

Coalition Building for Persons with Disabilities

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The Information presented is only provided as a guide in assisting persons with disabilities in discovering opportunities in establishing Coalitions within their own communities, as well as finding out about Tribal, State, and National affiliates for assistance and networking.

The tools and resources that follow are designed to help you identify the purpose of a coalition, how to sustain a coalition of individuals and organizations that will create change in your community by working together.

What Is Coalition Building ?

A Coalition consists of individuals or organizations working together in a common effort for a common purpose to make more effective and efficient use of resources and how things can be changed, “to do something for the cause, rather than the applause”.

Coalitions are the cornerstones of creating successful change within a community. They represent an array of local interests and bring together organizations and individuals to build a power base that works to influence social change of a mutual concern.

Coalitions come in a variety of forms including permanent or temporary, single or multi-issue. A well-organized, broad based coalition will be successful in creating policy change, increasing public knowledge, creating a network and development of innovative solutions to complex problems.

A Coalition should be structured to:

- Involve all key players.
- Choose a realistic strategy.
- Establish a shared vision.
- Agree to disagree in the process.
- Make promises that can be kept.
- Build ownership on all levels.
- Institutionalize change.

- Publicize successes.

What a coalition can do ?

The activity and objective (s) depends upon need, local assets and availability of individuals. The purpose should be to inform and mobilize individuals to establish a purpose and outcome. Education and activism are the two key components. Some groups emphasize education over activism, or vice versa. It depends upon how the group is set up. Many groups don't incorporate, although incorporation should definitely be considered. This involves establishing Federal Identification – 501 (3) c status. However, if your objective is short term and is a one time need, this may not be required.

Coalition members roles and responsibilities

1. Participate in determining the direction of the coalition.
2. Serve as a representative of the coalition.
3. Participate in implementing activities that are set for by the coalition, including any committee's.
4. Serve as resource for the development of program activities.
5. Help to represent the coalition at key official meetings and events.
6. Gather and relay appropriate information to the coalition to serve as basis for decisions.
7. Attend meetings on a regular basis.
8. Help to develop and implement a self-sufficiency and self-advocacy role.

The following is a partial listing of state or national coalition building affiliates that will allow you to build a team, including step by step guides. To find out more information about click the appropriate link:

1. Minnesota Department of Health – provides useful information on choosing group leadership, brainstorming, and developing a mission statement. The site provides worksheets and checklist for developing a coalition -www.health.state.mn.us/divs/fh/chp/hpkit/text/team_main.
2. LDOnline – The leading Website on learning disabilities for parents, teachers, and other professionals -
www.ldonline.orgwww.protest.net/activists_handbook/coalition.html

3. Wisconsin Clearinghouse for Prevention Resources – Helping youth, families, schools, and communities lead healthy and productive lives - www.uhs.wisc.edu/01-Prev-Coalition.html
4. National Council on Disability – The overall purpose of the agency is to promote policies, programs, practices, and procedures that guarantee equal opportunity for all people with disabilities, regardless of the nature or severity of the disability, and to empower them to achieve economic self-sufficiency, independent living, and inclusion and integration into all aspects of society - www.ncd.gov/brochure.htm
5. Native American Calling – A live call-in program, linking public radio stations, the Internet and listeners together into a thought-provoking national conversation about issues specific to Native communities. It is designed to improve the quality of life for Native Americans. – www.nativeamericancalling.com
6. ADA Watch – a nonprofit informational online network designed to activate the disability community’s grassroots in response to threats to civil rights protections for people with disabilities. Seeks to build an online community of empowered citizens united. – www.adawatch.org
7. American Indian Disability Technical Assistance Center – strives to support American Indians and Alaska Natives in their efforts to improve employment opportunities and vocational rehabilitation outcomes wherever they live in the United States. We are committed to helping tribes build their capacity to develop and implement culturally appropriate laws and policies, cross-cutting infrastructure, and direct program services - www.aidtac.ruralinstitute.umn.edu
8. “The People’s Paths” – North American Indian & Indigenous People’s Medical – Health Info. – This site was created in the hope that all people, no matter what their own culture, may be able to find a bit of information that might be helpful in the understanding of American Indian Culture and other Native Cultures from all over our Mother which is called Earth! – www.thepeoplespath.net
9. “Yellow pages for kids” - National Disabilities Organizations & Information Groups – you will find educational consultant, psychologists, diagnosticians, health care specialists, academic tutors, speech language therapists, advocates, and attorneys. You will also find government programs, grassroots organizations, special education schools, and parent support groups. – www.yellowpagesforkids.com

Information compiled and organized by: Willie Davis, SLC Consultant, 12-05
Sources: Underage Drinking Prevention Project, Wisconsin Clearinghouse, Protest .Net/Activists Handbook