



Community Organizing for Prevention

Learning Objectives

By the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- Describe the basic principles of community organizing
- Identify and apply steps in community organizing to a current issue
- Describe at least 3 facilitation techniques
- Explain the difference between advocacy and lobbying

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INFORMATION SHEET 1.1

Facilitator Tips and Techniques

Coming from the Latin *facilitar*, meaning, “to make easy,” the role of the facilitator is not to do for others but to bring out the ability of a group to meet its training goal. Below are some tips to make your job as a facilitator easier and more productive.

Setting Group Guidelines

Never omit the step of setting group guidelines. While you can create a list ahead of time, it is usually better to solicit them from the group. Explain that in prevention, whether we are facilitating a skills group for youth or running a coalition meeting, guidelines set up front are always needed.

- Solicit group guidelines from the group by asking what actions we should take so that everyone feels comfortable and safe and has the opportunity to learn.
- Phrase suggested guidelines in positive terms. These then become guidelines what we will do versus what we will not do. For, example, “no side conversations” might be changed to “one person speaks at a time.” If a negative guideline is offered by a participant, re-phase it in positive terms and ask that person if it could be phased in that way. Then write it on the flip chart paper.
- When the group is finished, ask one by one if everyone is OK with the guidelines suggested. Then state that you will also be abiding by these guidelines and that they will be posted on the wall for the duration of the training to remind us all of what has been agreed to.

Tips on Using a Flip Chart

Flip charts can be utilized in a variety of ways. The instructor should as much as possible prepare them in advance to serve as an outline or guide for the session or highlight key definitions or concepts; write on them during the session as ideas are generated; refer back to them as needed; post them on walls for reinforcement; and use them to facilitate group reporting. Flip charts help reinforce learning because students can see, as well as hear, what is being talked about.

- **Use only dark marker colors** when writing on the flip chart paper. Black, dark brown, or dark blue are the most legible. Avoid using lighter colors like yellow, orange or green, except for highlighting. Surprisingly, red is also a very difficult color to read and should be avoided for text. Two colors can work well on a single flip chart sheet.
- **Print – don’t use script.** Block letter printing on the flip chart paper is much easier to read from the back of the room.
- **Be sure not to crowd the flip chart** with too much information (four or five lines to a page). If necessary, remove the sheet, tape it to the wall, and continue writing on another sheet. Or, you may wish to have two flip charts set up side by side.



- **Prepare in advance the flip chart sheets recommended in your trainer's preparation handout.** Be sure to proof read any flip charts you have prepared in advance. When writing "on the spot," spelling errors are somewhat understandable. Also, if you can, laminate the sheets for use another time.
- **Keep your prepared flip chart covered** with a blank page or tape it up so the content cannot be seen until you are ready for the group to see it. When you have finished your reference to that information, "flip" it over, unless you want the group to be reminded of the information. In that case, tape it on a side wall using tape permitted by your host. Be sure to check on this before the training begins.
- If possible, obtain flip chart **paper with light, preprinted "grid" lines** and an adhesive backing. This will help make your printing more legible and eliminate the need for masking or painter's tape.
- **Don't turn your back on the group and "talk to the flip chart."** Write down what you need, and then turn back to the group. A few moments of silence are okay.
- **Don't block your audience's view of the chart.** Stand to the side of the chart and point to the key words or ideas.
- You can, in advance, lightly **pencil in reminder notes** to yourself on the flip chart.
- Use **paper clips (or 'page maker' post-its) to mark the location of flip chart sheets** prepared in advance.
- When recording comments on flip chart paper:
 - **Check frequently with the person** offering the comment you are recording. Say something like, "This how I wrote your comment. Did I get it right?" Whenever possible, use the speaker's own words (although not necessarily all of them).
 - Don't be afraid to **ask someone to repeat** a comment, either because you could not hear it, could not understand it, or it went too fast.
 - **Write enough** so that a person who was not present could understand the comment that was written.

Forming Your Small Groups

After Session 1, confer with your co-trainer to plan the composition of your small groups. Your goal is to create the best learning environment possible, especially since so much of the learning in the SAPST occurs at this level.

- Mix the composition of groups by gender and geography. Avoid having people who work together in the same group.
- Try ranking the participants by "1" (little or no prevention experience), "2" (3-6 years of experience), and "3" (Significant prevention experience) and separate them so that there are people from each ranking in each small group.
- Consider switch the location of the groups in the room for Session 3 if you think it would work better if a group in the back of the room moved to the front.



- If after Session 2 you observe that the dynamics in a small group seems not to be working well, use the morning of Session 3 to switch several people into another group, including the problem person saying for example that you thought it would be good for the group as a whole to “switch things up a bit.”
- It usually works well to have the groups create a name for their group before the first activity. It begins bonding the group.
- Before the first case study activity, ask the group to select a recorder and reporter for the activity. Tell them that they will be expected to rotate these roles so that everyone in the group has the opportunity to present at least once. You will have to attend to this expectation since one or two people will tend to respond for the group more than once.
- Consider providing small candies or fruit for days 2 and 3 in the afternoon after breaks when energy may flag.

Open Discussion Techniques¹

- Staying Focused
 - Begin each section by saying clearly and specifically what you will be covering. Then at the close of the section, repeat what you have covered. As the saying goes, “Say what you are going to do; do it; and then say what you did.”
- Organizing the Flow of Discussion.
 - Ask who wants to speak on a topic and then take volunteers in the order that you see their hands.
 - When the initial responders have spoken, ask if there are others who wish to add something.
 - If there is a sudden flurry of hand waving or agitated body language, interrupt the group and say, "I'm going to interrupt and allow a few people respond to the last comment. Then we will return to the discussion."
 - Ask leading and open-ended questions to get more clarification or go deeper, or to guide the conversation back to the topic at hand:
 - Can you give me an example of that?
 - Can you say more about that?
 - How did you get to that conclusion?
 - How do you see that relating to [whatever topic you're covering]?
 - What do you think a solution to that could be?
 - Have you experienced something like that before? What was it?
- Reflect and summarize. One of your most important jobs as facilitator is to take what participants are saying about a particular topic and then generalize and summarize what has been said to help the conversation arrive at a good conclusion.

¹ Some content adapted from *Waterfronts Florida Action and Interaction Guide*, Prepared by the FL Conflict Resolution Consortium ,
(<http://www.floridajobs.org/fdcp/dcp/waterfronts/OrientationTraining/Handouts/FacTipsTech.pdf>)



- Use “ELMO” as a group guideline (Enough. Let’s Move On.”).
- Broadening Participation
 - Ask: "Who else wants to say something?" "Blake, do you have anything to add?" (only if his/her body language suggests they want to speak)
 - Ask: "Does anyone have another point of view or perspective on this. Gently cut off those who talk too much or too long by interrupting them and asking if you can summarize what you have heard them say thus far. Then move on to another person.
 - Use the Clock - "We have a few more minutes; I want to make sure we have heard from everyone."
- Helping Individuals Make Their Points
 - Use active listening - Give full attention, acknowledge emotions, paraphrase key points and summarize as needed.
 - Draw people out by saying, "Can you say more about that?" Use constructive questions at appropriate times to: 1) summarize key points, 2) explore options, 3) relate the discussion to points previously made, and 4) test consensus.
- Managing Divergent Perspectives
 - Validate different views and summarize by focusing on points of agreement and difference in sequence, one at a time. (This works best when there are only a few themes.)
 - Call for responses by asking, "Are there any reactions to what (the speaker) said?"
 - Deliberately refocus the group by saying, "We have been talking about (topic A). Is this a good time to switch to (topic B)?" "Let’s take that up now?"
 - Identify themes or ask the group to do this: "I think you might be discussing several issues at the same time. They are: one (issue A), two (issue B), three (issue C) and four (issue D). Did I miss any?" Do not suggest or ask them for an order. If you wait, they will usually suggest a way to integrate some or all of the issues. If not, you can do this.
 - Refocus the group and use the Parking Lot: "Our discussion has branched out from our original purpose of (restate purpose). Which do you think are relevant to this particular topic? Does anyone have any comments on any of these issues or how they relate? We can put the other issues in the Parking Lot to attend to later.
- Handling Incorrect Answers
 - Cull out from the incorrect response any correct points and then proceed to add to this the correct information referring to the relevant references in the curriculum or research.
 - If the response is completely incorrect, say, “Some people think that. However, what we know now from current prevention research is that....” Then provide the correct information and a reference.



- Re-Focusing a Distracted or Low Energy Group
 - Take a short break.
 - Take a stretch break and lead the group in some easy stretching exercises or ask for a volunteer to lead the group.
 - End or change the activity you are doing and move to a more interactive one.
 - Attend to the time allocations for activities in the curriculum. However, when the noise level in the room goes down during the discussion, it usually means the groups are finished. Check in with each group and give another minute so that the slowest group can complete its work.
 - Invite the group to take a minute for a moment of silence and ask everyone to take a minute of deep breaths with their eyes closed. Lead this by using a quiet voice and modeling breathing in and out very slowly while clearing your mind of distractions.

Dealing with Unproductive Behavior

Difficult behavior is often unintentional. Inattentive members may be engaging in side-bar conversations, taking calls or indiscreetly dealing with e-mail. They might also have personal agendas or simply be disrespectful. They might also be unhappy because they have been mandated to attend the training. A positive intervention will most often assist you in dealing with behavior that does not help the group achieve its training goals or objectives.

- If you do have people attending who are required to attend, acknowledge privately that you know they are mandated to be there. State that you will check in with them at the end of each of the first few days to see how they are benefiting from the training and that you intend to make the time as useful as possible to them (e.g. providing tools to assist them in helping their constituents do better prevention work, offering additional training/teaching strategies for assessment, planning, etc.)
- Refer to the group guidelines established the morning of Session 1; restate their purpose (a safe, supportive, respectful and productive learning environment for all); and then refer specifically but to the guideline(s) being violated.
- Incorporate the “ouch!” option into the group guidelines. Explain that sometimes one of us might say something that is inadvertently hurtful to us. We have the option to say “ouch!” if this happens. As the facilitator, you would handle this if the situation arises.
- Use gentle and appropriate humor for redirection.
- Direct your questions to the individual for clarification.
- Seek help from the group in clarifying or reinforcing a point in question or being challenged. (e.g. “Has anyone else had that experience Maria is describing?”)
- Address the issue at a break or at the end of the day.
- Walk discreetly to where a disruptive person is sitting and stand a few feet behind her/him. Usually the disruptive behavior will stop solely due to your physical proximity.



Ending the Day

- Always allow time for the closure activities at the end of each session.
- At the end of the first day of a multiple day training, consider asking for “Pluses” for the day and “Wishes” for the next day. This will give you an idea of what is working for the group and what other needs you might need to attend to.
- As an added closure activity for a multi-day training, draw a triangle, a square and a circle on a piece of chart paper. Beside the triangle write, “Three points that I will remember from today’s discussions.” Beside the square, write “something that was discussed the squares with my beliefs or experience.” Beside the circle, “write “something still going around in my mind.” Ask the participants to write responses to each of these. Then solicit responses from the group. Save the “circle” items as parking lot issues or additional expectations.



INFORMATION SHEET 1.2

20 Principles for Successful Community Organizing

What follows is a list of take-away lessons and principles, a sort of manifesto for today's community organizers.

“Freedom, freedom is a hard won thing, and every generation has to win it again.”

1. Most people are motivated primarily by self-interest. As a creative community organizer, you are always trying to figure out people's common self-interest, the glue that binds political organizations and movements.
2. Institutions and people that hold power over others are rarely as united as they first appear. If you can't get a person or institution to support you, you want to do everything in your power to convince them that it's in their best self-interest to stay out of the fight.
3. Start the process of strategy development by imagining that instant just before victory. Then, working backwards, do your best to figure out the steps that will lead to that moment.
4. It is generally useful, as a part of any creative community organizing campaign, to advocate for a positive as well as to oppose a negative.
5. The more complicated a strategy or tactic, the harder it is to carry out, and the less likely that it will be successful. You can ask a few people to do a lot of things, particularly if they're committed activists. If you want hundreds or thousands of people to participate in a campaign, you need to ask the great majority of them to do one thing, and only one.
6. You need to believe that human beings, no matter how much they may hate each other, can somehow find some common connection. To do that, leave your stereotypes at the door.
7. In real life and in actual campaigns for social action, the people are always partly united, partly divided. It's up to you to reinforce unity and to compensate for the divisions among the people with whom you work.
8. Don't ever let anyone tell you that demonstrations were only effective in the 1960s--that in the twenty-first century, we need to find other, less confrontational ways to make our voices heard.
9. Be absolutely certain that the people you work with truly understand the risks they're taking, the things that could go wrong, the losses they might suffer, before they make the decision to act, individually or together.
10. One of the greatest skills an organizer can have is the ability to frame and ask questions in ways that make people not only want to answer them, but also to think deeply, and in unexpected ways, about what the answers might be.
11. Laughter really is therapeutic, and hope does heal. Be cheerful in the face of adversity, and help others feel that way.



12. The more sure you are of yourself, of your experiences in other communities and campaigns, the more you have to struggle to avoid the arrogance of thinking you know what's right for other people.
13. When an institution that has a responsibility to everyday people fails to do its job, one option is to build another organization to challenge the first one and force it to do the right thing. The other option is not only to build an alternative organization, but to use it as the base for a campaign to take over the original one.
14. When those who have been without power gain it, there is no guarantee that they will exercise it more democratically than those who have had it before.
15. The power of culture can be an antidote to people's inability to see beyond their "own people" or situation. Culture can transform consciousness and make social change transformative rather than merely instrumental.
16. Organizers are often unjustly accused by those in power of inciting violence or social outcry.. This fallacy needs to be put to rest. It is however a tactic the opposition sometimes uses to discredit your organization.
17. Go not only with what you know, but with whom you know. Even in the Internet age, personal relationships still count, especially when you're asking people to do something. When recruiting volunteers, give them a specific list of needs from which they can choose.
18. It's quite easy to slide from helping organize a community to becoming its leader and spokesperson--even though you're not really a member of that community.
19. We can never truly predict what human beings working together can accomplish, and therefore we can never compromise with injustice.
20. The beloved community of which Dr. King spoke, rather than something we reach some day in the future, may be something we experience a little bit every day while, as creative community organizers, we walk and work towards it.

Sid Kahn, "Creative Community Organizing: a Guide for Rabble-Rousers, Activists and Quiet Lovers of Justice." www.alternet.org/story/145924



INFORMATION SHEET 1.3

Steps in Community Organizing

1. Gain an understanding of the community

- A. State the issue in specific and positive terms.
- B. Why is this issue important enough so people are willing enough to take action about it?
- C. What data do you have (quantitative and qualitative) to attest to the importance of this issue?
- D. Can something be done to affect it in a reasonable timeframe?

2. Build your capacity to effect change

- A. Who are your stakeholders for this issue?
 - Who cares about this problem?
 - Who are your allies?
 - Who are the “loyal opposition?”
 - Who has the power to give you what you want?
- B. For each stakeholder...
 - What is their level of Involvement?
 - What do they contribute to your efforts?
 - What do they get from being involved in your efforts?
- C. What will be your infrastructure (meeting times and schedule, meeting place, agendas, modes and frequency of communication, contact person, etc.)?
- D. How will you build readiness (e.g. training, information sessions, media advocacy, etc.)

3. Articulate your issue clearly

- A. What is your group’s long term goal?
- B. What are your short-term goals (e.g. six months)?
- C. What is the benefit to the community if you succeed?



4. Plan and implement a purposeful action plan

- A. What specific culture needs are there within your community (language, access to technology, literacy level, cultural norms related to the issue)?
- B. What are your organizational strengths and weaknesses and the strategies to address them?
- C. What are your action steps with timelines, task assignments and performance measures?
- D. What training do you need to provide for those involved so they can advocate successfully?

5. Get the word out

- A. What is your plan to communicate with constituents using media of all forms?
- B. How will you thank supporters and helpers often, personally and publicly
- C. What ways will you use to celebrate successes along the way?

6. Evaluate

- A. What were your outcomes?
- B. What worked?
- C. What didn't work?
- D. What did you learn?
- E. Where do you need to build capacity to continue your efforts?

WORKSHEET 1.4

Your Recruitment Plan

Directions: Identify five key stakeholders (organizations or individuals and the sector of the community they represent. Then clearly and specifically identify what they can give to your cause and what they can get from being involved. Complete the last two columns at a later date.

Prospective Coalition/ Planning Group Member (Name/Title)	Sector	THE 'GIVE': What do they contribute to the cause you are supporting?	THE "GET": How will they benefit from their involvement?	Who will contact?	By when?



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*The 12 sectors recommended by SAMHSA are: Youth; Parents; Law Enforcement; Business; Media; Schools; Healthcare; State, local or tribal agencies; Civic and volunteer groups; Youth Serving Organizations; Religious or Fraternal Organizations; Other. For your issue, identify important “others.”