



## Event Planning Guide

The following will help your organization, agency or coalition to plan a successful event using the PowerPoint presentations and other resources in this outreach guide. A detailed checklist is located at the end of this document to help you organize your event. The checklist can be revised according to your planning process by deleting our examples and typing in your own information.

Before you begin to plan the details of your event, review the following suggestions and strategies:

- 1. Create a vision of success** - Before you begin any planning, have everyone in your organization or coalition be committed to the idea of a successful community event and believe you can make it happen!
  - Brainstorm together:
    - ⇒ What would a successful event look like?
    - ⇒ What audiences in community would you like to reach?
    - ⇒ What will the audience gain by attending the event?
    - ⇒ What will your organization or coalition gain by sponsoring the event?
- 2. Develop goals and objectives** - Taking the time and energy to do this upfront will help establish a clear direction to plan and evaluate your event.
  - Goals state what will happen as a result of the event.
    - ⇒ Example: (List pediatric, faith community, or other target audience here) will have an increased awareness about the need to improve end-of-life care so that people will take action for themselves, their loved ones and others in our community.
  - Objectives state how and when the event will happen. Include the specific topic(s) to be addressed, target audience, measurable outcome(s) and timeframe.
    - ⇒ Example: (Organization or coalition name) will conduct (list specific number here) of seminars using NHPCO's Outreach Guide materials for congregational members at three churches or synagogues by December 1, 2009.
- 3. Distribute the workload** – Establish an event planning committee, and assign tasks and responsibilities (that are based on your goals and objectives) among everyone participating in your organization or coalition. Then set regular meeting dates to keep everyone on track with their assignments.

4. **Start planning in advance** – Allow plenty of time to attend to all the details of planning and promotion. Use the event checklist below to develop an action plan for documenting tasks, person/s responsible and deadline dates. Also, remember that great speakers are often booked in advance, so contact your potential speaker/s early.
5. **Identify existing resources for donations** -
  - a. Make a list of resources that each internal member of the organization or coalition will contribute - for example, print handouts and flyers, provide audiovisual equipment, etc.
  - b. Make a list of external relationships you already have established in the community to ask for donations to support your event – for example, venues for food, publicity, media coverage, event location, etc.
6. **Plan the details** – (Refer to event checklist at the end of this document that you can adapt and modify.)
  - **Budget** – Make a list of all items that need some type of funding support. Funding can be acquired through in-kind support, monetary donations, or other donations.
  - **Location** - Make sure that topics and titles are enhanced by the location you choose. If the topic you choose is attractive to your audience but the location is unfamiliar or difficult to access, people are less likely to attend. Also, keep in mind that the location you choose can also communicate an affiliation with a group or belief system.
  - **Speakers** – If you are looking for speakers outside your organization or coalition, start with identifying existing relationships - you will be surprised by the speakers you have access to! Be sure to thoroughly brief all speakers regarding your goals, objectives, audiences and key messages.
  - **Program agenda** – Remember to allow time for the audience to participate in the event, and to socialize with one another and members of your organization or coalition. This can lead to meaningful conversations that can leave a lasting impression. Also, prepare:
    - ⇒ Written instructions for any facilitators, moderators, or greeters
    - ⇒ Sign in sheets for participants
  - **Refreshments** - Always include some type of food and beverage that your audience would enjoy (and that you can get donated for free if possible).
  - **Participant handouts** – Collate a participant information packet to distribute at the event that would include information about your organization or coalition, and information that would interest your primary audience. See Caring Connections' resource list for ideas.

7. **Promote and publicize** - Invest in one well-done promotional flyer for the event that can be used in multiple ways – mailings, posters, etc. Some ideas include:
  - Focus marketing efforts to targeted groups, not individuals - you get more “bang for your buck.”
  - Hold every member of partnership accountable for marketing to specific groups of people – for example, require every member of organization or coalition to be responsible for bringing three people to the event.
  - Faith community/church bulletins, supermarkets, little league games, community bulletin boards, book clubs, libraries, and hair salons are all potential distribution channels for your materials.
  - Use connections with professional or academic venues
    - ⇒ Offer continuing education through an approved school or agency
    - ⇒ Connect with local professional associations
    - ⇒ Go to the teachers in local schools – law, medicine, high-school, nursing, community colleges, legal assistant, theological seminaries – and encourage them to bring the class to the event.
  
8. **Evaluate your outcomes** – Refer to the Faith Outreach Guide Appendix; use or adapt the participant feedback form, to learn how to track and document your activities. Other suggestions include:
  - Have a suggestion or comment box available – it is a great way to ensure that participants have an opportunity to give anonymous feedback.
  - If a participant shares a personal story, ask if you could write it up or share it anonymously at future events or in your materials. Personal stories about the need to improve end-of-life care and services often have the greatest impact.
  
9. **Follow-up** - Collect participant names and contact information on a sign-in sheet at your event. People who attend have demonstrated an interest in your cause so find ways to keep them involved! You can also use your list to promote future events. In addition,
  - Write a story to print in your organization or coalition’s newsletter summarizing the event.
  
10. **Celebrate!** – Plan a celebration with your organization or coalition after completing your event to acknowledge the successes achieved. This will serve to build team spirit and motivate your group to plan future events.

