BUILDING A GOOD & HEALTHY COMMUNITY COALITION

Good & HEALTHY
SOUTH DAKOTA
COMMUNITIES

The Good & Healthy Communities initiative is designed to transform and strengthen state and local public health systems, partnerships and policies in South Dakota through coalition-led community health improvement planning for and implementation of environmental, health systems and community-clinical linkages and strategies.

Building a strong collaborative coalition takes time and effort, but it's worth it. A coalition should encompass all stakeholders—those affected by the work of the coalition and by the issue it addresses—as well as community-opinion leaders, policymakers, and community members at large. Influential stakeholders and diverse community partners must be involved early on to provide coalition power, credibility and recognition.

The following process steps will get you started on the way to building a Good & Health Community Coalition for launching the community health needs assessment and health improvement process:

1. **Establish a core group.** *In general, the broader the membership of any coalition, the better, but there are certain people and groups whose representation on a coalition is absolutely essential.*
   - Start with people you know.
   - Contact people in agencies and institutions most affected by the issue.
   - Talk to influential people.
   - Find and make contact with those few individuals and organizations most involved with the issue.

A CORE GROUP (STEERING COMMITTEE OR WORK GROUP) IS FIVE TO TEN REPRESENTATIVES OF DIFFERENT SECTORS FROM COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, BUSINESSES, GOVERNMENT, INSTITUTIONS, OR INDIVIDUALS COMMITTED TO THE PROJECT.

WHILE ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS CONTRIBUTE TO THE BROADER, ORGANIZING COALITION, IT IS THIS SMALLER GROUP OF INDIVIDUALS WITHIN THE COALITION WHO TAKE MORE DIRECT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE EFFORT.

WORK AS A TEAM. INCORPORATE THE PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSIVENESS, COLLABORATION, AND ACTIVE LISTENING IN ALL PLANNING AND DECISION MAKING.

2. **Brainstorm a list of people known in the community and identify the most important potential coalition members.** *Consider people from all different sectors.* See the section on *Key Stakeholders* in the Toolkit for more information.
   - Keeping your program goals in mind, create a list of the kinds of people and groups you want to include (i.e. race and ethnicity, income, religion, age, gender, views, geography, political affiliation, occupation).
   - Consider those involved in civic groups (agency boards, advisory committees, neighborhood councils, local community organizations, social movements, and neighborhood improvement associations).
   - Consider formal and informal leaders, grass-roots leaders, and high visibility leaders in the community.
   - Consider staffing needs, administrative assistance, meeting sites, trainers, facilitators, public relations experience, evaluation assistance, and fundraising experience.
   - Consider policymakers, people from government agencies, and leaders from key community institutions.
   - If your coalition has a narrow and time-limited purpose, there are probably people or organizations you can't do without.

3. **Recruit members and organizations to the coalition.** *Recruit those individuals and stakeholders who top the list.* See the section on *Recruiting Key Members* and the *Partner Recruitment Template* in the Toolkit for more information.
   - Target outreach to those who are invested in seeing the issue(s) solved. For each contact, ask, "Who is missing, who else should we be talking to?"
   - Build relationships as you go. Even if they don't wish to become involved at this time, they may be able to help at some future point.
   - Find and make contact with those individuals and organizations most involved with the issues of the community.

4. **Schedule and organize coalition meetings.** *Collaboration and team building are important for driving community initiatives and coalition engagement. The first meeting of a coalition is important. If it's a high-energy, optimistic gathering that gets people excited, you're off to a good start.* See the section on *First Community Coalition Meeting Guidelines* and the *Coalition Meeting Template* in the Toolkit for more information.
    - Keep the agenda focused; stick to tasks involving the whole coalition.
    - When new coalition members have joined, consider holding a brief orientation before a regularly scheduled meeting to explain the program and bring newcomers up to speed.
    - Develop and maintain a task tracking list for coalition members. Provide reminders as needed.
    - Establish a schedule for future meetings.
    - Send minutes out right (within 3 days) after the meeting.

5. **Determine stakeholders' roles and responsibilities.** *Identifying stakeholders helps in determining who could or should be part of the planning team, what role they can serve in, and who should be kept informed and on what.*
    - Use the *Stakeholder Roles and Responsibilities* template located in the Toolkit to help define each stakeholder's employer, interests, input, involvement and skills. This helps with planning workgroups and task specifics.
    - Questions to ask in identifying stakeholders include: Who is involved with implementing public health-related programs? Who receives or is affected by the programs? Who can affect the outcomes of the plan?

6. **Create mission and vision statements.** *Vision and mission statements provide the framework for what change the coalition hopes to accomplish*. For more information see the section on *Vision and Mission Statements* and the *Sample Vision and Mission Statements* in the Toolkit.
    - The vision statement should be created by the core group.
    - The mission statement might be written by a workgroup of the coalition.

7. **Follow up to the first meeting.** *Make sure that there will be a well-attended second meeting so work can continue.*
    - Distribute the minutes of the first meeting.
    - Send reminders about the next meeting; include it to those who missed the first time, and those whose names were received from people who attended the first meeting.
    - Follow up on the groups or individuals who are working on tasks assigned at the first meeting. Try to involve other people with relevant skills or to get those tasks accomplished.
    - Keep looking for new coalition members.

8. **Create a list of the kinds of resources needed.** *Determine what other resources (financial, material, informational, etc.) are needed, develop a plan for getting them, and decide who's going to be responsible for carrying it out. First determine what is available in the community.* See the section on *Asset Mapping* in the Toolkit for more information.
    - Think about groups and people who might provide these resources and consider their work on the coalition.
    - Finding resources are part of creating a strategic plan that encompasses your vision, mission, and action plan.

9. **Communicate, communicate, and communicate.** *Make sure that lines of communication within the coalition and among the coalition, the media, and the community are wide open.*
    - Open communication will assure that everyone has the information necessary to make coalition efforts successful.
    - Good communication with the media and the community increases chances for publicity and support when needing them.
    - Conducting spokesperson training may assure accurate and consistent messages among coalition members.

10. **Next steps.** *A number of specific things—some of which were already started in that first meeting— need to be done to make sure that the coalition keeps moving forward.*
    - Appoint an individual, a core group, or even professional staff to be responsible for monitoring the overall operation of the coalition to make sure its efforts succeed.
    - Prepare for the future and hard work of maintaining the coalition over time.

Key guiding principles for coalition development are (1) being realistic about what can be done, (2) don't commit or promise more than can be accomplished, and (3) always follow through with what is promised.

Tools and Templates
Coalition First Meeting Guidelines – The first meeting is important to start the coalition off on the right foot. This offers some guidelines that can help assure a successful meeting.
Coalition Meeting Template – Tips and reminders to help keep the meeting on task, as well as a template to use for note tacking during the coalition meetings.
Coalition Member Volunteer Description – A list of suggested coalition member general and individual roles and responsibilities as a coalition member.

Resources

Building a Good & Healthy Community Coalition
Tools & Resources. CoalitionsWork.
Coalition Building 1: Starting a Coalition. Community Toolbox, University of Kansas.
Every Day Democracy
THE CHANGE MANAGEMENT TOOLBOOK

References

1. Rabinowitz, P. & Wolff, T. (2013). Chapter 5. Choosing Strategies to Promote Community Health and Development, Section 5. Coalition Building I: Starting a Coalition. In The Community Toolbox, University of Kansas. Retrieved from http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/sub_section_main_1057.aspx
2. Everyday Democracy, Ideas & Tools for Community Change. (2013, August 6). Build a Strong, Diverse Working Group and Organizing Coalition. Retrieved from http://www.everydaydemocracy.org/en/Page.Organizing.BuildTeam.aspx