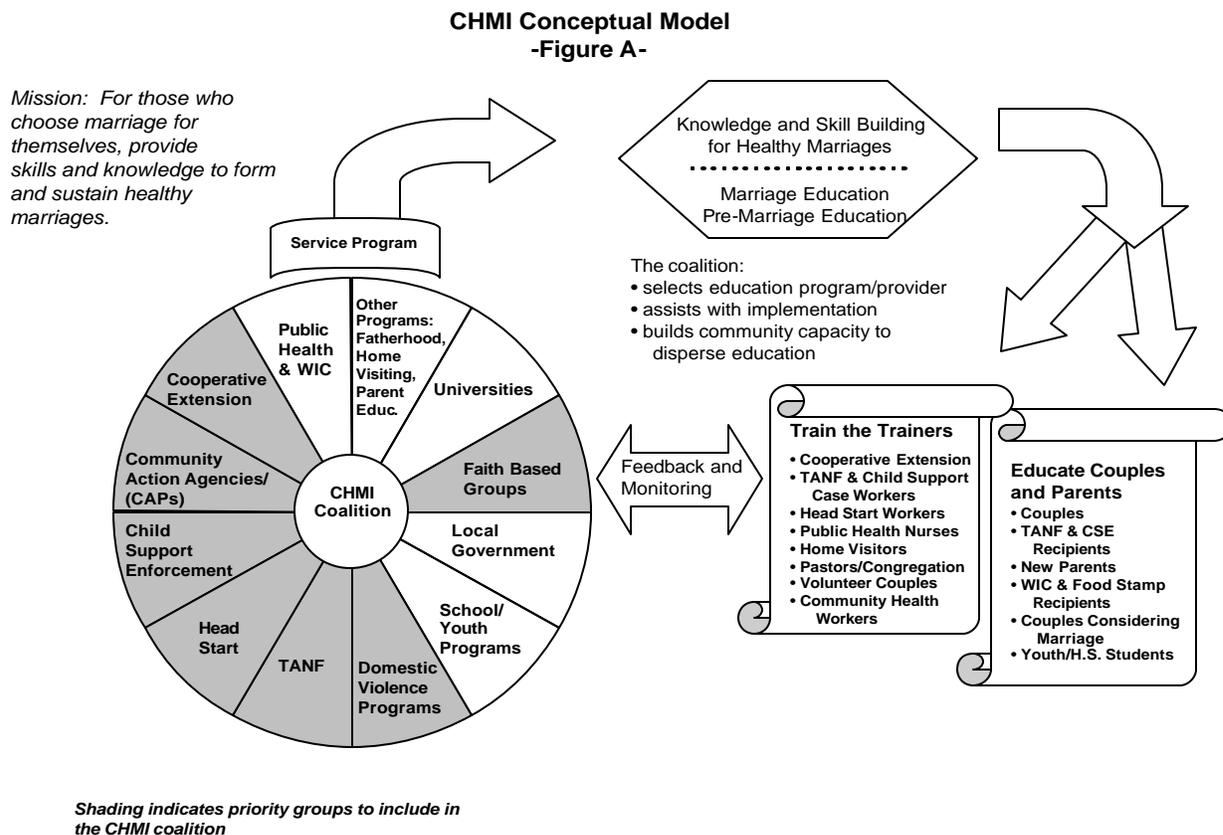


Coalition Building for A Community Healthy Marriage Initiative

INTRODUCTION

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF), DHHS, is committed to helping communities build comprehensive **Community Healthy Marriage Initiatives (CHMI)** designed to help couples who choose marriage for themselves form and sustain a healthy marriage. This initiative is central to ACF's mission of assuring the well-being of children. Each community interested in developing a CHMI is encouraged to build a broad community coalition as a base for planning and implementing healthy marriage services. ACF encourages communities to use the coalition approach to assure broad support, share community resources, and engage the community at large in healthy marriage services. Of particular importance are coalition partners that serve or can help reach low-income families and fragile families who are the potential or current recipients of state and federally funded social services. ACF's priority is to serve these parents and their children. An important first step for the coalition is defining and selecting the community service strategy that will reach these target populations. A conceptual model for the coalition's role in building a CHMI is depicted in **Figure A**.



Other technical assistance modules in this series describe a variety of best practices for service strategies. This module focuses on building the coalition. Individuals creating coalitions can find a vast body of literature and a number of web-based resources. The purpose of this coalition building module is to describe suggested coalition members, outline steps for establishing coalitions, and provide information on coalition building resources. The module includes four sections:

1. **Section I** provides a list of potential partner organizations that sites should consider including as part of their coalition.
2. **Section II** describes the essential steps to building a coalition. These steps describe how to build collaborations among a diverse group of members. The steps serve as a guide to propel coalitions forward; each coalition should examine its current structure, process and stage of development and apply the steps that are most appropriate.
3. **Section III** offers a series of questions that coalitions can use to ensure that the essential components of each step, described in Section II, are addressed.
4. **Section IV** contains a listing of websites, books and assessment tools with useful information on building a coalition. The goal of this section is to help direct coalitions towards additional resources that will assist them in moving beyond the basics provided in the first and second sections of the module.

We would like to acknowledge the extensive work of the many authors who have written extensively on building coalitions, as well as the thousands of coalitions across the country whose experiences have contributed to this body of literature. Specific sources that contributed significantly to the development of this coalition building module are included in Section IV.

I. POTENTIAL PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

The following section contains a listing and description of organizations that should be considered for inclusion in a Community Healthy Marriage Initiative coalition. Agencies and groups are listed in priority groups. ACF strongly encourages the inclusion of certain agencies and groups to help the community plan for potential federal funding opportunities that may become available over the next several years. For example, funding opportunities may be available through TANF, Child Support Enforcement, Refugee Resettlement, among others, therefore a viable community coalition will include representatives from these agencies at the local level. Faith-based groups are also a priority for CHMI coalitions. Many faith-based groups are natural partners for CHMI projects as they have complementary missions and have longstanding experience in supporting healthy marriage services.

The leadership group that plans for the development of the coalition will need to think strategically about which agencies to involve, in what order, and the best way to approach them. Some groups will be natural allies, while others will need to be approached carefully and sounded out to understand their issues and concerns. For example, domestic violence programs are potential supporters, but they will be very concerned about services that inadvertently lead women to stay in dangerous marriages. If domestic violence program leaders are engaged early on as partners, they can participate in planning to make sure that marriage education trainers are taught how to recognize signs of domestic violence and that programs have up-to-date information about community domestic violence services. Often it is best to approach key community leaders individually to gain support before a larger community group is invited to participate. Once key stakeholders are on-board and initial goals have been set by a steering committee, a typical next step is an event inviting other agencies and groups to participate in a session that educates them about the problem, goals, and best practice options that the community might choose to implement. At an appropriate point, the leadership group, working with local counterparts of state agencies, will need to strategize about how and when to engage state agencies.

Table 1 summarizes the list of potential partner organizations and can be used as a checklist to monitor the diversity of coalition membership. Following the table is a brief description of each organization.

**Table 1: Check List of Potential Partner Organizations
for A Community Healthy Marriage Coalition**

POTENTIAL PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS	Identified / Contacted Appropriate Local Representative to Participate? (Yes/No)	Agreed to Participate? (Yes / No)
STATE & LOCAL AGENCIES (FEDERALLY FUNDED SERVICES)		
Tier I (Priority Partners): State and Local Programs that are potential funding partners and that work with target service populations		
Social Services (TANF)		
Child Support Enforcement Program		
Family Services (Child Protective or Child Welfare Programs) ❖ These agencies sponsor Safe and Stable Family Programs that might have local service teams		
Head Start Agencies		
Community Action Agencies		
State Refugee Resettlement Programs and Community -Based Refugee Resettlement Agencies		
State and County Cooperative Extension Programs (see state land grant colleges)		
Tier II: Other State and Local Offices that have related missions and/or have access to target service populations		
State Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Programs and Local WIC Service Providers ❖ These agencies offer supplemental food and nutrition education for low income women, infants, and children		
Department of Public Health: Maternal and Child Health (MCH)		
State and Local Employment Services: Local Workforce Investment Agency		
Housing and Urban Development: Local Housing Authorities		
Child Day Care Licensing Agencies/ Day Care Funding Agencies ❖ Agencies that train day care providers or authorize day care subsidies for low income families		
Other Agencies Relevant for Your Community		
FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS		
Local Congregations		
Local Affiliates of National Faith-based Organizations ❖ Catholic Dioceses and/or Archdiocese ❖ African American Churches or Alliances ❖ Inner-City Church Alliances		
Other Groups Relevant for Your Community		
LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS		
Domestic Violence Groups (Priority Partner)		
Local Government (e.g., Mayor's Office, County Council or Commission)		
Local Business Groups (e.g. Chamber of Commerce, Employee Assistance Programs)		
Neighborhood Associations		
Fatherhood Support Organizations		
African American Service Sororities and Fraternities (e.g. Alpha Phi Alpha & Alpha Kappa Alpha)		
Local Organizations for Low Income Individuals		
Local Community -Based Social Service Agencies (e.g. Catholic Charities, YMCA/YWCA)		
Other Groups Relevant for Your Community		

A. STATE & LOCAL AGENCIES THAT ADMINISTER FEDERALLY FUNDED SERVICES

The following federal programs are involved in activities relevant to the CHMI. The local offices, and in some cases the state offices of these federally funded programs, should be approached to be part of the community coalition. In some communities, they may already be actively involved in supporting community efforts to promote healthy marriages. Coalition members may be able to leverage their existing relationships with many of the local and state offices and assigned technical assistance providers can work with CHMI sites to establish linkages with many of these programs.

TIER I Partners

Social Services: TANF (Priority Partner)

State and local Social Service Agencies have the mandate and authority to administer Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs with state and federal dollars (TANF Block Grant, Maintenance of Effort dollars). States have wide flexibility to develop and implement their own welfare programs. The structure of the TANF program differs from state to state, and may be state or county administered. TANF programs assist participants in terminating their dependence on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage. Depending on the state, services to individuals can be provided by the TANF agency or a community contractor (e.g., one-stop career centers, community-based organizations).

TANF serves the primary population for the CHMI. The local and state TANF agencies are important partners for the CHMI coalitions because of their state mandate to promote two-parent families. The federal legislation authorizing TANF, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act (PROWRA) of 1996, gives states the authority to fund programs that help families form and sustain healthy marriages. To date, a number of states are currently using TANF funds for family formation activities. To contact local and state TANF representatives, coalition members with existing relationships can leverage those connections or contact their ACF Regional Office for an appropriate state or local contact. Additionally, ACF technical assistance providers can assist sites with making connections to local and state TANF representatives.

Child Support Enforcement Program (Priority Partner)

Child Support Enforcement is a federal/state/local partnership to promote family self-sufficiency and child well-being, locate non-custodial parents, establish paternity when necessary, and issue orders and collect child support. Parents receiving TANF or Medicaid for their children must cooperate with Child Support Enforcement programs; however, non-recipients can also access these services.

It is important to note that the structure of Child Support Enforcement differs from state to state; in some states the program is administered at the state level and in others it is administered at the county level. The operating agency (e.g., Department of Social Services,

Department of Revenue, etc.) also differs by state. State and local jurisdictions utilize several tools to enforce child support obligations, such as income withholding and credit bureau reporting.

This agency, at the state and local level, is a priority partner for CHMI coalitions. For example, Child Support Enforcement programs support state projects that can provide mediation, counseling, and parenting education services. There are also projects in a number of states to encourage marriage and promote responsible fatherhood. To contact local and state Child Support Enforcement representatives, you may ask coalition members with existing relationships and the ACF Regional Office to provide contact information. Additionally, ACF technical assistance providers can assist with establishing those linkages.

Child and Family Services (Priority Partner)

Every state has an agency responsible for administering ACF family service programs designed to protect children from abuse and strengthen families. At the federal level, the Children's Bureau is the responsible agency within ACF. At the state level, these services are usually located in a Children and Family Department, a Social Services Department, or within an "umbrella" Health and Social Services Department. These agencies all have local service units responsible for delivering services directly to families and responsible for investigating reports of child abuse and neglect. These agencies are also usually responsible for foster care programs, adoption programs, and services for adolescents. One of the programs administered by state agencies and delivered at the local level is the Promoting Safe and Stable Families program, which is designed to prevent the unnecessary separation of children from their families, improve the quality of care and services to children and their families, and ensure permanency for children by reuniting them with their parents, by adoption or by another permanent living arrangement.

The Promoting Safe and Stable Families program is a priority partner for CHMI coalitions because the reauthorization of the program, signed into law by President Bush in 2001, clarifies that monies can be used for promoting healthy marriages to further the well-being of children. To contact local Child and Family Services representatives, coalition members and the ACF Regional Office can leverage existing connections and the technical assistance providers can facilitate establishing linkages to local representatives.

Local Head Start Agencies (Priority Partner)

Head Start serves low-income families by delivering comprehensive child development programs including education; medical, dental, and mental health services; nutrition; and parent involvement. The Head Start philosophy is built on three principles: providing comprehensive child development services; working in close partnership with parents and other family members to develop and utilize their strengths so that all involved adults may successfully support child, personal, and family goals; and building linkages and collaborations with other service providers and leaders in the community. Federally provided Head Start funding is awarded directly to local Head Start agencies. State level Head Start government agencies do not exist but some states have statewide Head Start associations that serve as voluntary education and coordination entities.

Many Head Starts have received grants to develop Fatherhood Support Programs, which can be adapted and expanded to include healthy marriage services. Head Start also has a history of supporting parent and family education services and can provide access to low-income families.

Community Action Agencies (Priority Partner)

Almost all counties (96%) and local communities have Community Action Agencies or Programs (CAPs or CAAs) that are responsible for developing and administering community-based services funded by state-allocated funds from the federal Community Service Block Grant (CSBG). At the federal level, the CSBG is administered by the ACF Office of Community Services (OCS). At the state level the CSBG is usually administered within the Social or Human Services Department. The CSBG can be used to provide a range of services to address the needs of low income individuals to ameliorate the causes and conditions of poverty. CAPs meet local needs in several broad categories including providing emergency food, clothing financial assistance, employment counseling, housing, literacy classes, nutrition counseling, senior services, small business assistance and transportation. CAPs also administer 40% of local Head Start programs.

CAPs are important partners for CHMI coalitions because of their influence over community funding streams and because of their longstanding role as key community development leaders. In many communities, they can provide access to facilities and offer in-kind staff support. They may also provide access to target populations and help identify marriage education trainers.

State Refugee Resettlement Programs and Community-Based Refugee Resettlement Agencies (Priority Partner)

Refugee Resettlement programs are responsible for establishing refugee services in the state by contracting with local service providers. The local programs are assisted by national voluntary agencies (VOLAGS) that have Cooperative Agreements with the Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (DOS/PRM). The VOLAGs provide resettlement assistance and are the initial sponsors of refugees entering the United States. The federal Office of Refugee Resettlement, working with the VOLAGs, is allocating a portion of its funds to provide grants to state refugee resettlement programs to support healthy marriage services.

Including Refugee Resettlement programs as a partner in the CHMI coalition is important because of potential access to available funding streams. The Office of Refugee Resettlement within ACF awarded \$3 million to states to support, through sub-grants to community-based organizations, programs that promote healthy families, known as the “family set-aside.” These funds will provide orientation, education, and counseling services that help maintain healthy marriages, promote responsible fatherhood, and secure the well-being of families in the refugee community. ACF will provide communities with a list of state contacts for the Refugee Resettlement programs.

State and County Cooperative Extension (Priority Partner)

Many counties in the U.S. have local County Cooperative Extension Offices that offer a variety of community building and educational services to county residents, including families and youth. While cooperative extension services are well known for their 4-H programs for youth, they also offer many other services such as parenting and child development education and nutrition education. For example, local programs might include:

- ❖ Healthy Families programs that work to assess family strengths and needs, enhance family functioning, promote positive parent-child interaction, and promote healthy childhood growth and development.
- ❖ Health education for youth surrounding Youth Tobacco and Drug-Use Prevention, Teenage Pregnancy Prevention, and Leadership and Community Development.

Including Cooperative Extension as a part of the CHMI coalition will provide important access to training and educational services. ACF will provide CHMI coalition sites with a listing of the Cooperative Extension point of contact in their state. The point of contact can serve as an important member of the coalition and can provide access to state level contacts and resources and work with sites to identify appropriate local/county level contacts.

TIER II Partners

State and Local Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program

The WIC program, federally funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), targets low-income, nutritionally at-risk populations (e.g., pregnant women, breast-feeding women, and infants (up to their first birthday), and children to age five. It provides vouchers to purchase food, nutrition counseling, and access to necessary health services through healthcare referrals. State Public Health Departments administer the federal program and local WIC centers provide direct services, such as food vouchers. Local WIC providers can help coalitions reach target populations and may be able to integrate messages about healthy marriage and healthy marriage services into their education and public awareness activities.

State and Local Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Public Health Programs

The Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB), DHHS, provides Title V grants to states to design and implement a wide range of maternal and child health programs. Most states, through state and local health departments, support community-level MCH services such as:

- home visits from a nurse to new parents to support the growth and development of infants and well-being of low-income families;
- prenatal care and home visiting programs for women with high risk pregnancies; and
- well baby, immunization, and child health promotion services.

Local and state MCH service providers are natural partners for CHMI coalitions because of their shared mission to promote the health and well-being of all children. States have broad discretion for allocating Title V (MCH Block Grant) funds. They also often have service systems in place that might serve as referral points and a base for reaching low-income families that would benefit from healthy marriage services. Home visiting programs to parents with infants have been shown to be effective in promoting healthy marriages.

State and Local Employment Services: Local Workforce Investment Agency

Through the U.S. Department of Labor, the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) provides funding to states to build the labor market through workforce training and placement of workers in jobs via employment services. Funding from the ETA is designated to the state under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). Services are provided in one-stop career centers. In each state the Governor is responsible for designating local workforce areas, with each having a Workforce Investment Board. The workforce investment board includes local businesses, local education entities, labor organizations, economic development agencies, and one-stop partners. While local employment programs and Boards are not likely to be a first tier partner for building a CHMI coalition, they may be able to help inform residents about services and serve as a referral point. They could also be educated about the importance of healthy marriages for a productive workforce and come on-board as resource partners.

Local Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Housing Authority

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is charged with assisting communities to develop affordable, safe, and decent housing for low-income families. To achieve this end, housing authorities were created to work with local governments and agencies to develop long-term housing strategies for communities. The local Housing Authority runs public housing units and Section 8 housing, as well as administers employment and training programs. Local housing authorities and subsidized housing development offer opportunities to reach families that can benefit from healthy marriage services. They may also help provide facilities and in-kind support for marriage education activities.

State and Local Child Day Care Licensing Agency

To improve the quality of life of children, the Child Day Care Licensing agencies at the county or state level offer an array of services to child care licensees, parents, and the general public. These include independent consultation, workshop and conference presentations on topics related to child care, referrals to child care agencies and resources, and trainings of new child care providers. These agencies may be partners to help reach families who would benefit from marriage education or may serve as a source for marriage education trainers.

B. FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Faith-based groups are natural and priority partners for Community Healthy Marriage Initiatives. There are a number of benefits to including faith-based organizations in coalitions. For example, faith organizations have established communication processes in their

congregations and in the community which can be used to provide information on collaborative activities and services (e.g., newsletters, announcements before and after services). Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and other houses of worship may already be supporting marriage education activities for their congregations, may have trained church leaders in marriage education and mentoring, and may offer broader community leadership and in-kind resources.

Local Congregations

Local congregations that serve the population that the coalition hopes to reach are logical partners. The coalition must identify those local congregations and conduct active outreach. Faith-based coalition partners should be reflective of the predominate religious and ethnic congregations in the community (e.g., Hispanic churches, inner-city churches, Jewish synagogues, etc.). Individual coalitions should brainstorm about the predominant faith congregations in their own communities and make plans to include identified Churches, Synagogues, and Mosques.

Local Affiliates of National Faith-based Organizations

In addition to local congregations, the coalition can also work with national faith-based organizations to identify local affiliates. The following is a brief list of national faith-based organizations that have local level affiliates. The following list is **only** suggestive, and not inclusive of all religious affiliations.

Catholic Diocese (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) serves as an umbrella organization for local-level diocese and other Catholic-sponsored activities. Departments of the USCCB include among others, National Black Catholic Congress, Hispanic Affairs, World Youth Day, and Natural Family Planning. The website provides links to local-level Catholic Dioceses (www.usccb.org/dioceses.htm).

Congress of National Black Churches

The Congress of National Black Churches, Inc. (CNBC), is an ecumenical coalition of eight historically Black denominations that joined together in collective and collaborative efforts to serve, support, sustain and empower the African American community. CNBC's mission is to foster Christian unity, charity and fellowship and to collaborate with ministries that promote justice, wholeness, fulfillment and spiritual values. CNBC has affiliates consisting of churches, health councils, community organizations and other groups who are working to improve the quality of life in their neighborhoods and communities. These affiliates are located in cities across the nation. (www.cnbc.org).

C. LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

Local community organizations can play an important role in the coalition. These organizations are particularly important for ensuring that the coalition is responding to the needs of the community within which it works. In addition, these organizations, along with local faith-based organizations, are an important source of referrals of couples into pre-marriage and marriage trainings.

Domestic Violence Groups (Priority Partners)

Healthy marriages are not abusive marriages. It is important to have local domestic violence groups involved in the planning stages of your coalition to ensure that marriage education trainers are taught how to recognize signs of domestic violence and that CHMI programs have current information about community domestic violence services. To locate domestic violence groups, consider using local community resource directories to find a listing of programs and shelters in the community.

Local Government (e.g., County Governments, Mayor's Offices, City Council)

Local governments, including County Governments and City Councils, could serve as partners to gain administrative and political support, acquire local funds and in-kind support, and integrate the activities with other local initiatives and services.

Local Business Groups (e.g., Chamber of Commerce, Business Alliance)

Local business groups, including the Chamber of Commerce and other Business Alliances, could serve as partners to attract local business leaders, and possible financial or in-kind support. Business leaders may be interested in services that improve the family lives of their employees.

Local Foundations

Local foundations represent another potential coalition partner that can serve as a source of funding and provide access to resources for healthy marriage activities. (The module on funding includes more information on foundations.)

Neighborhood Associations

A coalition will often find that formal and informal neighborhood associations can be avenues to reach “grassroots” representation and to encourage community participation in the program.

Fatherhood Support Organizations

Local fatherhood support organizations may already have clearly developed partners that would be interested in also participating in marriage initiative projects.

African American Service Fraternities and Sororities (e.g., Alpha Phi Alpha & Alpha Kappa Alpha)

In some communities, the local chapters of fraternities and sororities may provide access to influential members of the community. For example, Alpha Phi Alpha, an African American fraternity, has been involved in promoting healthy fatherhood. Sororities like Alpha Kappa Alpha are involved in community service projects that support among other projects, those related to health, economic empowerment, education, and the African American family.

Local Organizations for Low Income Individuals (e.g., Food Banks)

For coalitions that are reaching out to low-income families and TANF recipients, a valuable partner for planning and client referrals may be local organizations that already serve low-income individuals, such as food and clothing banks.

Community Based Social Service Non-Profit Agencies (e.g., Catholic Charities, YMCA/YWCA)

Communities will often have natural leaders with similar interests in their community such as YMCA/YWCAs, and Catholic Charities. Catholic Charities USA is the largest private network of social services organizations in the United States that works to support families, reduce poverty and build communities. Local Catholic Charities staff members and volunteers help people become self-sufficient. Services are offered to people regardless of faith, race, or age. State and local branches of Catholic Charities can be found www.catholiccharitiesusa.org. The YMCA/YWCA is a charitable, voluntary, community-based association dedicated to improving the quality of life for children, youth, adults and families through programs that build spirit, mind and body. If the CHMI coalition adopts a youth strategy as part of its services, the YMCA/YWCA could serve as a link to youth groups and other community members.

II. BUILDING A COALITION: CRITICAL STEPS

This section describes essential steps to address when building a coalition. These steps reflect the process by which a coalition establishes a collaborative partnership among a diverse set of members. All steps need to be addressed for building a successful coalition; however, the steps do not need to be implemented in the order in which they are presented. Some steps may occur simultaneously, others may occur sequentially. Each coalition should examine its current structure, internal processes and stage of development to apply the steps that are most appropriate for advancing the coalition's progress.

Core steps for building a successful coalition include:

❖ Clearly define the coalition's leadership
❖ Clearly define the coalition's core group
❖ Assemble the coalition's broad membership
❖ Clearly define the coalition's shared mission and vision, goals and action steps
❖ Define coalition structure, staffing and communication
❖ Identify resources and funding sources
❖ Implement strategies and action plans to achieve the coalition's mission and goals
❖ Evaluate the work of the coalition as it progresses
❖ Sustain the coalition

The remainder of this section describes the key components of each step listed above.

❖ **Clearly define coalition's leadership.**

Coalition leaders must attend to the many aspects of organizational functioning, including the convening of meetings, communication, clarity of roles, decision-making and conflict resolution processes, and maintaining the focus and momentum of the coalition.

Within coalitions, the most effective leadership is that which focuses on facilitation and coordination. Coalition leaders facilitate coalition meetings, which includes creating and distributing agendas, ensuring that meeting protocols are followed (e.g., starting on time,

recording and distributing proceedings), ensuring that all members have an opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns, and remaining neutral. Leaders also follow-up on decisions made by the coalition and keep the coalition on task and the coalition's mission at the forefront of all activities. If the leader is unpaid, it is important to avoid the pitfall of leaders feeling overloaded with coalition-related responsibilities, commitments and projects, on top of the other work they do. Leadership should be shared as broadly as possible, rather than falling on the shoulders of one or two individuals. Successful coalition leaders must:

- Be personally committed to the coalition's mission and vision, and inspire commitment in other members and the community.
- Build broad-based involvement and invite active participation.
- Keep conversation and action flowing among members.
- Have the ability to facilitate group meetings and progress.
- Assist in surfacing, addressing and resolving conflicts among coalition members.
- Demonstrate trustworthiness, patience, energy and hope.
- Establish trust among coalition members and the community.

❖ **Clearly define coalition's core group.**

A core group within the coalition needs to be established to fill the leadership role, with responsibilities and processes clearly defined. In addition to this core group, a lead agency designated as the legal entity that can receive funds and hire staff for the coalition also needs to be established. The core group will be focused on supporting the programmatic aspects of the coalition. Collectively, this core group will have more contacts and more knowledge of the community than any single person or organization and will make it easier to identify and recruit broad membership partners. Diverse representation in the core group is critical. The core group should include:

- Important stakeholders and key supporters of the initiative.
- Adequate representation from the community to ensure that community "voice" is heard from multiple perspectives (e.g., ethnicity and race, socioeconomic level, geographic location).
- Leaders recognized either formally or informally in the community (e.g., church leaders, county or municipal officials).

❖ **Assemble the coalition's broad membership.**

For coalitions in the early stages of development, an important step is defining who needs to be at the table and what their contribution will be. A broad array of partners working together in all phases of a coalition's work will help with identifying and effectively addressing problems, developing plans, taking collective action, and refining the coalition's actions over time. A larger, more diverse set of coalition members enables the group to access and attract a greater number and variety of resources to support the coalition, and increases community "buy in" as multiple perspectives contribute to the group's decisions and action plan. Diversity among members and inclusion of agencies, faith-based groups, and community groups provides for a greater potential to establish projects that are likely to be sustained over time.

Inclusive membership will occur only through active recruiting (see the list of suggested or possible partners, Section I). As reflected in the core group membership, coalition members should include:

- Stakeholders or those who are either affected by the issue or responsible for taking action within the community on the issue .
- Community opinion leaders (e.g., clergy, business or civic leaders, or others who are highly credible in the community) who influence large numbers of community members.
- Policy makers (e.g., local political leaders, state representatives and others in policy-making positions) who can add credibility to the coalition and its mission and increase opportunities to influence policy related to the coalition’s issue of interest.

The group should generate a list of potential members, then examine the coalition’s membership in light of its shared vision, mission and objectives to ensure that all of the key “players” related to the issue are invited to the table. Coalitions may want to develop an organizational fact sheet that includes the vision, mission and objectives of the coalition to hand out to new or potential members. The recruitment of new members is an ongoing process, and is not limited to the initial formation of the core group and its broader membership.

It is important to get a firm commitment from members and for all parties involved to understand how the coalition will function as an organization and how responsibility will be shared among coalition members. Each member must be committed to: the overarching issue driving the coalition’s mission; open communication among members and with individuals, agencies and organizations outside of the coalition; and the belief that each organizational member has the right to actively participate in the coalition.

❖ **Clearly define the coalition’s shared mission and vision, goals and action steps.**

To succeed, coalitions need to have a clear mission that is shared by the broad coalition members and to which its core leaders and members are highly committed. The mission identifies the overarching purpose of the coalition and provides a target on which all members can focus their efforts, especially during times in which progress appears stalled or the coalition’s focus deviates. As the coalition matures it is important to adhere to its mission and strategic plan. Addressing the general questions “who are you and what do you want to accomplish?” the mission statement should:

- Concisely describe what the coalition is going to do and why;
- Use widely inclusive language to enroll potential new members and avoid limiting participation; and
- Be outcome-oriented.

Equally important to the mission is the development of clear goals and strategies and action steps to achieve those goals. An initial first step might be a workshop or retreat about the group’s vision, during which members determine short- and long-term goals and begin to lay the foundation for action plans. Coalitions need to be oriented to produce meaningful change

through defined goals. While networking and information exchange are valuable aspects of coalitions, specific actions need to emerge from the planning process.

Working with the members, coalitions should create a worksheet that states the objectives or goals, needed resources and relationships, and timelines for accomplishing the coalition's objectives. While clearly set and available to guide the coalition's actions, timelines need to remain flexible if, when put into practice, they are unrealistic. The worksheet may also describe the potential barriers to success and strategies to overcome them.

The process should include the following steps:

- State the **mission** to describe what the coalition intends to accomplish and why it is important.
- State the **objectives** to indicate how much the coalition hopes to accomplish by when.
- Identify **strategies** for how the coalition will accomplish its work.
- Select specific **changes to be achieved** that will result in accomplishment of the coalition's goals and objectives.
- Identify **action steps** (e.g., which members will do which tasks by when), and reflect on the overall plan to ensure that it is complete, clear, enables the coalition to accomplish what it intends to accomplish, anticipates potential challenges and obstacles, and is flexible enough to respond to unanticipated changes in the community.

❖ Define coalition structure, staffing and communication.

Structure. Coalitions need to have a framework around which the coalition is structured to allow the group to function efficiently and effectively. As mentioned previously, the first step will be to designate a lead agency as the legal operating entity for the coalition. The structure defines the procedures of the coalition, including how members are accepted, leadership is chosen, differences are mediated, decisions are made, and work and responsibility are delegated. Coalitions can adopt structures that take any of the following forms:

- Steering committee
- Advisory or supporting committee
- Task forces

One element of a coalition's structure focuses on the establishment of a decision-making process. A clear democratic decision-making process (e.g., majority consensus) must be established to allow for broad input into decisions and for disagreement to occur and be resolved.

It is also critical that coalitions conduct meaningful meetings, which includes:

- Respecting the availability and time constraints of member organizations; and
- Holding agenda-driven, efficient meetings through which progress is articulated, decisions are made, and progress is achieved.

To increase the chances of conducting meaningful meetings, members should establish a regular meeting time and place as early as possible, and communicate the meeting agenda early

to members, allowing those unable to attend to provide comments if they choose. At the *initial* coalition meetings, the following activities should be completed:

- Write a mission statement;
- Identify a facilitator for future meetings and agenda setting;
- Obtain commitment from coalition members;
- Identify agencies or organizations for a targeted recruitment effort; and
- Select a name, one that clearly describes the coalition's focus and can serve it well in terms of publicity.

Staffing. The best staff are those with strong organizational skills, group facilitation skills, and a community development philosophy. The nature of the staff's role may vary from coalition to coalition, and may include coordinator, facilitator, problem solver, communication link among members, clerical functions, among other roles. Hiring a core staff, even if it is a part-time position that pays only modestly, may significantly benefit a coalition in that this staff, hired with a strong set of related skills, can help organize, facilitate and mobilize the coalition.

Communication. Effective communication—both internally, among a coalition's members, and externally, with the broader community—is both critical and essential to a coalition's success. It is important to ensure that all coalition members understand the coalition's mission, goals and actions, and their roles and responsibilities in contributing to the coalition's success. Open communication engenders trust, builds ownership and commitment, and builds internal credibility among coalition members. Successful coalitions must provide time for networking and developing effective communication processes for use during meetings and other exchanges among coalition members.

To communicate effectively with outside sources, coalitions can create an information packet that includes:

- Cover letter explaining coalition's mission and vision;
- Fact sheets, news clips, and other information that support the coalition's mission; and
- List of coalition members and endorsing or supporting organizations.

(Refer to the step "Assemble the Coalition's Broad Membership" to identify how this packet can be used to orient new members).

❖ **Identify resources and funding sources.**

Coalitions need funding to sustain their basic efforts of coordination, collaboration and information exchange. Funding can support an array of coalition activities, including enabling the coalition to hire core staff such as a coordinator, facilitator and/or other staff; pay for mailings; support marketing activities; or pay for the coalition's projects or activities.

Before seeking funding, coalitions are encouraged to consider for what purposes funding will be used. Coalitions can usually get started with a minimal budget that sustains their basic coordination, collaboration and information exchange, including money for core staff, mailings, rental of meeting space, and an annual meeting. In seeking out funding, coalitions can:

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- Apply for grants
 - Participate in local fund-raising activities
 - Seek in-kind support
 - Approach the private sector, including businesses, for support
 - Turn to foundations (national or local)
 - Approach legislators
 - Collect dues from coalition members
 - Develop other “creative” approaches to soliciting support.

Some of the partner organizations, listed in Section I, may serve as funding sources.

Responsibility for seeking out funding may be assumed by hired staff, a subset of the coalition members, or another designated individual or group of individuals. In addition to seeking out opportunities to solicit funding, coalitions should recognize the resources, both financial and non-financial, that members can provide in relation to each goal or objective.

While securing funding is important for supporting a coalition’s activities and ensuring its sustainability, coalitions are cautioned to **first** focus on building relationships among members and between the coalition and broader community, and establishing the coalition’s structure, leadership, communication and decision-making processes. Defining the coalition’s mission, goals and action steps and establishing a “track record” of small successes will help to bolster commitment and maintain the energy and commitment of coalition members.

❖ **Implement strategies and action plans to achieve the coalition’s mission and goals.**

The previous steps emphasize the importance of establishing processes to help the coalition achieve its mission and goals. It is equally important that the coalition takes action on achieving its short- and long-term goals to fulfill its mission, and demonstrates and celebrates small and big successes both within the coalition and within the broader external community. The group should outline a strategy for maintaining the coalition’s momentum and energy, and for orienting new members.

Sharing the coalition’s milestones and successes can help engender feelings of success among coalition members and maintain the momentum of the partnership and its members, as well as help to continue to attract new members, resources, and support from within the community. The media can play an important role in this process.

❖ **Evaluate the work of the coalition as it progresses.**

Evaluation is an important aspect of ensuring the effective functioning of the coalition, as well as enhancing chances for the coalition’s long-term sustainability. Collecting information about how things are done and the results of the coalition’s actions provides ongoing feedback that can improve the coalition’s work and encourage necessary adjustments to the programs, policies, and other interventions.

Ongoing monitoring is a critical process of tracking what is *supposed to be* happening based on the coalition’s strategic plan, compared to the progress the coalition has actually made toward

achieving its goals and broader mission. The evaluation process encourages the coalition members to reflect on its processes and outcomes (to date) to:

- Ensure that, in the face of the current environment and circumstances, the mission is still valid;
- Evaluate the extent to which milestones are being met and whether the goals and objectives need to be updated;
- Ensure that achievements and progress are being communicated effectively both with the coalition and the broader community; and
- Assess whether the group's work is valued by those within and/or outside of the coalition.

The evaluation process ultimately helps to maintain the momentum of the coalition, recruit new members, and solicit additional resources (e.g., financial, in-kind) by documenting the process of community change and improvement, and using feedback to improve and celebrate efforts.

❖ **Sustain the coalition.**

A primary goal of any coalition is to sustain its key structures, functions, and relationships. Specifically, a coalition needs to sustain its:

- Guiding vision and mission, and related goals and objectives.
- Basic governance structure and rules for operating within that framework or structure.
- Leadership and membership.
- Roles, responsibilities and functions of members.
- Funding and public support.
- Visibility in the context of the broader community.

To sustain a coalition, members must develop and implement a maintenance plan. The coalition's leaders, core group or an identified subset of members should be given responsibility for developing a maintenance plan, which can be as formal or informal as the coalition chooses.

The nature of activities incorporated into a maintenance plan can vary from details related to maintaining a schedule and format for coalition meetings to developing a plan for financial sustainability or formalizing the coalition (e.g., incorporating the coalition as a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization) and will vary from coalition to coalition.

III. KEY QUESTIONS FOR EACH COALITION BUILDING STEP

This section contains a series of questions that coalitions can use to make sure the essential components of each step described in Section II are addressed.

❖ **Clearly define leadership and core group.**

- What organization has been designated as the lead agency?
- Who is the coalition's primary leader?
- Does the leader have strong leadership skills?
- What are the leader's primary responsibilities? Are they clearly defined?
- Who are the "key players" to be included in the core group?
- Have the key players been invited to participate in the coalition? Have they agreed to participate?
- What is the primary responsibility of each core group member?
- How do the leader's and core group members' functions fit into the mission and goals of the coalition?
- What time and resource commitment is expected of the leader and core group members?

❖ **Assemble the coalition's broad membership.**

- Who should be included as members?
 - Who might gain from participation in the coalition?
 - How might the coalition gain from different individuals' participation?
 - Who might challenge the coalition's mission?
 - Who controls resources that could help resolve the issue?
 - Who has the power to affect the issue?
 - Who else should be asked to join?
- What kinds of outreach are needed to recruit members?
- Who will be responsible for (a) targeted and (b) general recruiting efforts?
- What does it mean to be a coalition member?
- Will the coalition have a formal membership? If yes, how will membership be formalized?
- What involvement or commitment (time, resources) will be expected of coalition members?

❖ **Clearly define the coalition's shared mission and vision, goals and action steps.**

- What does the coalition want to accomplish?
- Why and how is the coalition in a position to make a difference?
- Who among the coalition are most affected by the issue?
- Do the coalition's goals take into account what is happening in the community?
- Has the coalition developed a mission statement?
- Are the coalition's goals challenging yet realistic?
- Are the proposed actions "doable?"

❖ **Define coalition structure, staffing and communication.**

- How will the coalition function as an organization and how will responsibility be shared by partner organizations?
- How will decisions be made? Has the decision-making process been communicated to the full membership body?
- Does the coalition have a regular meeting cycle that member can count on?
- Do the core group members and committees communicate regularly?
- Has the coalition taken steps to encourage open and full communication among its members?
- Has the coalition taken steps to ensure full coordination and collaboration?
- Has the coalition identified the types of staff to be hired, if any, and the skill sets sought in these staff members?
- Do current members and volunteers feel sufficiently supported and appreciated?
- Has the coalition established and communicated to its members internal processes for coordinating the group's activities, communicating, making decisions, and resolving conflicts?

❖ **Identify resources and funding sources.**

- How much funding does the coalition need?
- What resources (financial, in-kind) do members bring to the coalition?
- Who is going to help raise money for the coalition?
- What community, state and national resources will the coalition seek out?

❖ **Implement strategies and action plans to achieve mission and goals.**

- What are the short-term and long-term activities of the coalition?
- What are the specific timelines for these activities?
- Has the coalition developed an action plan?
- Who is responsible for implementing specific actions, by when?
- Who is responsible for monitoring the implementation of various actions?
- How are the successes and milestones of the coalition celebrated?
- When and how are the coalition's activities communicated to the broader group? To the community?

❖ **Evaluate the work of the coalition as it progresses.**

- At all times, keep on track by asking the question: Does this issue directly relate to the coalition's mission and agenda?
- Are people assigned specific tasks in the action plan getting their work done?
- Is the coalition encountering unanticipated obstacles?
- What are the outcomes of the completed work?
- Are these the outcomes the coalition intended?
- Does the coalition need to adjust its goals, strategies, or actions or the timeline by which it intends to complete the tasks?
- What activities took place? (process)
- What was accomplished? (outcomes)
- What were the long-range effects? (impact)

❖ **Sustain the coalition.**

- Has the core group developed a strategy for maintaining the coalition's structure, membership and momentum?
- Is the maintenance plan formal or informal?
- Has the coalition considered how it will maintain visibility in the larger community?
- Has the coalition assessed its need for financial and non-financial resources, and developed a plan for how to continue to attract and acquire such resources?

IV. RESOURCES

*This section contains a listing of **websites, books, and self-assessment tools** with useful information on building a coalition. The list of tools is not exhaustive, but includes some valuable resources and are representative of the materials that we used to create this module. We would like to acknowledge the authors who developed these resources and tools for their contributions to the field. Their work guided development of this coalition building module.*

WEB RESOURCES

Community Tool Box:

<http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu/homepage.html>

- Currently, the core of the Tool Box is the "[how-to tools](#)." These how-to sections use simple, friendly language to explain how to do the different tasks necessary for community health and development. For instance, there are sections on leadership, strategic planning, community assessment, advocacy, grant writing, and evaluation to give just a few examples. Each section includes a description of the task, advantages of doing it, step-by-step guidelines, examples, checklists of points to review, and training materials.

AHEC/Community Partners, Inc.:

<http://www.ahecpartners.org/resources/hcm/materials.shtml>

- AHEC/Community Partners, Inc. is committed to developing, promoting and sustaining community-based efforts across Massachusetts. Its goals are to increase collaboration within and between communities, to build citizen participation, and to improve community quality of life. Programs focus on expanding health care access and creating healthy communities. The website has a link to 28 excellent information-filled tip sheets, each of which covers a single coalition building topic. Tip sheet topics include: Principles of Success; Coalition Start Up; Coalition Leadership; Stages of Development in Community Coalitions; Money and Coalitions: Delights and Dilemmas; Sustainability of Coalitions; The Care and Feeding of Coalition Leaders; Coalition Barriers and How to Overcome Them; and Engaging the Grassroots in Healthy Communities Initiatives.
- The coalition building tip sheets are also available in a reference book that can be ordered off the AHEC website.

Prevention Institute:

<http://www.preventioninstitute.org/eightstep.html> (full report)

- This tool guides advocates and practitioners through the process of coalition building, from deciding whether or not a coalition is appropriate to selecting best membership

and conducting ongoing evaluation. The Prevention Institute outlines eight steps for developing effective coalitions and offers a description of issues related to each step.

The Center for Collaborative Planning:

www.connectccp.org

- The Center for Collaborative Planning provides and cultivates innovative resources and support to build and strengthen communities in their pursuit of health and well-being. The website which is still under construction provides some tools for building collaborative partnerships. The Center is located in California and offers various workshops to the public.

The Ohio Center for Action on Coalitions, Ohio State University:

<http://ohioline.osu.edu/lines/kids.html#COALI>

- This series of facts sheets, developed by the Ohio Center for Action on Coalitions, provides an understanding of the intricacies of building coalitions. The fact sheets cover 16 topics including setting goals, evaluating the collaborative process, and resources. The fact sheets are focused on youth-oriented coalitions; however, the facts are widely applicable to all types of coalitions.

National Association of Governors' Highway Safety Representatives (NAGHSR)

http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/alcohol/Community%20Guides%20HTML/Guides_index.html

- The Community "How To" Guides on Underage Drinking Prevention is produced by the NAGHSR. These guides address fundamental components of planning and implementing a comprehensive underage drinking prevention program. The Guides are designed to be brief, easy-to-read, and easy-to-use. Each guide contains a resource section to assist readers in obtaining additional and detailed information about the topics covered in that guide. The appendices include useful tools for each topic area that provide coalitions and organizations with a jump-start in their planning and implementation activities. Although designed for development of coalitions around alcohol abuse prevention, the information can be applied to all coalitions.

BOOKS

The Spirit of the Coalition:

Berkowitz B, and Wolff T. **The Spirit of the Coalition.** Washington DC: American Public Health Association, 2000.

This book provides public health practitioners and other public health community workers down-to-earth details of how coalitions work most effectively in everyday practice. First-hand accounts from distinguished coalition leaders illustrate personal examples and lessons learned on how coalitions can be built and sustained, bringing measurable, lasting results. The stories

and supporting text demonstrate how coalitions can be powerful tools to raise community participation and improve community outcomes.

Ordering Information: Published by the American Public Health Association. To order, call (202) 777-APHA, fax (202) 777-2534; or visit the APHA website at www.apha.org

From the Ground Up!

Wolff T, and Kaye G. **From the Ground UP!** Washington DC: American Public Health Association, 1995.

This companion workbook to *The Spirit of the Coalition* is a "toolbox" for building coalitions and developing healthy communities. Coalition coordinators and community organizers can benefit from its description of community development. Chapters include *Barriers to Coalition Building and Strategies to Overcome Them*; *Community Assessment: A Key Tool for Mobilization and Involvement*; *Monitoring and Evaluation of Coalition Activities and Success*; hands-on worksheets; and much more.

Ordering Information: Published by the American Public Health Association. To order, call (202) 777-APHA, fax (202) 777-2534; or visit the APHA website at apha.org.

A Practitioner's Guide to Successful Coalitions:

Wolff, Tom. **A Practitioner's Guide to Successful Coalitions.** Washington DC: AHEC Partners.

This set of articles reviews the state of the art of community coalition building in both practice and research. The structure of the articles reflects a collaborative process, with multiple contributors from different disciplines using a variety of formats.

Available from the AHEC Partners website:
<http://www.ahecpartners.org/resources/hcm/materials.shtml>

ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Partnership Self-Assessment Tool:

www.PartnershipTool.net

- This tool enables partnerships to assess how well their collaborative process is working and to identify specific areas for improvement. The tool helps partnerships:
 - understand how collaboration works and what it means to create a successful collaborative process;
 - Assess how well the coalition's collaborative process is working; and
 - Identify specific areas on which the coalition can focus to improve its collaborative process.

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- Specifically, the tool assesses the coalition in the areas of leadership, efficiency, administration and management, and sufficiency of resources. The coalition's coordinator must register the coalition to use the tool. All members familiar with how the partnership works (e.g., the communication, coordination, and decision-making processes, leadership, and structure of the coalition) should complete the on-line questionnaire (estimated time for completion is 15 minutes). In total, at least 65% of the coalition's active participants need to complete the survey within a 30-day period in order to get an accurate assessment of the coalition's collaborative process. Requirements for using the Partnership Self-Assessment Tool specify that the coalition should be in existence for at least 6 months, be in active collaboration (i.e., the members actually interact), have begun to take action to implement its strategic and action plans, and have at least five active members BEFORE participating in the assessment process.

Evaluating Community Collaborations: A Research Synthesis:

http://www.quintiles.com/Specialty_Consulting/The_Lewin_Group/Lewin_Publications/Human_Services/Publication-12.htm

Prepared for the Department of Health Services, Office of the Secretary by The Lewin Group, Inc. April 2000.

- **Chapter 4**, of this report prepared by The Lewin Group, Inc, presents a framework for assessing the current level of local collaboration and establishing measurable goals for the future. This chapter provides a *Collaborative Framework* that can be used by both evaluators and community collaborations to assess their current level of collaboration and establish specific measurable goals for the future. The framework uses specific goals or indicators of collaboration to guide the reader and can be applied to the unique experience of any coalition.

Community Tool Box:

<http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu/homepage.html>

- The Tool Box, as mentioned above, includes the following sections: description of the task, advantages of doing it, step-by-step guidelines, examples, checklists of points to review, and training materials.
- The Tool Box has a number of assessment tools within each section.

Minnesota Department of Health:

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/fh/chp/steptools/tools.htm>

- Community Integrated Service Systems: Building Productive Community Connections includes a series of tools that are specifically geared towards coalitions planning for tobacco prevention; however the tools are applicable to coalition building in general. Particularly helpful for identifying the non-financial resources of broad coalition

members is the worksheet associated with “Identify Each Community Partner’s Activities.”

Nebguide, University of Nebraska, Lincoln:

<http://www.ianr.unl.edu/pubs/family/g988.htm>

- The organizational fact sheet provided by the University of Nebraska, Lincoln is a valuable tool that can be filled out by new partner organizations joining the coalition. Among other things, the fact sheet asks the organization to identify their mission, membership qualifications for the coalition and the communities they serve. The tool is adapted from the Family Community Leadership Project materials by Dr. Georgia L. Stevens, Family Economics Policy Specialist, University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension, 3/90.

Center for Collaborative Planning:

<http://www.connectccp.org/programs/CPHC/CollaborativeMaintenanceCheckIn.pdf>

- As noted above, the Center for Collaborative Planning (CCP) provides and cultivates innovative resources and support to build and strengthen communities in their pursuit of health and well-being.
- “Keeping Fit in Collaborative Work: A Survey to Self-Assess Collaborative Functioning” is a tool for assessing organizational functioning as well as progress in strategies, projects or activities. It is suggested that collaborative members complete the survey separately and then come together to discuss results and plan action steps.