

# Community Organizing for Prevention and Recovery

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## OBJECTIVES

- Describe the basic principles of community organizing
- Identify and apply steps in community organizing to a current issue
- List strategies for engaging and retaining partners and organizing communities in collaborative efforts

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## Expectations



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## What Is Community Organizing?

The process by which people come together to:

- identify common problems or goals,
- mobilize resources, and...
- develop and implement strategies for reaching the objectives they want to accomplish.

What data do you have to assert the importance of your issue?




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## Why Community Development?

- Breaks down barriers and bring together disparate groups
- Builds community
- Develops local skills
- Surfaces natural leaders
- Identifies resources and strengths
- Increases equity
- Lays a foundation for activism and self-sufficiency




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## A Fundamental Premise of Community Organizing

“You don't organize people to do something you think should be done. Instead, you find out what is important to people in the community, and then help them reach their goals.”

Ref: Community Toolbox: <http://ctb.ku.edu/>




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## When Do We Engage in Community Organizing?

- ✓The community asks for it.
- ✓An issue or problem has reached crisis proportions, and it's obvious to everyone that something must be done.
- ✓There are resources available to address the issue.

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## What Is a Pressing Substance Abuse Issue in Your Local Community?

HOW DO YOU KNOW THIS?  
 IS IT RELATED TO OTHER COMMUNITY CONCERNS?  
 WHAT IS ITS READINESS TO TAKE ACTION?

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## Steps in Community Organizing

1. Gain an understanding of the community
2. Articulate your issue clearly
3. Build your capacity to effect change
4. Plan and implement a purposeful action plan
5. Get the word out
6. Evaluate




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## Step 1: Gain an understanding of the community

- Is the issue **important** enough to people that they're willing to take action about it?
- Is it **specific**?
- Can it be framed as a **positive** goal?
- Can something be done to affect it in a **reasonable timeframe**?




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## Your Assessment Tools

Quantitative Data



Qualitative Data




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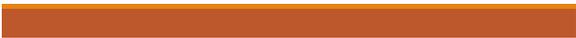
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## Step 2: Build Your Capacity

- A. Determine your stakeholders
  - Who cares about this problem?
  - Who are your allies?
  - Who is the loyal opposition?
  - Who has the power to give you what you want?
- B. Identify your key supporters and their level of Involvement
- C. Create a structure




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## BUILD CAPACITY First, Engage Your Stakeholders

WHO ARE THE STAKEHOLDERS  
IN YOUR COMMUNITY?



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## Who Are Your Stakeholders?

- Those who will benefit by our actions
- Those who will be affected (especially your focus population)
- Those who will have to administer the program or enforce the policy.
- Those who work with or serve the populations that will be directly affected
- Those who stand to gain or lose revenue or other resources, or will have to alter their mode of operation because of a potential change in program or policy

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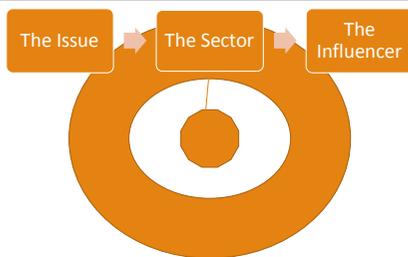
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## Identifying Key Players



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# Who Are Your Stakeholders?



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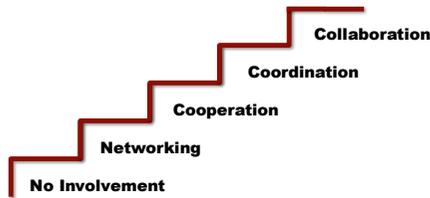
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## Second, Determine Stakeholders' Level of Involvement



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## Getting Your Stakeholders to the Table

The "Give"

The "Get"

Our Common Agenda, Values, Mission



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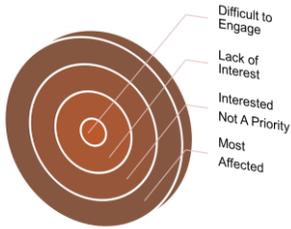
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## Targeting Outreach



*“Nothing about us without us.”*



### **BUILD CAPACITY** Increase Your Stakeholders' Readiness to Act



### If They Won't Come to Your Table, Get a Seat at *THEIR* Tables

ASK to join!

Describe what you can bring to the group:

- Knowledge
- Skills
- Constituencies
- Resources



Use data to identify overlapping interests, goals and agendas

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### BUILD CAPACITY Then, Articulate the Issues Using Data

Half of all lifetime cases of mental and substance use disorders begin by age 14, and 75% begin by age 24.

Binge drinking was highest among young adults aged 18-24 (25.6%) and high school students (24.2%) in 2009.

By 2020, mental and substance use disorders will surpass all physical diseases as a major cause of disability worldwide.

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### Build Capacity And Then, Raise Awareness with Stories and Anecdotes




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## What Is Your Story?



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## Step 3: Develop a Plan

1. Define your long- and short-term goals.
2. Identify your organizational strengths and weaknesses and ways to address them.
3. Identify action steps with timelines, assign tasks and identify performance measures.
4. Provide training for those involved.
5. Keep the culture of your community in mind.
6. Include stakeholders every step of the way.

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## (Strategic) Planning for Action

### Why Use a Strategic Plan?

- To give structure to your initiative
- To build shared agreement about what to do and how to do it
- To create buy-in/ownership
- To help focus your efforts

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## Strategies to Organize Your Community

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1. Community Development
2. Policy Change
3. Social Action
4. Coalitions

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### Step 4: Create a Structure

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- Develop an organizational structure: meeting times, committees, etc.
- Prepare contingency plans.(Your Plan B!)
- Incorporate ways to make the work enjoyable for community members and engage them.
- Decide how and how often you will communicate with your constituents and the community at large..

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### The Four Cornerstones of an Organizational Structure



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THE MEDICAL FOUNDATION, INC.

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## Decision-Making Structures

- **No Structure:** Free of rules/penalties
- **Hierarchy**
  - Autocratic: One-person rules
  - Consultative: One-person rules with advice
  - Oligarchic: Experts rule
  - Business or Military: Chain of command
- **Majority Rule :** Voting
- **Unanimity:** All completely agree
- **Consensus:** *Mutual search for solution which all can accept*

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## Step 5: Get the Word Out

- Communicate with your constituents regularly
- Use media of all forms
- Publicize your small successes
- Tell the stories that go with your efforts
- Thank supporters and helpers often, personally and publicly
- Celebrate successes along the way




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### Step 6: Evaluate

- ✓ What were our outcomes?
- ✓ What worked?
- ✓ What didn't work?
- ✓ What did we learn?
- ✓ Where do we need to build capacity?




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### Coalitions Trouble-Shooting




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### Create Your Coalition Action Plan

- Define your Mission
- Describe Your Short Term Objective: To do what, with whom and by when
- Set 5 Action Steps and Completion Dates




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## Final Caution: Advocacy vs. Lobbying

Lobbying is a type of advocacy that attempts to **influence specific legislation**.

**Educating** the public and/or legislators on a **specific issue** is not considered lobbying.



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## Is It Lobbying?



Your state is considering enacting a Good Samaritan Overdose Prevention Act . As part of your work, you want to support the passage of this law.

**Action 1:** Identifying yourself as a prevention or peer specialist, you contact elected officials or their staff, and encourage them to support the legislation.

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## Is It Lobbying?



Your state is considering enacting a Good Samaritan Overdose Prevention Act . As part of your work, you want to support the passage of this law.

**Action 2:** At local events, you educate the public Good Samaritan Overdose Prevention Act and how it will reduce deaths due to overdoses and alert them to pending legislation on this issue but you take no position.

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## Is It Lobbying?



Your state is considering enacting a Good Samaritan Overdose Prevention Act . As part of your work, you want to support the passage of this law.

**Action 3:** You attend a town forum on overdose prevention and provide several examples of states with a Good Samaritan Overdose Prevention Act that have demonstrated a decrease in overdose fatalities.



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## Is It Lobbying?



Your state is considering enacting a Good Samaritan Overdose Prevention Act . As part of your work, you want to support the passage of this law.

**Action 4:** You place an advertisement in the local newspaper urging legislators to adopt the Act.



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## Time to Get Going!!

- Make contact with agencies, organizations, and individuals that know the community well, and use their knowledge and credibility to ease your way in.
- Make your goals and process clear in small meetings that lead up to a larger one.
- Convene a stakeholder meeting and plan it well.
- Reinforce the involvement of all stakeholders.



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Remember:  
“Nothing about us  
without us.”



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What About  
Sustainability?

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A Parable of Sustainability



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## Keys to Sustainability

- ❖ Community support
- ❖ Organizational capacity
- ❖ Effectiveness




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## The Best Measure of Success

“When the best leader’s work is done, the people say, ‘We did it ourselves.’”

Lao-Tzu, Chinese Philosopher, 400-500 BC




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## The Ten Rules of Community Organizing

1. Nobody's going to come to the meeting unless they've got a reason to come to the meeting.
2. Nobody's going to come to a meeting unless they know about it.
3. If an organization doesn't grow, it will die.
4. Anyone can be a leader.
5. The most important victory is the group itself.
6. Sometimes winning is losing.
7. Sometimes winning is winning.
8. If you're not fighting for what you want, you don't want enough.
9. Celebrate!
10. Have fun!

Ref: Beckwith, D. & Lopez, C. Community Organizing: People Power from the Grassroots.  
commorg.wisc.edu/papers97/beckwith.htm




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