Step 2: Forming an Oral Health Coalition

Critical Task: To bring together a diverse and representative group of stakeholders to form an oral health coalition.

Introduction

The goal of Step 2 is to help you identify and bring together potential coalition members. You will also find guidelines for establishing the organizational structure of your coalition. Both of these steps are crucial to getting your coalition off to a good start. This guide will help lead the way so that you can avoid many of the pitfalls that can stop or stall coalition progress, or lead to loss of interest by the members.

Step 2 addresses the following topics:

> - Clarifying your purpose
> - Developing a plan for recruiting members
>   -Identifying potential members
>   -Contacting potential members
> - Structuring your coalition meetings
>   -Establishing ground rules
>   -Making decisions
>   -Dealing with conflict
>   -Documenting your work
>   -Developing leadership
> - Planning the first meeting

Clarifying your purpose

So, you've decided to take the plunge and start an oral health coalition. You're dedicated, inspired and ready for the challenge. Start with sharing your ideas with a confidante or core group of trusted colleagues. Do you have a few people that are with you on this? They will be helpful as you get started. Before you start contacting members of the larger community to gain support for forming an oral health coalition, either alone, or with a core group of planners, use Worksheet # 2 to clarify your own purpose in forming a coalition. It is important to think through your own reasons for wanting to begin the process. It will also be helpful to identify others you can enlist in the pre-planning phase of this process.

ÖUPÁFΊ ∈ĦI G
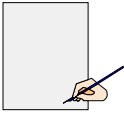
Worksheet # 2 Coalition Convener/s Clarification Worksheet (Page 23)

Worksheet # 2
Convener/s Clarification Exercise

Respond to the following questions:

1.   What do you see as the community need/problem you want to address?

2.   How do you know this is a need/problem? What data do you have?

3.   What do you see as your role in forming an oral health coalition?

4.   How do you define "community" for this project? (i.e. county, city, people who interact with babies born in St. Peter hospital)

5.   What is your vision for the community?

6.   Does anyone else share your vision?

7.   Who would be affected by the work of this coalition?

8.   Why would they want to get involved?

Assessing the information you have written on the worksheet will help you continue the planning process. As you start talking to other potential coalition members it is important to be clear with them about why you are suggesting the formation of a coalition.

<u>Developing a Plan for Recruiting Oral Health Coalition Members</u>
(adapted from "Develop a Plan for Recruiting Members"[1])

Why should you develop a plan?

Developing a plan will make your search for members more efficient and effective. A plan is important because if focuses on the set of steps you will need to go through to achieve your ultimate goal of recruiting members. The planning stage is the time to decide what actions the organization will take to achieve its goal.

Regardless of whether you are trying to recruit members who speak for themselves, or members who speak for an entire organization, it will help you to make a plan to find people and bring them together.

Most of the time organizers looking for membership would have had better luck recruiting potential members had they sat down and actually planned what they were going to do to achieve their goals, rather than just jumping right in. A planned effort will almost always be superior to an unplanned, disorganized attempt.

Writing things down is very important to the planning process because you don't want to waste time going over questions you have already answered. Writing down the answers saves precious time.

Developing a plan for recruiting members will cause you to ask yourself some very important questions. Your answers to these questions will be the building blocks for your recruitment plan. Your answers on Worksheet # 3 will be the basis for your recruitment plan. You may want to revisit them when your coalition begins meeting if you find that more recruitment is necessary.

---

[1] *Community Toolbox,* "Develop a Plan for Recruiting Members," Chapter 5, Section 3, University of Kansas.
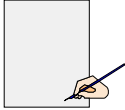
Worksheet # 3 Recruiting Coalition Members (page 24)

Worksheet # 3
Recruiting Coalition Members

1. Why do you want or need members?

2. What kind of members do you need? (i.e. Individuals, members who speak for organizations, members with specific skills or expertise)

3. How many members do you need?

4. Who is going to contact potential members? (divide the task)

5. What is the best method for contacting potential members?(in person, on the phone, by mail)

6. How should you approach potential members? What do you want to say? (How will they benefit from joining the coalition?)

Using your answers to questions on Worksheet # 3, you are now ready to think about the individuals you want to contact.

Identifying Potential Members

Begin with people who are **interested**. A shared and clear commitment to the purpose is the single most important factor contributing to success. Don't waste time trying to include people who should be involved but who simply are not interested; conversely, don't exclude groups that logically might have something to contribute.

Consider **diversity** from the beginning. Multicultural group members understand their cultures and norms and can reach out to their communities. Are there minority populations in the area that need to be represented? Are there tribes, migrant populations or low-income group representatives involved in your coalition? Involving members of these groups can greatly increase the effectiveness of your coalition. They will bring information about the dental health of their communities, as well as knowledge of strategies for reaching underserved families.

Involve **those directly affected** by the problem. "Social or community problems are problems that by their very definition concern a large number of people. Unfortunately, those who are socially and economically powerful, such as government officials, interest groups, or community leaders often define these problems and their solutions. While everyone is indirectly affected by social

Identify members representing the following:
- Interest
- Diversity
- Those directly affected
- Individuals
- Others

problems, those who are directly experiencing the problem are often left out of the processes of identifying what the problem really is."[2]

Individuals can also make good coalition members. Parents and people affected by the problem should be included, even if they do not belong to any particular organization. They can bring a fresh perspective that might not be represented by those from organized groups.

Worksheet # 4 includes a list of possible oral health coalition members. You can use this as a reminder of possible resource people, but each community will have its unique organizations and citizen groups and individuals whom you will not want to overlook. Worksheet # 5 can be used to individualize your contact list.
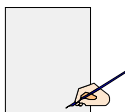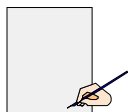
Worksheets # 4 and # 5 Oral Health Coalition Contact List
(pages 25 & 26)

Worksheet #4

Oral Health Coalition Contact List

Agency/Group Represented	Contact Person	Address	Phone	E-mail Address
Local Health Dept.				
Dental Society				
DentalHygiene Society				
Head Start				
Health and Human Service Providers				
School Nurses				
Service Clubs				
Parents				
Dental Consumers				
Health Clinics				
Hospitals				

[2] *Community Toolbox,* "Involving People Most Affected by a Problem," Chapter 5, Section 7, University of Kansas

Oral Health Coalition Contact List

Agency/Group Represented	Contact Person	Address	Phone	E-mail Address

Contacting potential members[3]

In person. It is best to make personal contact when you can. The more personal the contact, the greater your chances of success. This is especially true when the potential member knows, likes and trusts the person doing the contacting. Face-to-face meeting has the most positive impact, but a telephone call can also serve as the contact point, particularly if you need to contact a large number of people. A follow-up letter confirming meeting purpose, time and place will then continue the recruitment.

By mail. Letters definitely still have their place. Many people genuinely like opening their mail; and for many of us, a personally addressed letter, with a personal greeting and message, is a pleasure to receive. In addition, a good letter can be strongly influential, often more so than a mediocre meeting. Letters can also be kept and referenced. And certainly, letters can reach a lot of people at a minimal cost.
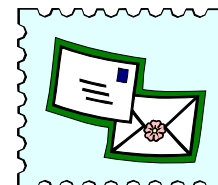
Your task will be to write a persuasive letter, designed to convince the recipient to join and be a part of your outstanding group. To do this well, you want to use persuasive skills. If you have a good cause (and it is good, otherwise you wouldn't be part of it), you have a perfect right, and maybe even a responsibility, to attract others to it. The general principals of persuasion are:

Get the reader's attention in design and content. The busier your reader is (or the less your reader reads) the more important this point becomes. Attention comes first. If you don't get attention, the reader isn't going to read the letter in the first place, or even open it.

Consider using:

- a distinctive envelope or stationary
- a familiar logo

---

[3] *Community Toolbox*, "Writing a Letter to Potential Members," Chapter 5 Section 4, University of Kansas.

- a slightly larger-than-average type size
- a distinctive type face, as long as it is easy to read
- the person's name in the salutation
- a handwritten signature. Add a personalized remark in your own handwriting.
- a hand-addressed envelope

Give the reason you are writing at the beginning. The first sentence is probably the most important sentence in your letter. Get right to the point. Write an eye-catching sentence, one that is going to stick in your reader's mind. Say why you are writing the letter.

> The printed word has not yet gone out of style.

Give the reader good reasons for becoming a member. The next step is to give your reader good reasons to become a member. You can include a few sentences about the coalition and about the issues, but don't include too much detail. That will be the topic of the first meeting

> The chance to address an important problem which concerns…
> The chance to help others…
> The chance to learn about…

Make a request that is clear, specific, limited, immediate and doable. Be sure the time and place of the first meeting stand out in the letter.

Express your appreciation for considering your request and for the reader's anticipated support.

Proofread your letter.

Sign it.

Should you use electronic mail to send your letter?

If you have the computer capability, it's very tempting to use electronic mail (e-mail) and send all of your correspondence via the computer assuming your recipient has an e-mail address. Doing so has several <u>advantages</u>:

- It is much faster than normal mail. This also makes it possible for the recipient of your letter to respond, via e-mail, much more quickly.

- It saves the trouble of addressing an envelope, buying a stamp, and mailing your letter.

- The letter is much less likely to get lost on the receiver's desk.

- Is increasingly a preferred method of communication with some people.

E-mail also has <u>disadvantages</u>:

- For some recipients, it has less stature than a formal letter. It may carry less weight, and seem less impressive.

- If the recipient does not read e-mail regularly, your timesavings are lost.

- And unless the recipient goes through the trouble to print your message, it may be gone forever with one tap of the delete key—and gone from you recipient's mind as well.

- Some of the most valuable "grassroots" community members whom you want to involve may not have e-mail.

Do the same persuasive principles apply when sending e-mail? Yes. Maybe even more so, if you want to ensure that your e-mail message stands out from all others.

Make a follow-up call. A follow-up call before the first meeting can be a helpful reminder and will also give you a better idea of how many people to expect at the meeting.

Structuring coalition meetings

Establishing ground rules

The single best way to prevent conflict is to create an atmosphere that is respectful of diverse viewpoints and conducive to open and honest discussions. This atmosphere requires that ground rules be established to promote effective communication during meetings.

You will want to develop your own set of ground rules with coalition members, but these are some that can get you off to good start:

- One person speaks at a time; others listen and do not interrupt.
- Speak for yourself, using "I" statements. Don't claim to speak for others.

- Be polite. It's acceptable to disagree, but do so respectfully.
- Observe confidentiality within established policies.
- Share group time fairly. Allow everyone a chance to speak and listen.
- Be open to listening and learning from other's viewpoints.

Ground Rules help:
- Create a safe environment.
- Keep people on track.
- Encourage everyone to participate.
- Protect privacy.

Making Decisions

It is very important for the coalition to decide how decisions will be reached. This may not happen in the first few meetings, but early in the development of the coalition the decision-making process will need to be formalized. There are a number of different models that have been used successfully. An overview is provided here. You will want to present options and be sure that the group is in agreement about how decisions will be made. You will probably also learn to use different types of decision-making processes based on the magnitude of the decision to be made. What is important is that people understand and agree to which process is being used.

Working Consensus. The goal of using consensus is to find common ground. Discussion continues until all points of view are aired and considered. All group members must agree to the decision. This is done because the decision will impact all group members. This is often a time consuming process, but builds commitment and trust. Using consensus to make decisions is a process that is challenging; yet rewarding. Many coalitions bring in a consultant to teach them the art of consensus building. The Appendix .   of this guide includes a list of "Tips for Facilitators" and "Tips for Group Members" when using consensus. A variation of consensus building is to use a "consensus minus one" model. This can sometimes help a group move forward even though there may be one individual who is not willing to compromise.
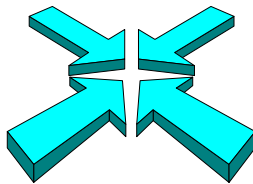
Robert's Rules of Order. Robert's Rules of Order have been around for a long time and are used universally for meetings of all kinds. Robert's Rules got started in 1876, when Henry Martin Robert, a former Union General in the Civil War, took on the task of codifying and simplifying the rules of procedure for the U.S. House of Representatives. In doing so, he drew on the workings of early English parliaments. Robert later adopted the rules to fit non-legislative organizations.

The basic premise of Robert's Rules of Order is that rights must be respected: "rights of the majority, of individuals, of absentees, and rights of all these together."

The basic process is:

1. A member presents a proposed idea (a motion).

2. A second member expresses support for discussion of the idea by seconding the motion.

3. A discussion or a series of discussions is held to allow all opinions to surface.

4. A vote is taken on whether or not to adopt the motion.

5. Commonly, majority rules.

Delegation. A situation is presented to the group and an individual or sub-group is given the authority to make decisions regarding that issue. Expectations and responsibilities should be clarified in the context of the whole coalition so that the limits of authority are clear. Delegation is used when there is trust among coalition members and when work can be more effectively accomplished by assigning a task to a few people. The type of decisions to be made need to be relatively small in scope and responsibility.

Dealing with conflict

Acknowledge that differing points of view
exist and that conflict is a natural part of the discussion process. Do not attempt to avoid conflict or sweep it under the carpet when it surfaces. Be careful to clearly define the conflict.

Have you ever been in one of those situations where someone has just been personally attacked and the group is in shock? Everyone is trying to remember, "What is it we do in a situation like this?" We have all been there. The most important thing to remember is to distinguish between the issues and the individuals involved in the conflict. The more specifically the problem is defined, the more suitable the solution is likely to be.

Once the issue has been defined you can solicit opinions. Then add, "does anyone have a suggestion on how to resolve this?" Further research is often an appropriate choice. If further discussion does not lead anywhere you can decide on what consensus level you are comfortable with and then make a decision. (See the Appendix 📄 for guidelines on consensus levels.) A good way to stay focused is to formulate the agenda with key individuals before hand and get agreement to stick to the agenda. Then, if conflict does arise, it will at least pertain to agenda items that are relevant to the discussion.

Documenting your work

You will want to keep a written record as your coalition comes together and begins to move forward. Be sure that someone records who attends each meeting and the nature of discussions held. This serves as documentation and a reminder of decisions that have been made, as well as keeping coalition members who were unable to attend a particular meeting informed and up to date on the progress of the coalition. In addition, potential funders often ask for minutes of past meetings to provide a history of the organization as a part of grant applications.

Developing leadership

It is important to think about coalition leadership even in the early stages of development. Every community has leaders. The challenge is to locate and recruit them to participate in your coalition. The demands of chairing or co-chairing a coalition can be significant, but they can also be personally and professionally valuable. Sometimes we are able to find natural leaders and then motivate them to get involved in the coalition. You also want to develop leaders within the coalition. The best way to do this is to offer training on issues such as strategic planning, grant writing, facilitation or media advocacy. Finding a mentor with another more experienced coalition is also a great way that leaders can get advice, support and ideas for their coalition.

> To develop leadership:
> - Share responsibility
> - Mentor future leaders
> - Offer training

Coalition leadership usually consists of a chair or co-chairpersons, a secretary, and a treasurer. If the coalition becomes larger, committee chairs may become necessary.

Co-chair responsibilities:

- consult with coalition members on items for meeting agendas
- chair coalition meetings, allowing for adequate discussion of all issues while keeping the meeting moving
- represent the coalition on important matters that affect it
- enhance the coalition's image in the community
- serve as a role model when representing the coalition
- supervise any committee chairpersons

Secretary responsibilities:

- keep accurate minutes or notes of meetings and arrange for their distribution. (Minutes or notes usually include names and organization affiliations of members attending, items discussed and any decisions or next steps decided. If mailed out, it is especially helpful to include the date, time and address of the next meeting at the top of the minutes)

- give notice of special meetings

- keep current list of members, with contact information

Treasurer responsibilities:

A treasurer may not be necessary unless the coalition decides to incorporate into a not-for-profit organization. Often, a coalition can enlist the help of another not-for-profit organization in the community to administer initial grant funds. Usually, the organization will take a three percent to ten percent administrative fee for acting as a fiscal agent. However, if a coalition decides to incorporate, filing to become a 501-(c)(3) may be one of the treasurer's first responsibilities.

Sample Oral Health Coalition By-laws are included in the Appendix 🗎 . After incorporation, the treasurer is responsible for:

- filing and keeping track of taxes and fees then become important
- overseeing the bookkeeper's work
- acting as a signer on the bank account
- keeping or overseeing accurate financial statements

Planning the first meeting

You have talked to people on the phone, written letters or otherwise gotten agreement from a core group of individuals to come to a meeting. You have talked about the perceived need. Now it is time to plan the first meeting.

Review the guidelines for successful coalitions in Step 1. Here are a few additional tips to consider:

- Make sure that you have a good idea of who is coming. Get commitments.

- Have an agenda. Get input on the agenda from key individuals prior to the meeting. Then get agreement on the agenda and stick to it at the meeting.

- Assign a note taker.

- Talk about the benefits of coalitions. This is the beginning of the solution.

- Use a flipchart to record responses.

- Serve snacks and allow time for informal networking.

- Set the next meeting if appropriate, or talk about a regular schedule of meetings.

If you manage to accomplish all these tasks in the first meeting, you are doing great. Remember, you are establishing trust. It will help if you set time limits on your agenda. That reduces the tendency to stray from coalition business. Don't worry if you don't get to everything.

Other key tasks to address during the formation stage include: recruiting members, formalizing rules, roles, procedures, discussing the vision for your community, and clarifying the coalition's mission. You will want to address these tasks early in the development of your coalition and get agreement from coalition members how the group wishes to govern itself and what direction the work will take.

The topics that are discussed at your first meeting will depend on the history and experience of the people coming to the table, and the needs of your community. Step 3 of this guide discusses, in some detail, key components in the development of an oral health coalition. You will want to read that chapter in order to decide where you need to begin in your planning process. Worksheet # 6 may be a helpful tool for you to use in planning your first and later meetings. Worksheet # 7 is a sample of a meeting agenda.
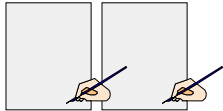
Worksheet #6 Oral Health Coalition Agenda (page 27)
 Worksheet #7 Oral Health Coalition Agenda (sample) (page 28)

Oral Health Coalition
Agenda for _____

Time	Activity	Purpose	Lead	Outcome/Action (what, who, when)

Oral Health Coalition (sample)
Agenda for August <u>12, 1999</u>

Time	Activity	Purpose	Lead	Action/Outcome (what, who, when)
15 min.	Welcome Introductions and Reason for coming Establish ground rules	Information sharing	Trudy (co-convener)	See attached sign in list 12 different groups represented
30 min	Brainstorm priority issues	Begin to identify action priorities	Trudy	Top four issues: Dental access Oral health ed. for new moms Public information Fluoridation
30 min	Who else needs to be here?	Develop a representative coalition	Tony (co-convener)	Rep. From dentists Elise will contact for next meeting Media Chris will contact health writer at Chronicle New mom Mary Lou will contact First Steps Coordinator
15 min	Next steps	When and where to meet again	Tony	Meeting set for 9/13/99 at Library at 9-11 am Tony will serve as facilitator. Trudy will mail notices and agenda

Convener/s Clarification Exercise

Respond to the following questions:

1. What do you see as the community need/problem you want to address?

2. How do you know this is a need/problem? What data do you have?

3. What do you see as your role in forming an oral health coalition?

4. How do you define "community" for this project? (i.e., county, city, people who interact with babies born in St. Peter hospital)

5. What is your vision for the community?

6. Does anyone else share your vision?

7. Who would be affected by the work of this coalition?

8. Why would they want to get involved?

Recruiting Coalition Members

1. Why do you want or need members?

2. How many members do you need?

3. What kind of members do you need? (i.e., individuals, members who speak for organizations, members with specific skills or expertise)

4. When do you want to have the first meeting? What tasks need to be accomplished to be ready for that meeting? (develop a timeline)

5. How should you approach potential members? What do you want to say? (How will they benefit from joining the coalition?)

6. What is the best method for contacting potential members?(in person, on the phone, by mail)

7. Who is going to contact potential members? (divide the task)

Oral Health Coalition Contact List

Agency/Group Represented	Contact Person	Address	Phone	E-mail Address
Local Health Dept.				
Dental Society				
Dental Hygiene Society				
Head Start				
Health and Human Service Providers				
School Nurses				
Service Clubs				
Parents				
Dental Consumers				
Health Clinics				
Hospitals				
Health Care Providers				
Media				
Policy Makers				
Key Businesses				
Multi-cultural Groups				
Prenatal Outreach Programs				
WIC				
Churches				
Community Foundations				
Colleges				
Children's Advocates				

Oral Health Coalition Contact List

Agency/Group Represented	Contact Person	Address	Phone	E-mail Address

Oral Health Coalition
Agenda for _____

Time	Activity	Purpose	Lead	Outcome/Action (what, who, when)

Oral Health Coalition
Agenda for August 12, 1999

Time	Activity	Purpose	Lead	Action/Outcome/ (what, who, when)
15 min.	Welcome Introductions and Reason for coming Establish ground rules	Information sharing	Trudy (co-convener)	See attached sign in list 12 different groups represented
30 min	Brainstorm priority issues	Begin to identify action priorities	Trudy	Top four issues: Dental access Oral health ed. for new moms Public information Fluoridation
30 min	Who else needs to be here?	Develop a representative coalition	Tony (co-convener)	Rep. From dentists Elise will contact for next meeting Media Chris will contact health writer at Chronicle New mom Mary Lou will contact First Steps Coordinator
15 min	Next steps	When and where to meet again	Tony	Meeting set for 9/13/99 at Library 9-11 am Tony will serve as facilitator. Trudy will send notice and agenda