

Developing Key Messages

Use of key messages is perhaps the most important communications tool for defining, amplifying, and/or raising the visibility and reputation of your brand. When consistently used, the likelihood that family and consumer sciences (FCS) will be seen as one of the best resources for education and enhancing life skills greatly increases.

Key Message Platform

General FCS

Message #1: The family and consumer sciences field draws from broad and diverse disciplines to develop and provide the content and programs that help individuals become more effective critical thinkers and problem solvers.

Support:

- FCS encompasses a wide variety of areas including, but not limited to, human development, personal and family finance, housing and interior design, food science, nutrition and wellness, textiles and apparel, and consumer issues.
- FCS includes professionals from multiple practice settings and content areas. Professionals are educators, administrators and managers, human service and business professionals, researchers, community volunteers, and consultants across the nation.
- FCS has uniquely qualified experts across multiple practice areas.

Message #2: Through discovery and delivery of research-based knowledge, family and consumer sciences professionals help individuals and families develop essential skills to successfully live and work in a complex world.

Support:

- Studies and research projects are often conducted by FCS professionals and published in renowned journals, newspapers, magazines, and research periodicals.
- Studies conducted by FCS professionals help offer solutions to key issues of today's world, such as obesity, domestic violence, financial illiteracy and bullying, plus several other important topics.
- FCS professionals' projects include:
 - Obesity: Programs reaching more than 4,112,000 individuals (Ex: Fuel Up to Play 60; SNAP-Ed; Smarter Lunchroom Movement)
 - Finance Education: Programs reaching more than 1,948,000 individuals (Ex: Certified Personal & Family Finance Educator Certification Program; Jump Start Coalition)
 - Emotionally Healthy Families: Programs reaching more than 233,600 individuals (Ex: MASK- Mothers' Awareness on School-Aged Kids)
 - Military Families: Programs reaching more than 844,000 individuals (Ex: Combat Boots to Cowboy Boots)
 - Economy's Impact on Families: Programs reaching more than 749,000 (Ex: budgeting webinars)
 - FCS professionals' literary works and studies include *Adolescent Life Satisfaction: the Unforeseen Impact of Indulgent Parenting* and *LEAP- Love Eat And Play*, a longitudinal eating and physical activity study on the effectiveness of preschool nutrition and physical activity program once they move into elementary school.

Message #3: Family and consumer sciences professionals, researchers, and educators are uniquely qualified to handle every situation, and are located across the globe, with programs and practices that reach into every neighborhood and community.

Support:

- A recent FCS experts survey identified subject matter experts among 5 key topic areas: Obesity (28); Personal & Family Financial Education (27); Military Families (10); Economy's Impact on Families (18); Emotionally Healthy Families (16); experts available in 29 states across the nation.

Key Message Platform

Childhood Obesity

Message #1: There is a nationwide obesity epidemic, especially in children and teens.

Support:

- Childhood obesity has more than tripled in the past 30 years.¹
- 30 percent of children aged 2 to 19 are considered overweight or obese.²

Message #2: The obesity epidemic in children will lead to increased incidences of disease and illness in our children and will continue with them into adulthood.

Support:

- Experts say that if the obesity epidemic continues unchecked, the current generation of young people could be the first to live with more sickness and die younger than their parents' generation.⁶
- About half of overweight teens and more than 60 percent of obese participants had at least one cardiovascular risk factor, according to one study.³
- The number of teens in the U.S. with diabetes or prediabetes has skyrocketed in the last decade, jumping from 9 to 23 percent.³
- 70-80% of overweight youth become overweight adults.⁵

Message #3: As researchers, educators, and program managers with offices and outreach in every township and neighborhood in the country, FCS professionals are uniquely qualified to help.

Support:

- Congress declared pizza a vegetable for the purpose of school lunches, due to pressures from food industry lobbyists.⁴ This means that our children are eating calorie-laden foods rather than fresh vegetables, which contributes to weight gain in children.
- There is a lack of instruction in school about how to cook healthy meals. Because of this, children are more likely to grab packaged, unhealthy snacks instead of chopping up fruit or vegetables, which contributes to obesity.
- During the past two years, 24 states and five cities considered taxing soda; however, each of these efforts were dropped or defeated.⁴ So, children and families continue to drink sugary and calorie-heavy drinks that contribute to weight gain.
- FCS professionals implement programs like SNAP-Ed (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education), which helps to promote healthy eating and maintaining appropriate caloric balance during each stage of life; Smarter Lunchroom Movement, which transforms school cafeterias so healthy eating is easier; Fuel Up to Play 60, which promotes healthy eating and getting active for at least 60 minutes every day; and Food Friends, Fun with New Foods which helps children to try new foods that may be healthier.
- FCS organizations offer webinars about nutrition and wellness in order to educate individuals and families.
- In 2011, it is estimated that FCS obesity-related programs and services reached over 4 million people.

¹ <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/obesity/facts.htm>

² <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/trends.HTML>

³ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/21/teen-diabetes_n_1528665.html

⁴ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/04/27/us-usa-foodlobby-idUSBRE83Q0ED20120427>

⁵ <http://www.childhoodobesitycoalition.org/obesity.htm>

⁶ http://www.networkforphl.org/public_health_law_topics/obesity_prevention/

Key Message Platform

Obesity - Portion Control & Smart Snacking

Message #1: Many Americans habitually eat oversized portions and unhealthy snacks.

Support:

- A study showed that people tend to eat more or all of snacks or meals when confronted with larger portions, which can increase what they eat by up to 43 percent.¹
- Most marketplace portions are at least two times, and sometimes as much as eight times, greater than standard recommended serving size.¹
- American children begin developing unhealthy snacking habits as early as 12-months-old, with candy, crackers and cookies being the most popular snacks.²
- Snacking on fresh fruit has significantly declined over the past 40 years and has moved more toward candy, desserts and salty snacks.³

Message #2: The trend of Americans eating too large of portions and unhealthy snacks is leading to weight gain and contributing to the obesity of the nation.

Support:

- Snacking has moved toward constant eating and has led to the increase of total daily caloric intake by more than 100 calories.³
- Consuming an extra 100 calories from soft drinks and snacks every day, you could pack on an extra 10 pounds of weight in a year.¹

Message #3: Through its research, education and outreach programs, FCS can help reduce this trend toward unhealthy snacking and consumption of large portion sizes.

Support:

- FCS, through AAFCS, offers educational webinars about nutrition and health, such as "Nutrition and Hydration for Physical Performance: Guidelines for Teens and Adults" and "Food Psychology: Why We Eat More Than We Think"
- FCS professionals are often published in magazines, newspapers, and research periodicals regarding studies they have completed.
- Donna Matheson, an FCS professional, teaches obesity prevention strategies for children and focuses on factors like portion size.

¹ <http://www.mealsmatter.org/Articles-And-Resources/Healthy-Living-Articles/Portion-Distortion.aspx>

² <http://www.foodnavigator-usa.com/Science/Unhealthy-snacking-habits-start-early-Nestle-research-finds>

³ <http://www.foodnavigator-usa.com/Science/Snacking-study-shows-kids-eat-nearly-constantly>

Key Message Platform

Obesity - Health Costs, Life Span

Message #1: Obesity is an expensive and preventable epidemic that is costing Americans billions of dollars and could lead to shorter life spans and poorer quality of life for children of this generation.

Support:

- Treatment of obesity-related illnesses like diabetes and heart disease costs up to \$190 billion a year.¹
- Obesity is now the largest concern in terms of healthcare costs in the US, accounting for \$147 billion to \$190 billion in yearly expenditures, compared with \$96 billion for tobacco.²
- The US has shorter life spans than other developed countries, which many experts attribute to unhealthy diets and obesity.³

Message #2: The obesity epidemic is predicted by many to continue getting worse, meaning even more Americans will become obese and healthcare costs will continue to increase.

Support:

- The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate about 42 percent of the U.S. population will be obese by 2030.⁴
- It is estimated that the number of Americans who are severely obese, meaning more than 100 pounds overweight, will reach 11 percent by 2030, about double the current rate.⁴
- This obesity increase is estimated to create \$550 billion of obesity-related health care costs within the next 20 years.⁴
- According to experts, if the obesity epidemic continues unchecked, the current generation of young people could be the first to live with more sickness and die younger than their parents' generation.⁵

Message #3: Whether online or in person, FCS programs are easy to access through schools, universities, communities and neighborhoods. Through its research, education and outreach programs, FCS can help to curb the obesity epidemic.

Support:

- FCS programs like the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program through the US Department of Agriculture assists limited resource audiences in acquiring the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behavior necessary for developing nutritionally sound diets.
- FCS organizations offer several webinars on nutrition, health and wellness.

¹ http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/47211549/ns/health-diet_and_nutrition/t/study-obesity-adds-billion-health-costs/#.T8jFRNWudKO

² <http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/story/2012-05-05/childhood-obesity-tobacco/54745872/1%204>

³ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-14070090>

⁴ <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/health/2012/05/07/fat-forecast-42-of-americans-obese-by-2030/>

⁵ http://www.networkforphl.org/public_health_law_topics/obesity_prevention/

Key Message Platform

Emotionally Healthy Families- Cyber Bullying

Message #1: Cyber bullying is when someone repeatedly harasses, mistreats, or makes fun of another person online or while using cell phones or other electronic devices, and it is a reality through which many American children and teens suffer.

Support:

- Over half of adolescents and teens have been bullied online, and 10 to 20 percent experience it regularly.¹
- More than 1 in 3 young people have been threatened online.¹
- 97% of middle schoolers are bullied while online.²

Message #2: Cyber bullying can be emotionally, psychologically and physically detrimental to children and teenagers.

Support:

- Cyber bullying victims are nearly twice as likely to commit suicide than those who have not been bullied.³
- At least 12 suicides have been somehow related to cyber bullying in the past 10 years, although the exact number is not known.⁴
- Cyber bullying victims can have long-term effects such as poor academic performance, anxiety and loss of interest in socializing, aggression or violence towards others, depression and suicidal thoughts or actions.⁴

Message #3: Parents and professionals need help to deal with cyber bullying's effects. Left unchecked and misunderstood, cyber bullying may contribute to emotional instability and socially uncomfortable children. Through research, education and programs in schools, universities and neighborhoods nationwide, FCS can help reduce the incidence and impact of cyber bullying.

Support:

- Social media is increasingly pervasive and common, leaving more children and teens vulnerable to cyber bullying- more than 85% of parents with teenagers ages 13 to 17 said that their children had a social media account.
- Facebook is considering allowing children under the age of 13 to have an account, which is likely to increase cyber bullying as 9 to 14-year-olds are most commonly known as both victims and perpetrators.
- FCS organizations offer webinars on social media.
- FCS programs like MASK (Mothers Awareness on School Aged Kids) and CHW (Cyber Hood Watch) promote online safety and awareness.

¹ <http://www.bullyingstatistics.org/content/cyber-bullying-statistics.html>

² http://www.nrea.net/viewpdf.cfm?filename=NREA_Cyberbullying_Present_11_11_11.pdf

³ http://www.cyberbullying.us/cyberbullying_and_suicide_research_fact_sheet.pdf

⁴ <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=130248877>

⁵ <http://headdrama.com/article/life/18/9872/the-long-term-effects-cyber-bullying>

Key Message Platform

Emotionally Healthy Families – The Sandwich Generation

Message #1: The sandwich generation, which is fairly prevalent in the United States, consists of middle-aged people who are taking care of their children as well as their elderly parents.

Support:

- One study showed that nearly 10 million adult children over the age of 50 care for their aging parents.¹
- There are now some 50 million Americans, greater than 16 percent, living in multi-generational households around the country.²
- Since 1990, the number of multigenerational households has grown about 40 percent.²
- US Census Bureau statistics indicate that the number of older Americans aged 65 or older will double by the year 2030, to over 70 million.³

Message #2: Americans who are sandwiched between taking care of both the older and younger generations in their family often experience financial and emotional strain.

Support:

- Having parents and adult children move back into the home changes the family dynamic and decreases space and resources, which can cause stress and discomfort.
- Finances become tighter with the responsibility of taking care of more people, and this takes an emotional toll on the family.
- Adults care for aging parents at an average cost of \$324,044 in lost wages, as well as Social Security benefits for women and \$283,716 for men.¹

Message #3: Through research, education and programs, FCS can help families plan for the impact of being an extended household.

Support:

- AAFCS provides a financial education certification program (CPFFE).
- FCS organizations provide financial resource management webinars.
- FCS professionals offer literature on stress management.
- FCS professionals study and can offer assistance to families dealing with difficult economic times.
 - Lorna Saboe-Wounded Head, Barbara O'Neill, Beth Bell, Pamela Schulze teach courses in and/or study Family Resource Management and Foundations in Financial Management, families and financial issues, family economics, American families in poverty, family struggles in economically challenging times, etc.
 - Catherine Coccia wrote "Women in Midlife: stress, health and life satisfaction"

¹ <http://www.financial-planning.com/news/baby-boomers-retirement-caregiving-healthcare-costs-2673823-1.html>

² <http://www.dallasnews.com/business/personal-finance/headlines/20110610-more-elderly-parents-moving-in-with-children.ece>

³ http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/cb11-ff08.html

Key Message Platform

Economy's Impact on Families

Message #1: Families are experiencing increased financial strain and emotional effects due to today's difficult economic time.

Support:

- The median American household net worth declined 35% to \$66,740 in 2010.⁸
- The Pew poll showed nearly half of people who had been unemployed for more than six months say their family relationships had become strained.⁶
- A New York Times/CBS poll of unemployed adults in winter of 2009 found about 40 percent say they believed their joblessness was causing behavioral change in their children.⁶

Message #2: Continued rising costs of healthcare and raising a child, in addition to joblessness, make it difficult for families to maintain a stable life.

Support:

- Healthcare for a family of four with an employee-sponsored plan now costs over \$20,000, a hike of almost 7 percent from 2011, according to the Milliman Medical Index.¹
- Over the last 10 years, the cost of raising a child has increased 25 percent.²
- Families can expect to spend between \$227,000 and \$285,000 raising a child born in 2010, not including the costs of college or pregnancy and delivery.²
- The unemployment rate is hovering at around eight to nine percent.⁵
- Nearly a quarter of working-age adults are uninsured due to the high cost of healthcare.⁷

Message #3: FCS research and educational programs can help as increasing costs coupled with increasing unemployment make the economy incredibly difficult for individuals and families to cope. The programs help families deal with the economy's impact, thereby reducing the burden and likelihood that they might slip into more debt and have trouble recovering.

Support:

- AAFCS offers a certification in personal and family finance education that validates an educator's knowledge and skills to effectively teach personal finance education to America's youth and young adults. The certification provides parents and students assurance of the educator's competence.
- Despite the ongoing recession, more than half (56%) of adults admit they do not have a budget.³
- Investors say they are more worried about the financial situation of their children or grandchildren than they were last year, a sign of the still worsening economy.⁴

¹ <http://www.marketplace.org/topics/your-money/makin-money/family-health-care-costs-breach-20000>

² <http://www.cnn.com/id/46797268>

³ <http://www.nfcc.org/newsroom/FinancialLiteracy/files2012/FLS2012FINALREPORT0402late.pdf>

⁴ <http://visual.ly/financial-literacy-2012>

⁵ <http://www.businessweek.com/ap/2012-05/D9V3MFT00.htm>

⁶ <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/08/magazine/08FOB-wwln-t.html>

⁷ http://money.cnn.com/2011/09/13/news/economy/census_bureau_health_insurance/index.htm

⁸ <http://money.cnn.com/2012/06/19/news/economy/net-worth-housing/index.htm>

Key Message Platform

Personal & Family Financial Education

Message #1: The high unemployment rate, ongoing recession, and high cost of living make it important to have a solid financial education.

Support:

- The average American household has a credit-card debt of nearly \$10,700.³
- In 2011, the average college student graduated with \$27,700 in debt.⁴
- 23.4 percent of families surveyed at the end of 2011 say they have no savings at all, due to bills and debt.⁵
- FCCLA is a student leadership organization that offers a Financial Fitness program that helps students make, save and spend their money wisely.

Message #2: Financial education has not been a priority in the education of most Americans, thus making many people financially illiterate and vulnerable to financial hardship.

Support:

- More than half (56%) of adults admit they do not have a budget.¹
- 42% of adults give themselves a grade of C, D, or F on their knowledge of personal finance.¹
- In some states, students are required to take a full-semester course devoted to personal finance education in order to graduate. Other states require students to have personal finance education incorporated into other coursework. Currently, more than half of the states do not have a statewide financial education requirement.²

Message #3: With its capacity for research, education and program development, FCS is helping the nation to overcome financial illiteracy and preparing them to lead a healthy, sustainable life.

Support:

- AAFCS offers a certification in personal and family finance education that validates an educator's knowledge and skills to effectively teach personal finance education to America's youth and young adults. The certification provides parents and students assurance of the educator's competence.
- AAFCS offers several webinars that aim to boost financial education, including *Budgeting and Debt Management: An FCS Approach* and *IRAs and Mutual Funds: How to Build Wealth for a Secure Future*, among others.

¹ <http://www.nfcc.org/newsroom/FinancialLiteracy/files2012/FLS2012FINALREPORT0402late.pdf>

² http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/28/financial-literacy-high-school_n_1384946.html?view=print&comm_ref=false

³ <http://money.cnn.com/magazines/moneymag/money101/lesson9/index.htm>

⁴ http://www.boston.com/business/personalfinance/articles/2012/05/27/heavy_student_debt_and_tough_job_market_how_can_students_manage/

⁵ <http://www.usatoday.com/money/perfi/credit/story/2012-05-11/american-families-dealing-with-debt/54946154/1>

Key Message Platform

Military Families- Unemployment

Message #1: Military veterans returning from war are coming home to find that they cannot obtain a job to support themselves and their families.

Support:

- 29 percent of the youngest military veterans home from Iraq and Afghanistan are unemployed.¹
- 20 percent of New Yorkers sleeping on the streets are veterans, according to NYC Department of Homeless Services.¹
- 60 percent of human resource managers and recruiters say they are hesitant to hire military personnel because they aren't sure military skills can transfer to an office setting.²
- Obama signed the "VOW to Hire Heroes Act" which provides business that hire veterans with a tax credit, in order to motivate businesses to hire veterans.⁴
- The First Lady and Dr. Biden created Joining Forces, which is a national initiative geared toward getting Americans to support military veterans and families through education, employment and more.⁵
- The White House has created many programs and initiatives aimed at helping veterans become better prepared to enter the civilian work force.⁴

Message #2: The veteran unemployment problem is expected to get much worse.

Support:

- The defense department plans to cut military ranks by some 123,900 soldiers over the next five years.³
- Experts say unemployment numbers are likely to grow as hundreds of thousands separate from the military over the next five years.²

Message #3: FCS can provide support and resources to military families looking for assistance in searching for jobs and managing debt.

Support:

- AAFCS offers a certification in personal and family finance education that validates an educator's knowledge and skills to effectively teach personal finance education to America's youth and young adults. The certification provides parents and students assurance of the educator's competence.
- FCS organizations offer several webinars that aim to boost financial education, including *Budgeting and Debt Management: An FCS Approach* and *IRAs and Mutual Funds: How to Build Wealth for a Secure Future*, among others.
- *Combat Boots to Cowboy Boots* is a University of Nebraska - Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture (NCTA) program designed to assist eligible military personnel, their families and armed forces veterans to become Farmers, Ranchers, and Business Entrepreneurs in their next careers.

¹ http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/keeping-veterans-off-the-unemployment-rolls/2012/05/06/gIOA5xoY6T_story.html

² <http://www.usatoday.com/money/economy/story/2012-05-06/veterans-job-hunting/54646288/1>

³ http://blogs.payscale.com/salary_report_kris_cowan/2012/03/unemployment-rates-veterans.html

⁴ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/veterans>

⁵ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/joiningforces/about>

Key Message Platform

Military Families- Vet-friendly Campuses

Message #1: Veterans returning from military service want to go to college, but they have unique needs and may require special assistance.

Support:

- More than half a million soldiers, vets, and veteran dependents are taking post-secondary courses.¹
- Rusty academic skills, family responsibilities, and a feeling of alienation from younger classmates make it difficult for veterans to succeed on campus.²
- Some colleges and universities are opening centers specifically for veterans to find assistance with military benefits, counseling and career planning.¹

Message #2: Many veterans go to schools that are either not veteran-friendly or claim to be veteran-friendly but do not really offer assistance. Because of this, they often end up dropping out because they do not know how to navigate college without guidance.

Support:

- Drop-out rates for veterans at one college studied was 69 percent.²
- In April, Obama signed an executive order that attempts to decrease the misleading tactics used by colleges to lure veterans and to enforce greater transparency on important statistics such as graduation rates.³

Message #3: FCS professionals are working to provide assistance to veterans going to school.

Support:

- FCS organizations offer webinars that can help teachers better prepared to work with veteran students who do not fall into the typical college student role, including "How to Engage Students and Maximize Learning" and "Diversity 101: Practical Insights into Managing Differences."

¹ <http://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2012/05/18/report-veterans-go-to-college-but-face-challenges>

² <http://www.usatoday.com/news/military/story/2012-05-29/veterans-college-education/55267084/1>

³ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/23/veteran-college-rankings_n_1540206.html

Key Message Platform

Military Families- Domestic Violence

Message #1: Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is one of the prime causes of veteran violence at home, making vets three times more likely to be aggressive toward their female partners. ¹

Support:

- 50 percent of veterans with PTSD commit wife-battering and family violence. ²
- According to a Yale study, combat vets were more than four times more likely to have abused a spouse or partner as other men. ³

Message #2: PTSD, which oftentimes leads to domestic violence, is considered a growing epidemic as the numbers of veterans suffering from this disorder continues to increase.

Support:

- More than 31 percent of veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan suffer from PTSD. ⁵
- The number of veterans who are going to VA hospitals for PTSD is increasing more than five percent per quarter. ⁴
- As many as 800,000 veterans suffer from PTSD. ⁶
- In the past year alone the number of diagnosed cases in the military jumped 50%, and that doesn't take into consideration all of the cases out there that have not been diagnosed. ⁷

Message #3: Domestic violence, specifically by combat veterans, is an increasingly prominent issue and FCS professionals are leading community-based programs that will educate families and individuals so that abuse can be identified and stopped.

Support:

- Evidence shows that therapy is helpful in the recovery from PTSD by helping veterans recognize and better manage and cope with emotions of aggression, anger and violence. ⁸ Counseling, which is a segment of the FCS field, can offer such therapy.
- Children who witness or experience domestic abuse are more likely to continue the cycle of violence and become violent themselves.
- FCS organizations offer webinars on improving marriages and relationships.
- Kansas State offers a program that helps veterans and their families with conflicts due to PTSD, deployment and unemployment, to name just a few.

¹ <https://www.commondreams.org/headline/2012/01/20-1>

² <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2010/09/25/ptsd-and-domestic-abuse-husbands-who-bring-the-war-home.html>

³ http://www.nccafv.org/combat_vets.htm⁴ <http://visual.ly/financial-literacy-2012>

⁴ <http://www.usatoday.com/news/military/story/2011-11-29/PTSD-cases-rise/51476604/1>⁶

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/08/magazine/08FOB-wwln-t.html>

⁵ <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/magazine/issues/winter09/articles/winter09pg10-14.html>

⁶ <http://thinkprogress.org/security/2011/06/27/255231/ptsd-awareness-day-5-ways-ptsd-hurts-u-s-soldiers/?mobile=nc>

⁷ <http://winoverptsd.com/wp/tag/combat-veteran-ptsd-statistics/>

⁸ <http://bjp.rcpsych.org/content/177/2/144.full>

⁹ <http://www.pbs.org/kued/nosafeplace/studyg/domestic.html>