

TAG! YOU'RE IT: HOW BIG TOBACCO SHIFTS BLAME BACK ONTO THE PUBLIC

Presented by Lissy C. Friedman, JD

Senior Staff Attorney

Public Health Advocacy Institute

Northeastern University School of Law, Boston, MA

Supported by the American Legacy Foundation & the National Cancer Institute

Tuesday, June 29, 2010

The Public Health Advocacy Institute is a non-profit public health and tobacco control legal research organization located at Northeastern University School of Law in Boston.

Agenda

- Use of Corporate Social Responsibility and Personal Responsibility Rhetoric:
 - ▣ “Youth Smoking Prevention” Campaigns
 - ▣ Secondhand Smoke “Accommodation Strategy”
 - ▣ Smoking Cessation & Smokeless Tobacco
- Additional Resources (Issue Briefs)
- Question and Answer Period

Research Objectives



- Examine internal tobacco industry documents for evidence of:
 - ▣ The strategic use of corporate social responsibility (CSR) rhetoric and initiatives
 - ▣ How CSR tactics influence and interact with themes of individual personal responsibility

Standard Tobacco Industry Argument



- We are a law-abiding industry
- We make a legal product
- Therefore we have the right to exist and continue business as usual

<http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/zjx92a99>

3/29/99

The Industry's Image Problem



“the tobacco industry is seen as the worst in fulfilling its responsibility to society,” and “[PM] is already seen as being among the least socially responsible . . . companies . . . in the United States.”

-2001 PM Survey

<http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/kuf31c00> (emphasis added)

08/21/01

Even Smokers Hate the Tobacco Companies

When surveyed, smokers, former smokers and never-smokers:

- ▣ mistrust the tobacco companies
- ▣ felt that they lied and were motivated solely by profits
- ▣ did not buy the companies' CSR efforts

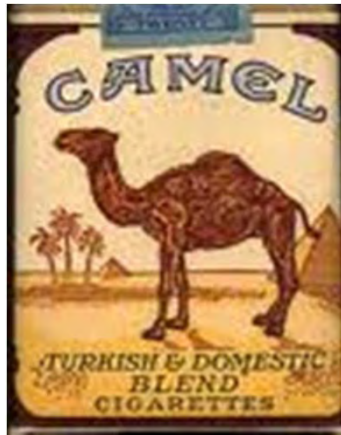
-2000 PM Survey Report

<http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/npb06c00>

2/29/00

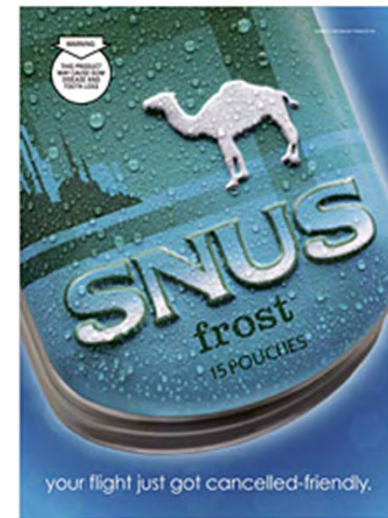


Trying to Build A Better Corporate Image



THE STRATEGY:

- Emphasize corporate responsibility
- Convince public “we’ve changed”
- Counteract old perceptions



Lack of Normalcy Has Serious Consequences

“our products will become relegated to the same position in society as condoms and pornography – sold in plain wrappers from under the counter.”

-1995 PM Sr. VP speech warning PM that it needed to normalize tobacco products,

<http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/avt18d00>

10/29/95



Corporate Normalization



“... at the end of the day, we want to be seen as a normal corporation, one with legal, regulatory and public opinion challenges to be sure, but with challenges that are manageable and do not threaten the legitimacy of the company.”

-2001 speech by Steve Parrish, PM Sr. VP of Corp. Affairs, describing the company's goal of achieving “corporate normalcy,” <http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/wmr82c00> (2001)

Tobacco Industry Denormalization

Denormalization uses counter-marketing and intervention efforts to:

- remove the legitimacy and normality garnered by tobacco industry CSR efforts
- generate support for additional tobacco regulation and tobacco control interventions

truth



-American Legacy Foundation truth® counter-marketing campaign. Available at <http://www.thetruth.com/shards/>.

Personal Responsibility: A Winner for Big Tobacco



- The industry uses buzz words and phrases like:
 - “personal responsibility”
 - “free and informed choice”
 - “individual choice”

Personal Responsibility: A Source of “Good Will”

“freedom of choice and free enterprise are particularly salient examples of areas where there is some residual of goodwill among the public.”



-2000 PM survey,

<http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/npb06c00>

2/29/00

Using CSR & Personal Responsibility to Blame the Public

Big tobacco has used personal responsibility rhetoric in 3 major CSR efforts to shift blame onto the public and consumers:



- “Youth Smoking Prevention”
- Secondhand Smoke “Accommodation Strategy”
- Smoking Cessation Campaigns

“Youth Smoking: It’s Not Our Fault!”

Tobacco industry “youth smoking prevention” programs say that the problem of youth smoking stems from:

- ▣ Bad parenting
- ▣ Peer pressure



Tobacco:
Helping Youth
Say No

A Parent's Guide to
Helping Teenagers Cope With
Peer Pressure



Common YSP Themes

- Smoking is a legitimate choice
- Use of overt and subliminal messages which glamorize smoking
- Smoking portrayed as an adult activity, creating a “forbidden fruit” image
- Programs are purposely ineffective



Presenting Smoking As a Choice



- PM' s “Think. Don' t Smoke.” YSP Program sought to “[r]einforce each teen' s ability to make his or her own decisions.”

-2000 PM Internal Memo

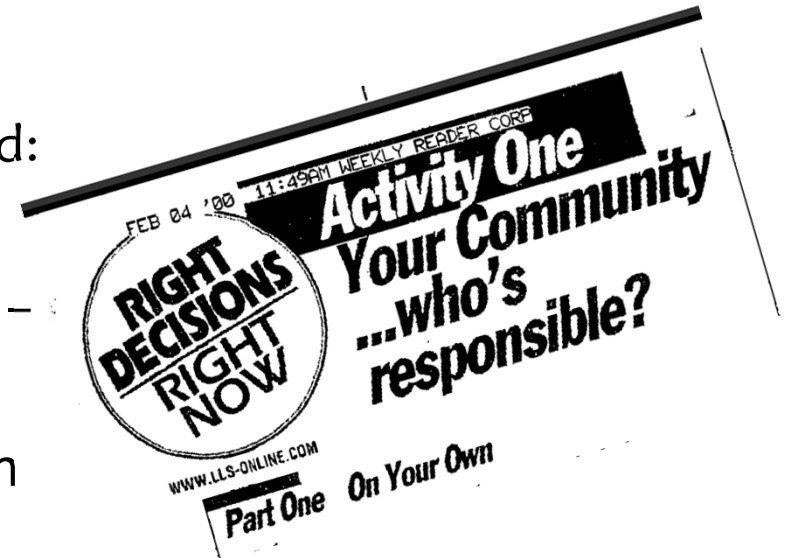
<http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/iwo02c00> (2000)

- RJR' s YSP “Right Decisions, Right Now” curriculum included the discussion topic: “whether there should be rules about [] things or if they should be left up to the individual students to decide.”

<http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/ave82a00>. 1/10/00

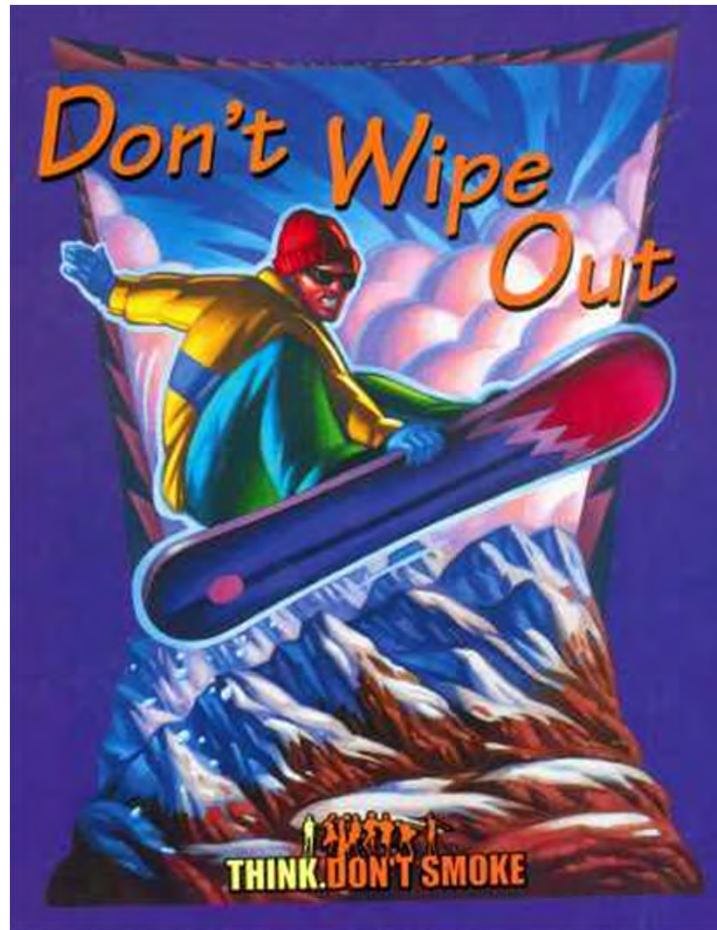
Focus on Youth Responsibility, Not Corporate Responsibility

- The teacher's guide to the RJR's "Right Decisions, Right Now" curriculum stated:
 - "This study guide . . . focuses on responsibility - defining it and giving students a solid foundation on which to form their own attitudes and actions. Too often, young people associate the concept of responsibility with blame"



- <http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/ghn20d00> (2000)

Subliminal Messages That Glamorize Smoking



“Forbidden Fruit” -- Smoking As An Adult Activity



- Lorillard continued its “Tobacco Is Whacko If You’re a Teen” campaign after receiving feedback from teens that the slogan was:
 - Confusing
 - Alienating
 - A further inducement to smoke

Purposely Ineffective YSP Programs

- PM's "Think. Don't Smoke." effectiveness evaluation focused on:
 - ▣ whether the youths who saw its commercials understood that the slogan "Think. Don't Smoke." meant "don't smoke."
 - ▣ not on the program's overall effectiveness to reduce youth smoking

- The American Legacy Foundation study found:
 - ▣ PM failed to evaluate its program for effectiveness in reducing youth smoking
 - ▣ PM's program might serve to dilute Legacy's truth© campaign's more successful approach.
 - ▣ As a result of the study, Philip Morris stopped airing its "Think. Don't Smoke." advertisements.

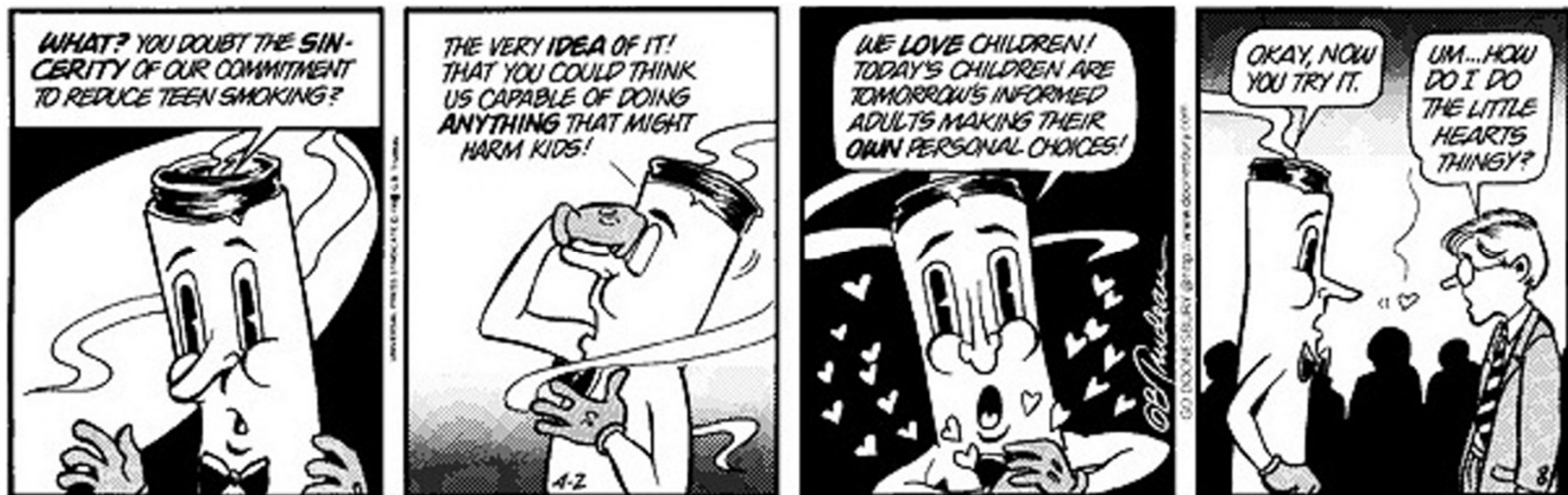
YSP Programs FAIL the Smell Test

- “[F]or no aspect of the tobacco issue are the motives of tobacco companies more suspect than the issue of underage smoking.”
- Survey results showed that the public suspected the industry of engaging in “reverse psychology” to encourage more kids to smoke.

-2000 PM survey of smokers and non-smokers
<http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/npb06c00>
2/29/00



Big Tobacco *LOVEs* Young People



© Doonesbury by Garry Trudeau

Hat tip to Josh Boyd, Organizational rhetoric doomed to fail: R.J. Reynolds and the principle of the oxymoron. *Western Journal of Communication*. 2004;68(1):45-71.

Secondhand Smoke Is Dangerous . . . for the tobacco companies.

↓ Declining Social Acceptability of Smoking =
Decline in Sales

↓ Harm to non-smokers from SHS takes away
traditional “freedom of choice” argument

↓ Fewer Smokers + Fewer Places to Smoke =
Declining Profits

Can't we all just get along?



- Big Tobacco's "Accommodation Strategy:"
 - Accommodation and courtesy can address SHS concerns
 - No regulation is needed
 - Smokers and non-smokers just need to communicate better



Options

PHILIP MORRIS USA

*Finding balance and comfort for both
non-smokers and smokers*

A Brave New Vocabulary

TRENDS IN ACCOMMODATION

2071428004

SHS Health Harms = Annoyance

Blowing Smoke Around = Ventilation

Smokers = The Oppressed Minority

Anti-Smoking Advocates = Militants

Everyone Else Needs To Be More Responsible!

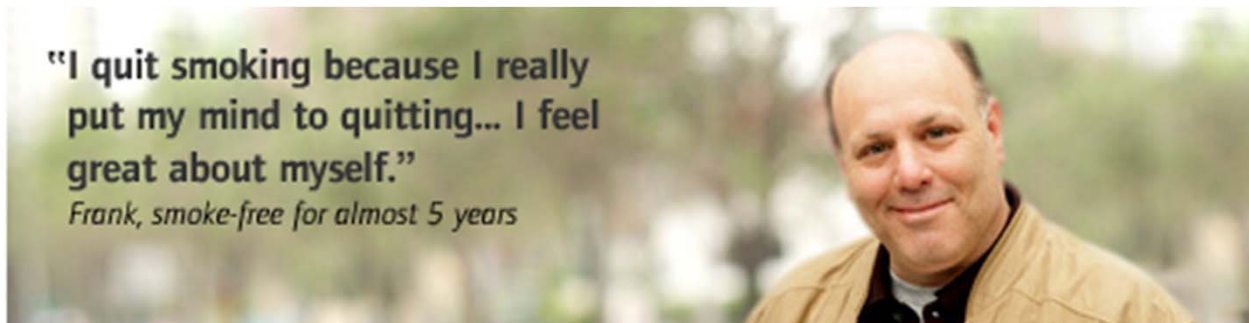
ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS

2071428006

- The “Accommodation Strategy” shifts the burden of responsibility away from tobacco companies and onto others:
 - Emphasizes negotiation between smokers and non-smokers
 - No need to make cigarettes less toxic
 - Puts the onus on the hospitality industry to install ineffective and costly ventilation systems

We wish you could quit us . . .

- PM's "Societal Alignment" strategy includes a smoking cessation program called "QuitAssist."
- PM hopes "QuitAssist" will help it seem like an enlightened and altruistic company, but continues to emphasize personal responsibility, not corporate responsibility.



. . . but not too many of you!

- PM counts on few people being able to quit.
- Downplays medical interventions to quit to avoid emphasizing the pharmacological effect of cigarettes.
- Uses confusing domain name:
www.philipmorrisusa.com vs. www.quitassist.com



Can't Quit? Go Smokeless!

THE STRATEGY:

- Acquire smokeless tobacco companies
- Put smokeless tobacco on a “continuum of risk”
- Promote smokeless as an alternative to quitting
- Promote “dual use consumption” of smokeless tobacco and cigarettes



We've Seen This Before!



**Considering
all I'd heard,
I decided to
either quit
or smoke True.
I smoke True.**

**The low tar, low nicotine cigarette.
Think about it.**

Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined
That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health.
1974

King Regular: 11 mg. "tar", 0.7 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette. FTC Health Warn. 75.
"lg", 0.7 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette. FTC Health Warn. 75.

© 1974 Philip Morris Inc.

149

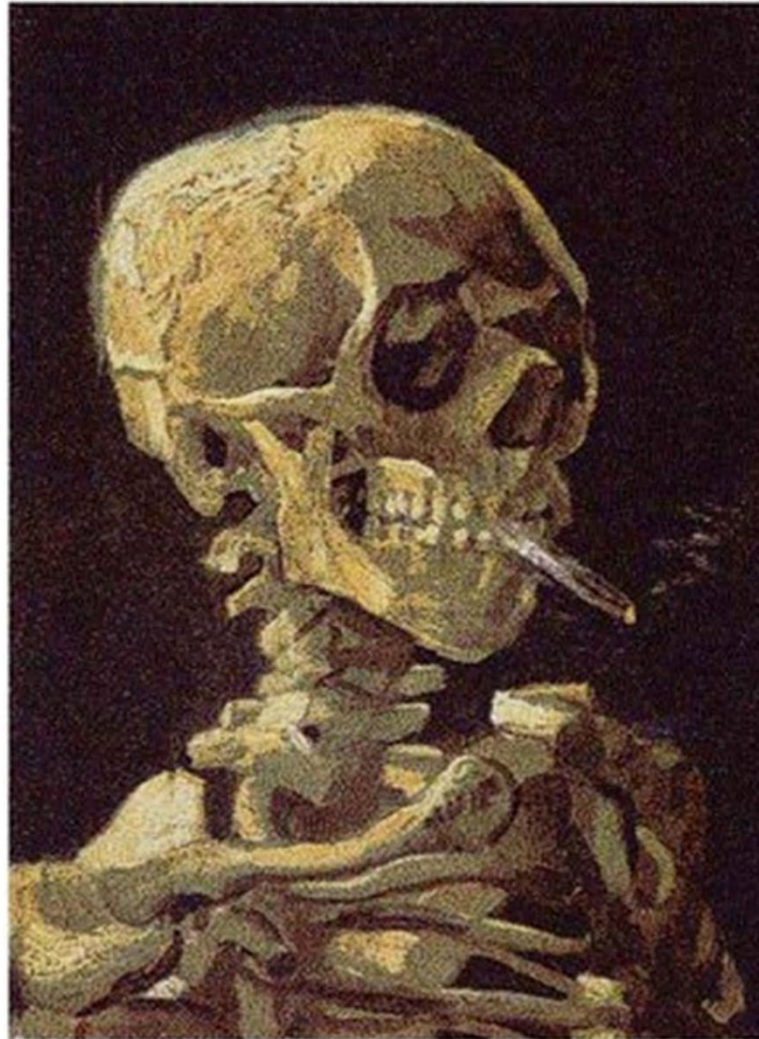
Conclusion



The tobacco industry has its own “dual-use” strategy:

- Use CSR campaigns to normalize the corporations’ image
- Use personal responsibility rhetoric to shift blame away from the industry and back onto the public.

A Mosaic of Bad Corporate Behavior



Credit: Poppive.com
<http://www.poppive.com/2008/08/mosaic-made-of-200000-packs-of.html>

A Mosaic of Bad Corporate Behavior



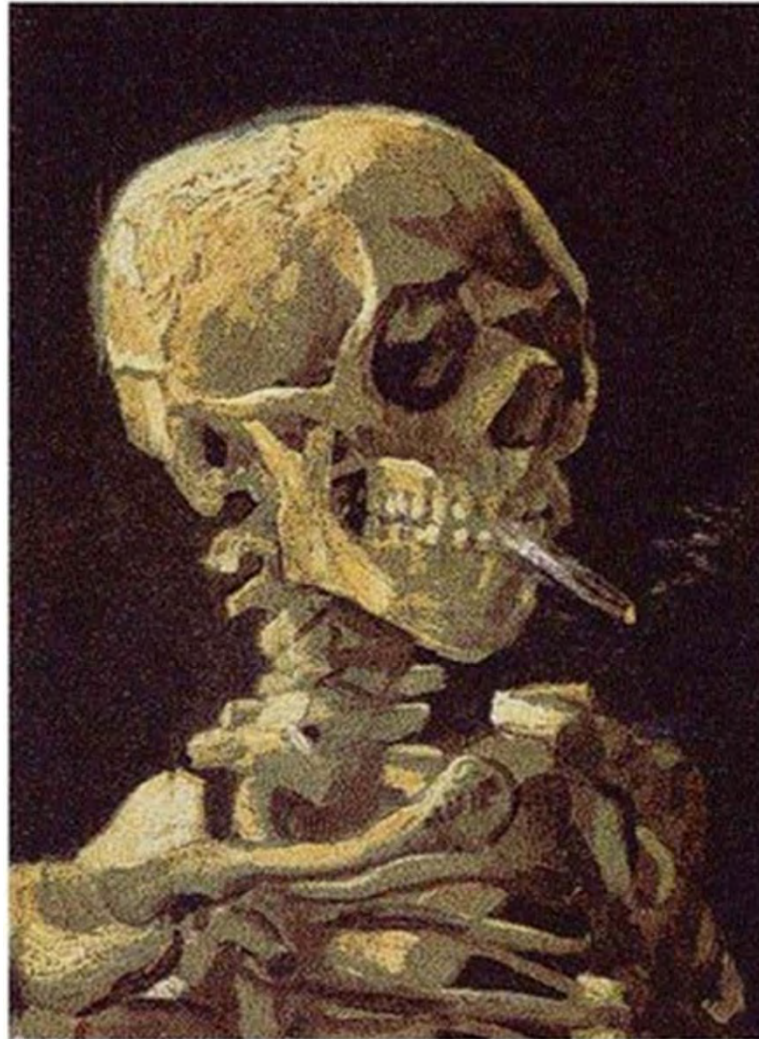
A Mosaic of Bad Corporate Behavior



A Mosaic of Bad Corporate Behavior



A Mosaic of Bad Corporate Behavior



Additional Resources

- Visit www.phaionline.org/responsibility for information on how to access detailed issue briefs on the following topics:
 - The tobacco industry's use of corporate social responsibility rhetoric & tactics
 - Denormalization of tobacco industry corporate social responsibility initiatives
 - Tobacco industry “youth smoking prevention” programs
 - Secondhand smoke “accommodation strategy”
 - Industry smoking cessation programs

- Download last year's archived webinar and issue briefs at www.phaionline.org/makeover

Acknowledgements



We are grateful for the support of the American Legacy Foundation's Small Innovative Grants Program, especially Lindsey Greto at Legacy, and the National Cancer Institute.

Thanks also to Cara Wilking and Mark Gottlieb of the Public Health Advocacy Institute.

For further information, contact:



Lissy C. Friedman
Senior Staff Attorney
Public Health Advocacy Institute
102 The Fenway, Suite 117
Boston, MA 02115
(617) 373-3514

lissyfriedman@phaionline.org

 Archived webinar presentation available at
www.phaionline.org/responsibility