

ACTION TOOLS: Coalition Building



Coalitions

Grassroots organizing involves building relationships with individuals and organizations to create a collective pool of talents and resources. The goal of grassroots organizing is to raise awareness about domestic violence by reaching out to a broader audience. By forming a coalition with like-minded individuals you will broaden your support base, and strengthen your political influence and lobbying force. By working collaboratively, your listening audience will grow. Here are some tips to keep in mind when forming a coalition.



BENEFITS TO FORMING COALITIONS:

- Expands your outreach capacity to communicate your message and gain greater grassroots support.
- Reduces duplication of efforts.
- Allows for more creative, multi-level solutions to complex problems.
- Gives you more clout with legislators when lobbying on behalf of a larger group of constituents and organizations.

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES TO FORMING COALITIONS:

- Agreeing on positions and strategies takes more compromising and time.
- Maintaining cohesion can be difficult because of historical mistrust or conflicting viewpoints.
- Delegating responsibility can be complex since coalition members also have responsibilities as members of their own organizations, etc.
- Ensuring that one member or one organization does not come to dominate the coalition's meetings and strategizing is important.
- Finding meeting times that work around coalition members' schedules can be a serious challenge!

TIPS FOR CREATING A COALITION THAT LASTS:

- Identify the signs of a potential coalition opportunity.
 - If another organization distributes literature that addresses the same issue as your organization.
 - If your interest in an issue brings you into contact with another organization with similar interests.
- Develop a clear vision of the coalition's purpose and what you want each member/organization to contribute.
- Draft a letter to potential coalition members inviting them to participate in an initial organizing meeting. You may want to follow up your letter with a phone call.

CONDUCTING THE FIRST COALITION MEETING

- Prepare an agenda in advance.
- Discuss the coalition's purpose, goals, etc. Get active participation from all members. Use this meeting as a brainstorming session for what needs to get done and when.
- Possibly create subcommittees within the coalition and delegate responsibilities.
- Determine a schedule for future coalition and subcommittee meetings.
- Establish an email listserv for the coalition to facilitate easier communication.