

## Community Coalitions

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### What is a Coalition?

Union of people & organizations working together to influence outcomes on a specific problem. Coalitions can accomplish goals that reach beyond the capacity of any individual member.

Coalitions work together to effect change. A coalition's goal may be raising awareness on a specific injury problem, distributing information / providing training to the community, gaining support for funding, influencing policy changes.

Coalitions share common goals, reduce competition for resources, & reduce repetitive services; provide a common forum; reaches more people than any single agency; conserves resources; greater credibility than individual organizations; foster cooperation & build trust among people with similar responsibilities & concerns; and reduces competition.

Collaborations can take many forms. Coalitions can range from informal networks to community coalitions to professional coalitions.

### Benefits of working in groups

- Maximizing resources
- Creates buy-in
- Stimulates creativity

### Challenges of working in groups

- Time consuming
- Conflicts of interest

## Questions to Ask Before Forming a Coalition

Is a coalition needed? Coalition can provide an effective, coordinated approach to injury prevention. But you should determine whether or not a coalition is needed. Coalitions take a lot of time and resources. Are there existing groups in the community dealing with injury issues? Can you become a part of that group?

Is the community ready for change? Communities should be ready for change. Agree on what change should look like. Agree on important issues and which they would like to work on.

Interest? Is there interest to address a specific issue? Are there motivated individuals willing to work towards a solution? A variety of groups, with motivated individuals, should be willing to share ideas, resources, & information.

## Community Resources

Getting to know the community resources available is a key step in getting a coalition off the ground.

Who could be core members of the coalition? Health professionals, Injury Prevention Coordinator, Nurse, CHR Health Educator, Medical Records Tech, Health Director, Volunteers-Parents, Grandparents, survivor (family), Church groups, Civic groups, Public safety-Law Enforcement, EMS, Highway Safety, Fire Department, etc.

Who could be partners and collaborators? These are people interested in being involved, but don't have the time to be full-time coalition members, or they have a special interest in a specific project or topic. Examples are administrators, tribal council members, physicians, and/or program directors. It is important to continuously recruit collaborators to participate in coalition activities. They might not become core group members, but their energy will revitalize the group. For instance, tribal council members are often too busy to attend monthly meetings, but can lend credibility & provide resources to a coalition.

## Planning

- Goals, Vision
- Projects, action
- A simple approach
- Organize, ground rules
- Short-term success

Coalitions need organization. The direction the coalition takes will depend on the vision, goals, objectives and interests of the core group. After identifying your core group, agree on some group ground rules, agree on a mission, objectives & structure. Decide who will facilitate the meetings and discussions and how decisions will be made.

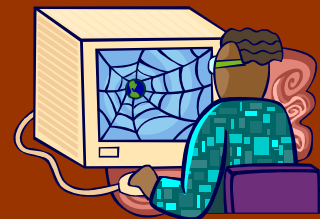
A simple approach is okay. You just need to have an approach. Short-term success and small wins should be emphasized. Don't focus on unreachable goals, for example World Peace. You should think... what would be the first step we should take towards world peace, and make that a goal.

## Coalition Maintenance: keep the coalition growing & healthy

- Communication
- Evaluation
- Challenges

Communication keeps the coalition functioning; keeps the team connected and aware. Example communications are newsletters, memos, meeting minutes, and the IHS Portland Injury website!

Post your coalition communication on the IHS Portland Injury Website!



See the Tribal News section of the website for more info.

## Final thoughts

Evaluation should be built into project plans. Evaluation is often neglected until requested by funding sources. Evaluation is vital to knowing how far the group has come, if a project is effective, etc. Evaluation should be built into the coalition's action plan.

### Common pitfalls for coalitions?

- Overwhelming core members with work
- No boundaries
- One person/group of people dominate
- No participation
- High turn-over of members
- Poor planning
- Changes in issues
- Changes in priorities
- Spinning off on tangents

Celebrate the completion of the project, but also celebrate smaller successes throughout the entire project. Success is an excellent opportunity to market the coalition. Celebrating success is important for the health of the



coalition; it keeps up the enthusiasm of the group, and it gives the group an opportunity to look back & see how far they have come & see what they are doing well.

To avoid some of these pitfalls, it is very important to:



- Revisit the vision, objectives, and action plan often.
- Monitor group dynamics.
- Empower and give responsibility to all group members.
- Utilize all available resources.
- Don't be afraid to change the plan if something is not working.