

Tips and Suggestions for Local Buy-In

Place Town Hall Meeting Event on your Community Coalition Team Agenda at least two months prior to holding the event. If a media representative is not on your team, invite him/her to this meeting. It will support their “buy-in” from the start. Emphasize the events potential to raise awareness and effect long term sustainable change.

For instance you might state:

- 1) Our community will have an increased awareness regarding the dangers of underage drinking.
- 2) Review the impact Underage Drinking has had on your community.
- 3) The positive advantages when parents discuss the issue with their children proactively vs. reactively.
- 4) Talk about how preventing underage drinking can reduce negative outcomes, such as injuries and death from alcohol-related crashes in your community.
- 5) Discuss added steps the community can take to reduce the demand for, the availability of, and access to alcohol by persons under the age of 21 years.

Ideally, plan on scheduling your event in April, during Alcohol Awareness Month.

Prepare a media advisory or news release to encourage media coverage.

Ask a volunteer to keep a binder of all media coverage and videotape the events of the meeting.

Emphasize to your community through media releases food will be served and all ages are welcome to attend.

Identify a facilitator. That person should be a formal or informal leader that is well respected in the community. He/she would stand at a podium, provide a brief narrative by outlining the purpose of the meeting, introduce panel members, read questions, thank the audience, panel members for attending and participating, and then close the event.

Begin lining up panel members well in advance. Be sure to include representation from all sectors. Coalition Team Members are often ideal panelists as they may represent, law enforcement (local-state) , school, parent, public/mental health, retired, faith-based, business and youth sectors.

Prepare handouts for meeting participants. What I found helpful was to purchase index cards, pencils. Solicit questions from your audience, but also have back up questions on hand.

Additionally, plan well in advance as to where you will hold you Town Hall Meeting event. Ideally, you should find accommodations in a neutral setting for example a centrally located community center. Other big advantages to holding your event at these sites include greater buy-in from attendees, and budget surplus as building fees are generally waived when holding community events.

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Begin designing your flyers. Use photos taken from local landmarks as a backdrop for your event information. See below example of Call to Action media release and flyer as an example.

Post and send out both printed and/or electronic flyers and mailings to reach out to the entire community. It's your call. You know what is the best method of "getting the word out" in your community!

Use the media kit as a guide to help reach out to the media and encourage local news coverage.

On your flyer and in other media correspondence, set a very clear time line for the event to be held. Typically, two hours is more than adequate.

At the post Coalition Team Meeting, plan on discussing the event, lessons learned and overall results.

Present Certificates of Appreciation for those panel members/volunteers that supported your event at an informal gathering. Follow up with a media release of appreciation to both the community and volunteers in your local paper. Remember the two most read sections of the paper are the Editorial Section and the Obituaries.

Use this event to identify additional community stakeholders or coalition team members that will support your future goals. These persons along with your existing members will often be the key persons to drive norm change in your communities.