

# National Coalition to Prevent Shoplifting

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## PROGRAM GUIDE

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In April of 1979, representatives of the American Retail Federation, Distributive Education Clubs of America and the General Federation of Women's Clubs finalized plans for the creation of the National Coalition To Prevent Shoplifting.

The purpose of this Coalition, which represents over two million persons, is to conduct a well-organized, action-oriented program to reduce shoplifting in our nation. The major emphasis is aimed towards educating youth to the fact that shoplifting is a crime.

The NCPS office works through the national organizations to train leaders at the state and local levels that they might instruct their memberships as to the magnitude of the crime and steps that the involved groups should take to implement effective programs.

Overall goals at the state and local level are to inform all citizens of the problem of shoplifting and to educate the public with regard to laws and existing penalties. Specific objectives are:

1. To educate youth as to the seriousness of the crime and potential consequences.
2. To educate adults to the realization that consumers pay for the losses incurred from shoplifting.
3. To educate merchants as to techniques used by shoplifters and proper procedures for apprehension and prosecution of those caught shoplifting their stores.
4. To gain the cooperation of law enforcement and the courts insuring that shoplifters, when apprehended, are not treated leniently.

The purpose of this program guide is to provide suggestions on how an effective campaign can be organized. The ideas to be presented have proven successful in local programs across the nation. They should in no way restrict your efforts and imagination in creating a program which is unique to your organization and geared to the needs of your community.

The National Coalition To Prevent Shoplifting is available to provide your local group with resource materials, technical assistance and information relating to statistics and facts on shoplifting. Another function of the Coalition is to serve as a Clearinghouse on effective programs which are in existence across the nation.

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## SHOPLIFTING – PROBLEMS AND PERCEPTIONS

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There is a tendency on the part of many individuals to view the problem of shoplifting as the retailer's problem. That is, these individuals often think that shoplifting is a problem only to store proprietors and take the view that 'Since I don't shoplift, shoplifting does not concern me.' Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, estimates of shoplifting loss suggests that each individual pays approximately \$250 in the form of higher prices for the cost of shoplifting losses and/or shoplifting prevention measures. The point we seek to convey here is that you and I pay for shoplifting. Retailers pass on the cost of shoplifting to us in the form of increased prices.

Just as the shoplifting problem is not simply a retailer's problem so, too, is shoplifting a 'pass-the-buck' type of problem. Consider for a moment the various institutions that are impacted by the shoplifting problem.

First, let's consider the judicial element of our society. Juvenile court judges and others who hear shoplifting cases often attribute the cause of shoplifting to retailers who are reluctant to prosecute shoplifting cases. In fact, many times cases often attribute the cause of shoplifting to retailers who are reluctant to prosecute shoplifting cases. In fact, many retailers are reluctant to prosecute shoplifting cases because they fear counter lawsuits; cannot afford to spend the time themselves in court; do not have adequate counsel and cannot afford the cost of same; or simply become callous and indifferent to the shoplifting problem and proceed to pass the cost on to their consumers as a natural part of doing business.

When retailers are confronted with the shoplifting problem, they, too, tend to 'pass the buck'. Retailers often suggest that the shoplifting problem is brought about by law enforcement agencies who either react slowly when they receive a shoplifting call or take the view that shoplifting is a fairly minor offense and due to understaffing, inadequate budgeting, etc., they prefer to concentrate their law enforcement resources upon more major crimes, such as burglary, rape, murder, etc. Thus, the retailers tend to blame their law enforcement agencies for the shoplifting problem.

As the third institution, law enforcement agencies are quick to point out that shoplifting is not their problem and that, instead, it is the problem of a changing value system. Many law enforcement personnel are quick to point out that the difference between right and wrong is something that is imprinted at an early age, either by the parents or teachers in the school system. Parents and teachers in turn are quick to point out that, whereas adults may think of shoplifting as a serious offense, few shoplifters are actually prosecuted. Research tends to bear out this point and it has been suggested that fewer than three percent of all shoplifters are apprehended.<sup>1</sup>

In a recently published doctoral dissertation, it was suggested that only one out of 1,250 shoplifters ever sees the inside of a jail cell.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the point is made that in sug-

gesting shoplifting is 'wrong' we are saying one thing while actually doing something dramatically different in practice. Statistics such as those mentioned previously would suggest that shoplifting is actually condoned and that many individuals and institutions have developed a callous and indifferent attitude toward shoplifting that may actually encourage it to occur.

### **THE SHOPLIFTING PROBLEM – HOW BIG IS IT?**

When the word shoplifting is mentioned, it conjures up in the minds of many the theft of a penny-piece of candy. Shoplifting is far from a petty crime. In fact, many individuals are surprised to learn that shoplifting is the largest monetary crime in the entire country. It is estimated that dollar losses due to shoplifting exceed \$8 billion annually. In contrast, the total loss to bank robberies in this country is approximately \$25 million. Therefore, for every dollar lost to bank robberies last year in the entire country, more than \$300 were lost to shoplifting.

As has been stated above, shoplifting losses and the cost of shoplifting prevention devices are passed directly on to the consumer. Numerous estimates of the cost of shoplifting borne by the consumer exist. However, a commonly accepted figure is that \$.05 out of every dollar that we spend on consumer goods goes either for the cost of shoplifting losses or for the cost of shoplifting prevention. It is estimated that retailers are currently investing between \$80 and \$90 million per year for protective devices alone.<sup>3</sup> This dollar figure does not include the amount spent on store security personnel and related shoplifting refuction devices.

### **SHOPLIFTING PERSPECTIVES**

A good analogy to the shoplifting problem is the analogy of the chain which is only as strong as its weakest link. Four links must be bound together if we are to make progress toward elimination of the shoplifting problem. These four links are the judicial element, the law enforcement element, the retail element, and finally consumers. Let us examine each of these four links in the chain briefly.

Many retailers express a current belief that the judicial element of our society has treated shoplifting far too leniently. Retailers often express the view that judicial personnel at all levels provide either suspended or token sentences when shoplifters are apprehended and convicted. Recently in the State of Georgia, a number of juvenile court judges were given three hypothetical shoplifting situations to evaluate. It is interesting to note that a sample of over 20 judges failed to reach any agreement as to sentencing that should take place for three convicted shoplifters.

Retailers and consumers alike are beginning to articulate the view that law enforcement personnel are far too lenient where shoplifting is concerned also. While television has popularized the concept of law enforcement taking a tough stand on such issues as the drug problem, shoplifting on the other hand is viewed more as a childish prank or a game. All too often, juveniles find out to their dismay that this is not the case and criminal records are established for young persons who fail to realize that shoplifting is a crime.

In failing to prosecute shoplifting cases vigorously, retailers have acted to condone the problem. In many large cities, professional shoplifters quickly learn which stores enforce shoplifting laws and which do not. These professional shoplifters prey upon the stores which either cannot or will not take the time to prosecute shoplifting cases. Complicating the issue from the retailer's standpoint is that far too many are ignorant

of shoplifting laws or do not understand them clearly. Lastly, the fear of a false arrest suit has prompted many retailers to act very cautiously.

Consumers have recently begun to be very vocal about increases in prices. Shoplifters have been apprehended who take the view that shoplifting is a proper thing to do inasmuch as retailers are only 'ripping us off anyway'. In fact, not only do consumers bear the cost of shoplifting losses and prevention, consumers also lose tax money that would have been charged had an item been sold legitimately. Using the \$8 billion figure for shoplifting losses nationally and assuming a five percent tax, we can readily see that \$400 million of lost tax revenue accrues each year.

### A SHOPLIFTING PRESCRIPTION

As may be seen from the above, the shoplifting problem is a complex one and this article, like many others, will propose no quick and easy answers to the problem. However, the situation is far from hopeless and the following suggestions may be worthy of your consideration. This author views three actions as necessary if we are to make progress in reducing shoplifting.

First, we must **educate**. It is important that we reach young people in our nation especially to indicate both dollar losses accounted for by shoplifting as well as the fact that this cost is passed on to consumers and is **not** absorbed by the retailer.

Second, we must **communicate**. It is especially important in our society that we communicate the facts concerning shoplifting. Shoplifting is a crime! This point must be driven home repeatedly as is true with any other commercial message. Additionally, we must communicate the concern over the shoplifting problem to individuals at federal, state and local levels of government. This specifically includes judicial personnel and law enforcement personnel as well as the individuals who are involved in the creation of laws. In many states, the shoplifting laws are being rewritten because of the activities of individuals interested in reducing shoplifting.

Lastly, we must **cooperate**. The analogy of a chain was used above and it is extremely important that all four parties in this chain cooperate with each other. The time is past for 'passing the buck' concerning shoplifting. Instead of faulting others, we, as consumers as well as retailers and both law enforcement and judicial personnel, must be prepared to work together to do what we can to reduce the shoplifting problem. This will not be an easy task nor should we expect any quick victories, but through cooperation, progress can be made.

Complex problems such as shoplifting do not have simple answers, however, the three steps suggested above provide a coordinated and useful way of attacking the shoplifting problem. We must educate, communicate, and cooperate to reduce the shoplifting problem and your help is actively needed.

### FOOTNOTES

1. Rothman, Marian Burk. "INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL THEFT: WHAT IT COSTS". *Stores*, January 1978, p. 44.
2. Cobb, William Ervin. "THE ECONOMICS OF SHOPLIFTING". (Ph.D. Dissertation, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Department of Economics, 1973).
3. Faria, Anthony J. "MINIMIZING SHOPLIFTING LOSSES: SOME PRACTICAL GUIDELINES". *Journal of Small Business Management* 15, October 1977, p. 41.

### SHOPLIFTING FACTS

1. Shoplifting is the nation's most expensive crime, accounting for monetary losses in excess of \$16 **billion** per year. By contrast, U.S. bank robbery losses in 1979 were \$47.5 **million**.
2. Consumers pay for shoplifting through higher prices — five to seven per cent higher on the average — more or less, depending on the type of store and where it is located.
3. Additional costs of shoplifting:
  - a. To merchants — for extraordinary security personnel and equipment.
  - b. To taxpayers — for law enforcement, trials and probation activities attributable to shoplifting offenses — plus millions in lost tax revenues.
4. The Christmas shopping season is also the season of the greatest shoplifting activity — more than 45 per cent. The next "busiest" period is the back-to-school time in late summer.
5. Among student-age shoplifters, girls outnumber boys by 4-1. (Girls go shopping more often and the items in which they are most interested — jewelry, cosmetics, clothing, etc. — are more accessible).
6. From the survey of 3550 retailers in 20 states taken in 1979-80:
  - a. Over half (56.3%) agreed that there has been a definite increase in shoplifting in the past two years.
  - b. Over a third (36%) indicate they do not feel apprehended shoplifters receive "fair and appropriate" treatment by the courts.
  - c. Almost half (41.9%) strongly or somewhat agree that their law enforcement agencies are insensitive to shoplifting and consider it trivial.
  - d. Almost half (44.8%) agree that the cost of shoplifting is directly passed on to consumers. Almost 40% feel that prices would decrease if shoplifting losses were cut.
  - e. More than 30 percent indicated problems with employee theft while more than 70 per cent indicated problems with shoplifting. As to which is the more serious problem, 82.4 per cent named shoplifting.
  - f. Whom do retailers think is doing the shoplifting?
    - More than 55 percent strongly agree that females are more likely to shoplift than males.
    - Almost two-thirds (63.6%) strongly or somewhat agree that teenagers are more prone to shoplift than adults.
    - Almost half (46.3%) strongly or somewhat agree that "racial minorities are more prone to shoplift than others."
7. From the survey of 49,376 students in 20 states taken in 1979-80:
  - a. Almost three out of four students responding strongly agreed that "Shoplifting is a crime."
  - b. Two out of three student respondents strongly or somewhat agree that "Most shoplifters are never caught."
  - c. Over 40% of students surveyed either strongly or somewhat agreed that "Stores force people to shoplift by charging prices that are too high."
  - d. Almost half the respondents (47.59%) strongly agree that "retail clerks watch teenage shoppers more closely than adults."
  - e. Over half the students responding strongly or somewhat agree that "teenagers are more likely to shoplift than adults."
  - f. Over 56% of student respondents strongly or somewhat agree that "stores pass the cost of shoplifting on to consumers."
  - g. Almost half (49.36%) of student respondents admit to having shoplifted.
  - h. Six out of seven students who shoplifted indicated they were not caught.
  - i. While 27% of students who shoplifted planned to do so in advance, almost 70% made this decision in the store.
  - j. Over 35% of student respondents stated "store personnel, police and judges are 'too soft' on shoplifters."



- k. Over 3 out of 4 (76.1%) of students who had shoplifted indicated they would not continue to do so in the future.
- l. Motives for shoplifting:
- 35.15% didn't have the money to pay for the item.
  - 26.61% did it for a thrill.
  - 27.33% did it on a dare.
  - 24.58% just acted on impulse.
  - 9.01% wanted to "get even" due to stores' high prices.
8. **Shoplifting Laws** — In most states, shoplifters are prosecuted under the "theft by taking" or similar statutes. Attitudes and practices with respect to prosecution and sentencing vary widely. A new Georgia law "theft by shoplifting," provides for mandatory sentencing on the second and subsequent offenses. Such a law is advocated by the Coalition as a "model" for other states to consider as one part of shoplifting **prevention** programs.
9. In the past decade, as shoplifting losses have mounted and retailers have become more determined to stop it, new security practices and sophisticated technology have been put into use. For example:
- a. Closed circuit television cameras aimed at counters displaying goods which are most attractive to shoplifters. Also, some larger department stores use mirror-like domes which contain a camera rotating as much as 360° to cover an entire area. Some stores even mount "dummy cameras in order to discourage potential shoplifters.
  - b. Electronic tags which cause an alarm to ring if someone has not had the cashier or clerk to remove it properly after the item was purchased. There is one drawback to electronic tags, if a clerk has forgotten to remove the tag from a purchased item it might lead to a possible lawsuit against the store from the disgruntled customer.
  - c. Guards and more guards.
  - d. Radio-communication systems between security personnel in plain clothes and others watching monitors in a back room.
  - e. False columns with detectives inside looking through an opening during large sales.
  - f. Glass panels that look like mirrors.
  - g. Store warnings such as signs and posters which remind possible shoplifters that, if caught, the store owners **will** prosecute.
  - h. A device called "Clerk-Alert" which is basically a cable looped through objects on display at retail counters. An electronic current flows through the cable and if someone were to remove, or attempt to remove an item, there would be an audible or inaudible alarm to alert store employees.
10. **Miscellaneous**
- a. In more than 50 per cent of shoplifting apprehensions, violators are 13 to 19 years old.
  - b. Other shoplifters
    - The kleptomaniac, or a person who has an uncontrollable (usually psychotic) impulse to steal, is rare.
    - Adult amateurs include housewives trying to stretch their budgets or to obtain articles that are especially wanted. Senior Citizens are part of the shoplifting problem as are individuals from all age, social and economic classes.
    - Professional shoplifters plan their thefts for the purpose of "earning" money. They concentrate on high-value items that can be easily sold. Professionals are skillful in such techniques as disguise, avoiding security traps, diverting attention, and talking their way out of trouble when apprehended — by claiming mistakes, threatening to sue, etc.
    - Drug addicts and other "desperate" individuals are unpredictable in their shoplifting habits. Their methods are impulsive and opportunistic. Also, such individuals are more apt to be violent if apprehended.
  - c. The most common items stolen are jewelry, clothes, perfume, tools, appliances, records, 8-track and cassette tapes and beauty aids. The average item stolen was valued at \$28 due to a considerable per cent of expensive items.
  - d. For the most part, items that were stolen could have been purchased by the shoplifter. A Los Angeles psychologist reported that many young people do not regard shoplifting as a crime but as a game in which to "beat the system."

## ORGANIZATION — A COALITION

The objective is to bring together community professional and volunteer groups to participate in a shoplifting prevention campaign. As your goal is to work for the reduction of a crime which affects all citizens, you naturally need all segments of the community represented. By bringing together a community team, allies are drawn from all segments to provide the necessary manpower and resources.

There are many organizations in the community with potential interest in joining a Coalition To Prevent Shoplifting. In building alliances, consider some of the following:

- Retail Members of State Retail Associations
- Distributive Education Chapters (DECA)
- Federated Women's Clubs (GFWC)
- Chambers of Commerce
- Fraternal Organizations
- Religious Institutions
- Local Merchants Committees
- Service Organizations, e.g. Lions, Rotary, Kiwanis, Optimists, Jaycees, Exchange Clubs
- Law Enforcement
- The Judiciary
- Media
- Youth Groups, e.g. Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, 4-H Clubs, etc.
- PTA

## BASIC RESOURCE NEEDS

Manpower, funds, services and time are important to the success of a shoplifting prevention campaign. Basic needs are overall community participation, media and publicity/promotion support, planning and finally the implementation of a continuous campaign.

## SUGGESTED APPROACHES

The following guidelines can be adapted to individual situations.

- 1) Send letters to the heads of organizations and agencies: Letters will be referred to the appropriate officer or chairman.
- 2) Involve personal contacts: Ask friends in target organizations to help you follow-up with the persons to whom you have written.
- 3) Follow-up by telephone: Several days after your letter is sent, call to set up a meeting.
- 4) Set up initial meeting: You want the community groups and agencies to share both the credit and responsibility for the success of your shoplifting prevention campaign. Explain your objectives, what you would like in the way of participation, resources and what benefits they will receive.

Some key points:

**Benefits to participating groups:** Participating in an effective approach to the reduction of shoplifting. Credit given in publicity depending on extent of involvement.

**Benefits to the community:** The team's efforts in initiating project or attack a problem. Less shoplifting and thus community betterment.

**Benefits to individuals:** Gaining more knowledge about the crime of shoplifting. Becoming more skilled in problem solving. Making new friendships.

- 5) What you need from potential allies: Not just their names but their resources and active participation. Letters of endorsement, introduction to other resource possibilities, manpower, facilities and cash donations are all desirable as you set up a community coalition.

Hopefully, these short-term resources will lead to long-term commitments by the various groups to an ongoing campaign. The strength of this approach is its ability to begin an ongoing process to reduce shoplifting in your community. Once a commitment to participate is made, set up a schedule of activities.

#### PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

**Gain community support.** This will be an important function of your coalition. Gaining support is a continuing activity and you will find that this support will grow as a plan of action develops and concrete activities begin to take shape.

**Develop a plan and mobilize resources.** A **written plan of action** (or plan for documentation) is concrete evidence of what is planned, for whom and of course, the goals and objectives. This aids in thinking things through in an orderly way.

This type of plan of action should include the following:

1. **Statement of the problem** – to include statistics of shoplifting in the community, losses to retailers, data from law enforcement and courts, etc.
2. **Overall Plan of Action** – in general terms, what the Coalition will do during the campaign.
3. **Responsibilities of each organization and agency involved** – detailed plans to include all scheduled activities.
4. **Resources** – identify all resources which will be available, i.e., films, speakers, printed materials, etc., and how and when these may be obtained.

**Evaluate.** Special attention should be given to a final evaluation of your project in order to estimate your success. Consideration could be given to the following items in order to determine if you indeed succeeded in increasing public awareness about the crime of shoplifting and brought about a change in shoplifting activity.

1. Number of persons reached through: media  
school presentations  
adult presentations  
seminars for retailers
2. Materials distributed and to whom
3. Attitudinal changes as noted in pre and post surveys taken in schools
4. An increase in prosecutions by merchants
5. An increase in shoplifting cases being taken into court
6. A reduction in juvenile apprehensions as noted in records of retailers

It is important to note that this type of program will probably bring about an initial increase in the number of apprehensions and prosecutions because of the educational phase which is directed at the retailers. This will, however, ultimately bring about a reduction in shoplifting activity. The increase will most likely occur during the first year your program is in existence. The reduction and noticeable decrease in shoplifting activity, particularly among juveniles, will begin to take place the second year.

#### COMPONENTS FOR AN EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGN

##### SURVEY OF STUDENTS

A survey of students can serve as a logical first step in an effective campaign. This survey of student attitudes on shoplifting can provide you with pertinent information relating to the number of students who have shoplifted, how, when, which types of stores and their feelings concerning shoplifting in general.

Conducting such a survey can give your Coalition valuable information as well as being an important reference as you work with retailers. Not only will merchants benefit from the results of such surveys, but information on survey results can be fed back into the community through the media.  
(See Students' Survey)

##### SURVEY OF RETAILERS

A survey of local retailers is an important component to a successful shoplifting prevention campaign. Such a survey will aid your Coalition in determining the merchants' point of view regarding shoplifting. It will also give you needed information on their losses, methods presently used in local stores to prevent shoplifting and training and instruction which may be much needed by management and employees.

Again, a compilation of these surveys will provide your Coalition with information which will be of an educational value in informing the merchants as well as the general public of the seriousness of this crime.  
(See Retailers' Survey)

### EDUCATION OF YOUTH

A determination of age levels to be reached and attitudes already formed by the youth will be obtained from surveys conducted in your local schools.

Surveys already conducted across the nation have shown that shoplifting activity begins around the 5th grade; if this proves to be the case in your community, the message up to this age level should stress prevention. When you are working with youth in the older age groups, you should recognize you are dealing with children who are probably shoplifting. Consequently, your message needs to stress consequences which can come from being apprehended.

There are many ways of educating children – again, dependent on the ages:

1. Sponsor assemblies and classroom programs in the schools. Films are available for this purpose and when used by a knowledgeable speaker, can bring excellent results.
2. Skits, plays and puppet shows are good – they can be written for varying age groups and acted out by young people which has a positive impact on juvenile audiences.
3. **Speakers could be obtained** from your local merchants association, police department and the courts. This type of program would be effective for presentation to high school students as they would be more impressed with professional opinions on shoplifting.
4. A **school-wide poster or slogan contest** is an excellent follow-up to classroom presentations, especially for lower grades. The posters could reflect a theme designated by your Coalition. Awards can be presented and winning posters can be displayed in the schools as well as in areas around your community. A **slogan contest** in the schools can be used as a means of establishing a theme for your overall campaign. Again, prizes could be awarded and the media could cooperate in announcing the winning "theme" to the community.
5. An **essay contest** with entries limited to 500 words on a subject designated by your Coalition could involve the students in upper grade levels. Prizes could be awarded to the best entries in each grade. Copies of the winning essays could be made available for use in school publications as well as through local news media communications.
6. **Bulletin boards and school visual displays.** Ingenuity and imaginative ideas can be used to create visual displays in the schools to further

educate the youth about shoplifting. Cartoon characters or other identifiable themes can be used to catch the attention of young people.

7. **Field trips** could be arranged for schools to have classes taken to see the security operations of a large department store in your community or even a nearby city. This program would take considerable planning but would be quite beneficial to those who are unaware of shoplifting prevention measures used by stores.

Other ideas which have proven to be successful are:

- creating a character or an image, or using an existing one well known to children, to get the message across i.e. Kermit and Miss Piggy, Uncle Sam, Pockets the Kangaroo.
- making use of high school media – daily bulletins, newspaper feature stories, etc.
- having local D.J., or other well-known personality involved in making presentations, appear at school.
- developing bookmark for use in school textbooks.
- setting up research folder for use in school and public library.
- distribution of balloons, buttons, T-shirts and decals. All are effective hand outs to imaginatively reach the youth.
- sponsoring a Shoplifting Prevention Walkathon.
- utilizing parades, fairs and mall displays to reach children outside schools.

### EDUCATING ADULTS

There are several messages you may wish to convey to the adult population in your community in regards to the crime of shoplifting.

1. The economic impact of this crime as it relates to them as consumers.
2. Their responsibilities as parents in assisting to reduce shoplifting among the youth, i.e. talking to their children about shoplifting, things to look for if they suspect their children might be taking items from stores, how to handle the situation if they find their children have shoplifted.
3. Their responsibilities as consumers, i.e. reporting shoplifting incidences to store management.

There are many ways to reach the adult population of your community. These include:

1. Programs and presentations for civic and church organizations using films, speakers and hand-out materials.
2. Mall displays which can be effectively utilized to reach large numbers of your adult population.
3. PTA meetings and PTA study groups featuring shoplifting prevention as their program.
4. Pamphlets placed in stores around the community to be given out with purchases made by adults.
5. The media directing articles and editorials to parents describing their responsibilities in educating their own children that shoplifting is a crime.
6. Signs in stores and other strategic places around the community further stressing to adults that shoplifting is a crime.

It is important to remember that when educating adults about this crime you are possibly reaching many who shoplift themselves. Your message needs to stress the penalties and laws of shoplifting as they pertain to the adult population.

Other ideas which have proven successful are:

- television and radio talk shows directed at the adult population.
- circulation of petitions in malls, gaining adult signatures, to encourage retailers to get tough on shoplifting.
- the use of a "theme" or "slogan" on hotel, shopping center marquee.
- the use of outdoor billboards posted in strategic locations.
- encouraging businesses to include shoplifting prevention message in their newspaper ads or circulars mailed to adult customers.
- giving the adult groups you visit the student survey - its a good attention getter. Then give them the results you obtained from surveys conducted in your local schools.

#### **EDUCATION OF RETAILERS**

The rights and responsibilities of the merchant need to be addressed by your Coalition if your campaign is to prove successful. Work with your local and state retail merchants association and your local Chamber of Commerce to involve the local retailers in your activities.

1. Sponsor a seminar for management and employees to help them better understand shoplifting laws, techniques used by shoplifters and proper methods for prevention and apprehension. Your local police department and courts could assist you with this training. Also consider using security personnel from major nearby stores to help instruct smaller merchants.
2. Encourage retailers to utilize signs and posters in their stores to visually show that shoplifting is a crime and that they will prosecute. It has been proven through research that such signs do help reduce shoplifting when placed in dressing rooms and other areas where they are easily seen.
3. Have newspaper run ad listing retailers in community who have agreed to prosecute shoplifters. This is an effective means of letting public know the retailers who are taking this position.
4. Involve law enforcement in an effort to help small store owners cope with shoplifting. This can include alert systems, foot patrol units, changing store layout and display.
5. Give awards or recognition to store owners and management who have firm policies on prosecution.

**INVOLVEMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AND COURTS.** As your Coalition is formed and plans are made for a community-wide campaign, every effort should be made to involve law enforcement and judiciary in your planning and organization. Possible activities may include:

1. Utilizing representatives of each at presentations in schools and for adult groups.
2. Panel presentations from each at seminars for merchants.
3. Scheduling presentation for a merchant to give the retailers point of view to local police department.
4. Visit and report on handling of shoplifting court cases for both adult and juveniles being tried.
5. Encouraging local press to print the names of convicted adult shoplifting offenders. This will serve as an effective deterrent for amateur adult shoplifters.
6. Interviewing judges, solicitors and probation officers. Consider doing a presentation for these individuals on the serious impact of this crime on your community. Remember, the educational process involves everyone.



## INVOLVING THE MEDIA

Your objective in involving the media in your Coalition is to establish an alliance with one of your community's strongest forces. Television, radio and newspapers can be one of the best sources for educating the public about 1) the crime of shoplifting; 2) your Coalition and its objectives; 3) your campaign activities as they take place.

## SELECT A COMMITTEE

Select people within your Coalition who have some contact with and knowledge of the media. Committee members should work in two areas - contacting and developing allies among the media; developing an overall public relations and educational plan.

It is important for this committee to realize that it is asking the media for a non-traditional commitment. They are accustomed to acting as a vehicle for community messages, but in this program, you are requesting a partnership in the Shoplifting Prevention Campaign. So before the committee begins to make its contacts, they should take the time to decide why they want and need the media's allegiance, what's in it for them and what benefit this will prove to be for the community.

Remember, too, that in broadcasting, stations must meet certain public service requirements in order to be licensed by the Federal Communications Commission. Stations look for public service programs they can support. The Shoplifting Prevention Campaign is a non-profit, volunteer effort in the best interest of the public and therefore qualifies as such a program.

1. Obtain Public Service radio and television announcements from the National Coalition to Prevent Shoplifting for distribution to local stations.
2. Develop press kit which includes information on your Coalition and its planned activities, a fact sheet on shoplifting and other pertinent information. Deliver these to all **Public Service Directors** and **News Departments** at radio and television stations.
3. Set up talk shows on radio and television stations to reach young people and adults.
4. Develop newspaper public service advertisements to run in your local papers. Ads can also be obtained from the National Coalition office.
5. Involve Mayor and Coalition in signing a proclamation naming a week or month as "Shoplifting Prevention . . . .". This could be incorporated with a press conference to kick off your campaign and can be effective in calling attention to your plans and activities.

Other ideas which have proved successful are:

- a kick-off planning breakfast or luncheon to announce plans to public - invite media to be present.
- producing written PSA's for distribution with press kits - this enables stations to develop their own editorials and comments.
- assistance from radio and television service directors in producing and taping PSA's using local individuals who are well known in community.
- working with school art departments to develop editorial cartoons depicting theme of local campaign - this could be used by local newspapers.
- keeping media involved and informed as campaign progresses so all newsworthy items are kept before the public.



6. THESE STATEMENTS ARE NOT MEANT AS STATEMENTS OF FACT. RATHER, THEY ARE PROVIDED TO DETERMINE YOUR OWN ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS. We are interested in learning whether you definitely agree, somewhat agree, have no opinion, somewhat disagree, or definitely disagree with each statement. Please check the blank that reflects YOUR OWN FEELINGS about each statement.

	Definitely Agree	Somewhat Agree	Have No Opinion	Somewhat Disagree	Definitely Disagree
There has been a definite increase in shoplifting during the last two years.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
When shoplifters are apprehended and prosecuted, the treatment they receive in the courts is usually fair and appropriate.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
The average person is aware that shoplifting is a crime.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Females are less prone to shoplift than are males.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Teenages are less prone to shoplift than are adults.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Racial minorities are less prone to shoplift than are others.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
The law enforcement agencies in my area are sensitive to the shoplifting problem and give it the attention it deserves.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
The cost of shoplifting is directly passed on to my consumers.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

7. Does your store prosecute apprehended suspected shoplifters? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If yes, approximately what percentage of suspected shoplifters does your firm prosecute? (check one)

- \_\_\_\_\_ 0 - 4.9%      \_\_\_\_\_ 25 - 49.9%
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5 - 9.9%      \_\_\_\_\_ 50 - 74.9%
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10 - 24.9%      \_\_\_\_\_ 75 - 99.9%
- \_\_\_\_\_ 100%

8. Does your store provide employee training regarding shoplifting detection, prevention and/or apprehension?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

THANK YOU FOR RESPONDING!

Please Mail Completed Questionnaire to:  
(Insert Local Club Name and Address Here)

## SUMMARY

Remember, the goals of the National Shoplifting Prevention Campaign are to reach and educate masses of people with the message that Shoplifting Is A Crime. You are working to change attitudes and opinions. Through this booklet, the National Coalition has provided you with suggestions on how to implement an effective campaign. Your Coalition's imagination, originality and involvement are again the key elements to the success of your program.