COALITION FACT SHEET #1

#1 BEFORE YOU BUILD YOUR COALITION

What is a Coalition? A *community coalition* is a group of individuals representing many organizations who agree to work together to achieve a common goal.[1] A coalition brings professional and grass-roots organizations from multiple sectors together, expands resources, focuses on issues of community concern, and achieves better results than any single group could achieve alone. Nonetheless, because a coalition involves an investment of time and resources, it should not be built if a simpler entity will get the job done or if community support is lacking. A coalition may address a time limited issue or establish a more sustained collaboration that helps a community analyze its issues to identify and implement multiple strategies that lead to policy, social and environmental change.

Why Coalitions Form. Coalitions may form to: 1) respond to an opportunity, such as funding; 2) respond to a threat or event such as a disease outbreak; or 3) expand organizations' limited time, expertise, resources, services, media coverage, contact with vulnerable populations or influence.

Characteristics of Effective Coalitions. Although each coalition is uniquely shaped by its community, successful coalitions have the following traits in common: [2]

- Ownership and support of coalition by coalition members and community
- High level of trust and reciprocity among members
- Frequent and ongoing training for members
- Active involvement of members to develop action plan of goals and objectives
- Implementation of a community action plan
- Productive meetings and decision-making
- Effective structure: Committed leadership team guides coalition to design/implement strategies
- Guidelines and procedures
- Continuous evaluation of coalition and its activities

Coalition Benefits. Coalitions offer benefits such as opportunities to: 1) exchange knowledge, ideas, and strategies; 2) share risks and responsibility; 3) build community concern and consensus for issues; 4) engage in collective action that builds power; 5) improve trust and communication among community sectors; and 6) mobilize diverse talents, resources, and strategies. Coalitions enable organizations to build capacity and develop interventions that meet their needs, are community-owned, culturally sensitive, and likely to be sustained.

Coalition Costs. Costs associated with coalition membership include: 1) loss of autonomy, competitive edge or ability to individually control outcomes; 2) conflict over goals and methods; 3) loss of resources (time, money, information, status); and 4) delays in solving problems or being recognized for accomplishments. Coalitions that survive over time must provide ongoing benefits that outweigh these costs.

Stages of Development. Coalitions develop in iterative stages. Although different programs use a different number of stages or refer to them by different names, CDC uses the following: 1) Commitment or engaging the community for build the coalition; 2) Assessment or looking at community assets and needs; 3) Planning or developing a Community Action Plan

1. Feighery, E. & Rogers, T. (1990). *Building and Maintaining Effective Coalitions*. Palo Alto, CA: Health Promotion Resource Center, Stanford Center for Research in Disease Prevention.
2. Butterfoss, F.D. *Coalitions and Partnerships in Community Health.* San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

(CAP) of strategic coalition activities; 4) Implementation or conducting policy, and environmental change strategies (PES); and 5) Evaluation or determining how well the coalition has reached PES goals

Steps for Building an Effective Coalition:

1. Develop your leadership team
2. Recruit diverse community organizations and convene the coalition
3. A community strengths, assets and resources
4. Develop a Community Action Plan (CAP) with feasible and appropriate goals, objectives and strategies
5. Implement and sustain policy and environmental change strategies (PES) to reach goals
6. Evaluate and improve the coalition and its strategies

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