



FOR OUR FUTURE PARA NUESTRO FUTURO

Community Alliance for Safety and Peace

Quick Start Guide:

How can I make a difference For Our Future?

When it comes to making positive change in a neighborhood or city, every person counts. You make a difference. You can help create a safe, secure community - a community free of violence so that we and our future generations can thrive.

The first step to making a difference is making a commitment – a commitment to ourselves, our family, our community. It's realizing that the things we do now make a difference for our future.

A commitment made by many leads to authentic community engagement. And for building a community that lives true to its values, community engagement is key.

How can I start?

There are many ways to get started. You can join an activity that is already occurring. You can organize your own activities. Or, you can start by bringing your friends, family or neighbors together to talk about an issue that is meaningful to you, so you can together address it in a way that works for your community.

Here are **9 steps to holding a house meeting**: [this can lead to another page and/or a pdf]

1. Identify who you would like to invite. You can start with a small group, to keep it easy. Three to eight people are easy to manage.

2. Pick a time and place that works for everyone (or at least most). An hour is usually enough time.

Meet somewhere comfortable, convenient, and safe to be and to share concerns honestly. Someone's kitchen or living room might be the best place.

- ▶ If children that are not part of the meeting are coming along, be sure to have a safe place they can be and play or do their homework. Have an adult or older child not in the meeting keep an eye on them.



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3. Provide drinks and snacks. You can make refreshments, or ask people to bring something small to share. Sharing food or drink helps people feel at ease.

4. Have paper and pens or pencils. Designate one person to keep notes so good ideas don't get lost. Other people might like to doodle or write notes, to keep their own ideas flowing.

5. Introduce yourselves – even if you all know each other already. In addition to your name, you can include one or two sentences about something else. For example, you can share something positive that happened to you recently, like finding a new job, or your child getting a good grade in school. Do keep it short.

6. Open the discussion. Thank those there for coming. Also mention those who wanted to be there, but could not make it. Briefly explain why you wanted to meet.

- ▶ Is there an issue you want to address, or is there an activity you want to do? It could be that you simply feel like “something” needs to change in your neighborhood, and you want to talk about it with others so you can identify it and do something about it together.

7. Open up the discussion to others. One goal of your meeting is to find the issue, activity or value that you all feel needs to be a focus. Examples are:

- The block, vacant lot or park needs to be cleaned up.
 - You want to have babysitting or homework circles after school.
 - There are illegal activities in your neighborhood that need to stop.
 - You want to plant a community garden with fruits & vegetables, or decorative plants and flowers.
 - Streetlights need fixing.
 - Kids need safe passage from home to school and back.
- ▶ Be sure that you write all the ideas, because you might address them at another time.
 - ▶ Be sure that everyone gets a chance to share their thoughts – but don't force those who prefer to listen for now. If there are many things, choose the one that is most important for now.



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8. Close the discussion with a review of what was discussed and what next steps might be – have another meeting, talk with key people, like a local clergy or council person, or a neighbor that has the community’s respect. Maybe ready for action, like everyone going to pick up trash from the streets and vacant lots next Saturday followed by a BBQ in the park. Or you might be ready for deep community organizing.

- ▶ Be sure everyone got to say what they wanted to say – but be sure the discussion stays relevant and within your timeframe.

9. End the meeting by thanking everyone for participating. You might join in a prayer, or by another round of sharing as during the introduction, perhaps with what you are grateful for at that meeting.

What do I need for deep community organizing?

So, you have already talked with your neighbors, joined a few peace walks and neighborhood BBQs and block parties, met with your other community leaders.

Now its time to do some deep community organizing. Your next steps are to:

- ONE: Identify a leadership team.
- TWO: Develop a common vision.
- THREE: Develop a strategy.
- FOUR: Implement the plan and evaluate the results.

Here are some tools to help you on that path:

New Organizing Institute Toolbox: <http://neworganizing.com/toolbox/>

From the Grassroots – Understanding Community Organizing (Video):
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fIXHRxc9q1k>

Community Organizing Guide:
<http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/negp/reports/orguide.pdf>



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Handbook on Community Organizing – Indianapolis Resource Center:
http://www.inrc.org/Assets/docs/workbook/2_organizing.pdf

The Citizen's Handbook: <http://www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook>

Doorknocking – a step by step “game” on conducting a doorknocking campaign:
<http://organizinggame.org>