert store managers about upcoming educational events that may bring customers to the store.** Retailers want to have enough seats to meet customer demand, and many stores do not keep large quantities of stock. Positive relationships also help if you need to smooth out any problems that arise or want to hold future events at the store.
- ❑ **Periodically check in with coalition members, community contacts, and families to find out how the program is doing. Also, check in with your company contact.** Provide updates to company contact on how the coupon program has helped the families in your community. Troubleshoot any problems that arise.

#### Tips to Remember When Developing a Coupon Program Partnership

- Be prepared to contact many company representatives before finding the right person.
- Be prepared with a quick summary of your program and how the coupon will help the company and the community. Your company contact may only have a brief moment to consider your proposal.
- Be prepared for the decision-making process to take a long time.
- Be prepared to negotiate and accept compromise.
- Be prepared for businesses to turn you down.