



**national
healthy marriage
resource center**

How to Form a Healthy Marriage and Relationship Coalition

How-To Guide

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How to Form a Healthy Marriage and Relationship Coalition

There are many healthy marriage coalitions operating across the county. However, coalitions can be very different in regards to how they meet, the goals they set, and the membership they serve. This How-to Guide explores some issues for consideration and identifies specific steps necessary to build a healthy marriage/relationship coalition. It is written for those who wish to establish a coalition focused on strengthening marriage and relationships in their community.

Background

A coalition is defined as a group of different organizations and individuals representing an array of interests and disciplines united by a common desire to influence change in a specific area. Coalitions may be local, state or national in scope. Further, they can have a permanent presence or be established on a temporary basis. Forming a coalition may be required for a number of reasons including:

- Addressing an urgent situation
- Empowering the community at a grassroots level to focus attention on a particular subject
- Providing needed services
- Pooling resources
- Bolstering the efforts of individual groups tackling a particular problem on their own

Regardless of their composition, duration or reason for being, coalitions are paramount to garnering broad community support and creating change within a community.

Coalitions are important to the field of marriage and relationship education (MRE) because they call attention to an issue that may not be familiar to the public.

They also create credibility surrounding MRE services in the community. Broad-based support and active involvement from a coalition can help put MRE on the radar of the media, decision-makers and the public. Given the relative infancy of this field, the coalition can also serve as a source of peer support among practitioners.

Whether your coalition is formed at the local, state or national level, the first step is to determine why a healthy marriage and relationship coalition is needed. Should you build a separate and unique coalition or support an existing cause? Research may be needed to determine if there are any other organizations and/or groups that already exist and are focused on marriage-related issues. For example, there may be an alliance of community- and/or faith-based organizations focused on marriage and relationships. There may be a family strengthening network and/or a child well-being task force whose mission includes MRE or complementary services. In this case, a subcommittee or advisory group focused on marriage and healthy relationships to support the existing coalition may make more sense than starting something new. Additionally, it's wise to find out what professional organizations exist that address marriage and family issues such as associations of marriage and family therapists.



When determining the need, learn about divorce rates, out-of-wedlock birth rates, and the economic costs of failed marriages for your community. Also consider which organizations or people may be concerned about these social indicators. This knowledge can be summarized in a one-page document to help make the case to potential members and community stakeholders that a specific and targeted coalition is needed to help address these issues. Many people fundamentally believe that efforts to strengthen marriages and relationships are worthwhile, but presenting credible facts and figures that illustrate the relationship between healthy marriage/relationships (and other issues) may help you gain support from potential coalition members.

Establishing coalition leadership early is crucial. The group of “founding members” will ideally share the common goal of strengthening relationships/marriages but will bring different networks and ideologies to the coalition. The coalition leaders are instrumental in developing the structure of the coalition, identifying its mission, and generating interest among potential members. Identifying the coalition leadership is an important first step in the process. The number of “founding members” making up the coalition’s leadership will vary, but this initial group should be broad enough to represent diverse sectors of the community and small enough to be manageable.

Create Mission, Goals, & Objectives

The coalition founders and/or leadership will want to create the mission and initial goals as they establish the group. A clearly defined mission helps the coalition stay focused on its main purpose as goals and objectives are developed. Engage diverse stakeholders in defining your mission and goals. This may be a long process but will pay off over time because you

Mission: Broad, general statements that tell why your organization exists. These should not change from year to year.

Goals: Statements describing what your organization wishes to accomplish stemming from your purpose or mission. Goals are the ends toward which your efforts will be directed and often change from year to year.

Objectives: Descriptions of what exactly is to be done, derived from the goals; clear, specific statements of measurable tasks that will be accomplished as steps toward reaching your goals. They are short term and have deadlines.

Source: The University of Texas at Austin, Texas Union Program Office

will have something that many people can support and agree on. Sample coalition mission and vision statements are listed in Appendix 1.

When developing the goals and objectives, it is important to consider what will be needed to accomplish them, if they are realistic and if they can be measured. A helpful exercise would be for the coalition to set “SMART” goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely). If your goal is to decrease the divorce rate in your community, how will you measure that and know your coalition made a difference? Set attainable goals and measurable objectives to help you reach those goals, and think about what resources you will need to measure your effort. For example,

it may be possible to increase the number of couples getting married in any given year who have participated in relationship education; however, you will need to coordinate with wedding officiates or the government division responsible for issuing marriage licenses to accurately track this information.

As the coalition grows, it may be necessary to revisit the mission, goals and objectives to be sure that they are still relevant to the group. These are not things you want to change frequently, but you should review them at least annually. If revisions are necessary, it is important to engage all members in the process because it helps create “buy-in” which may lead to more active participation and more long-term involvement from members.

Create the Coalition Structure

Another important consideration is how to organize the coalition. Coalitions can be structured in a variety of ways, and several potential components are discussed below.

1. **Steering Committee/Advisory Board:** A steering committee/advisory board provides guidance on key coalition issues such as developing goals and objectives, and ensuring activities align with these objectives. A steering committee/advisory board may also guide decisions about opportunities for funding and spending resources and should contain individuals with relevant expertise and/or networks to support the growth and development of the coalition.
2. **Executive Committee:** A coalition may want to elect officers and form an executive committee charged with leading and overseeing all coalition activities. Executive committee

positions may include: chair, vice chair, treasurer, secretary, and outreach coordinator. An executive committee might interface directly with a steering committee/advisory board to be sure that the coalition is working toward its overall mission.

3. **Committees/Work Groups:** A coalition can decide to organize itself by committee where small groups of members are responsible for specific coalition activities. Committees can be organized in various ways including:
 - a. By duty (new member outreach, marketing, fundraising, etc.)
 - b. By issue area (healthy relationships, youth, engaging men in MRE, strengthening families, reaching expectant couples, etc.)
 - c. By geographic area

It is also important to consider what resources the committees/work groups may need to complete their activities. Perhaps volunteers from member staffs will be needed to assist the committees/work groups with activities. Committees are typically on-going.

4. **Task Forces:** As the coalition develops its goals and objectives, it may be desirable to establish temporary task forces to accomplish a specific goal or activity. Members and/or volunteers may need to devote time to a task force charged with planning an annual fundraising event or writing a proposal for new funding. These activities may not be permanent coalition duties but require specific expertise and involvement above and beyond basic coalition membership.

Regardless of how it's organized, a coalition will need to create and maintain a clear focus and implement structure in order to successfully achieve its goals. Coalitions, like any organization or group, require energy to establish and sustain them. Do not expect overnight results. Invest time in careful planning and cultivate the group over time. Set short and long term goals, and start by developing reasonable benchmarks that are process oriented (i.e. agree on coalition bylaws, elect coalition officers, design a coalition logo, etc.). Six months to one year is not too long to spend getting a coalition up and running. You will need to spend time on the front end developing your infrastructure in order to ensure that you are able to sustain a group long enough to achieve your goals and objectives. You may want to consider filing for 501(c)(3) nonprofit status to be eligible for funding opportunities that will help you generate momentum around your coalition.

Write By-laws

Coalitions can be formed in a number of ways and may be varied with respect to the size of membership. However, one thing is essential to providing structure and guiding a coalition regardless of its structure and size: by-laws. By-laws are rules generally written by the coalition's founders and/or leadership that regulate the operations of the organization. By-laws usually become effective after being approved by a steering committee/advisory board and the coalition's membership. They include specific sections (or articles) that outline how the coalition will function. Each article may also contain sub-sections providing more detail about a particular topic. By-laws help provide a coalition with the structure needed to build its membership and gain momentum; however, they may be amended over time as needed. The articles and sub-sections of a coalition's by-laws should include the following information:

- The coalition's mission and goals
- Organizational structure
- Various offices/committees of the coalition as well as their function
- Membership eligibility, the membership process, expectations of members and voting rights
- Process for obtaining funds (foundation/grant opportunities, dues, contributed by member organizations, fundraising efforts, etc.) and how such funds will be managed among coalition members
- Process for amending the bylaws if/when needed
- Conflict of interest

By-laws can be distributed to potential members to provide them with a clearer understanding of what the coalition is and what will be expected of them as members. Your coalition's by-laws should also specify the roles various coalition members will play related to sustainability. It will be up to each individual coalition to decide how many members are sufficient to vote to approve the by-laws. An example of a healthy marriage coalition's by-laws is provided as Appendix 2.

Member Roles & Responsibilities

Before reaching out to potential coalition members, you should determine what it is you want them to do.



Clearly defining coalition members' roles and responsibilities prior to inviting participation will ensure that those who decide to participate are aware of what is expected, and this helps set the coalition up for success from the beginning. Appendix 3 is an example of a planning tool that can be used when developing roles and responsibilities for members of a healthy marriage/relationship coalition. Think specifically about how involved coalition members need to be, and what is necessary in order for the coalition to complete its goals and objectives. Some expectations you may want to consider for coalition members are:

- Provide MRE services in the community (either through their organization or as an individual)
- Participate in a community needs assessment (see Community Needs Assessment Worksheet, Appendix 4)
- Attend domestic violence training
- Help in strategic planning efforts
- Establish long- and short-term goals for the coalition
- Recruit other members
- Participate on a committee or workgroup
- Assist with fundraising efforts
- Attend a specified number of meetings to maintain active status
- Pay dues

Once determined, the roles and responsibilities of coalition members should be clearly stated in a membership agreement so that potential members are aware, upfront, of what is expected. A membership agreement may be for an individual or for an organization that commits to supporting the coalition's efforts even if a particular staff member leaves the organization. A sample of a membership agreement is provided as Appendix 5.

Member Identification

Potential Coalition Representation

Faith-based groups, health care organizations, schools, universities, businesses, community/civic groups, chambers of commerce (Hispanic, women's, etc.), government agencies (WIC, Child Support, TANF, etc.), elected and appointed leaders including judges, community members, men's groups, women's groups, parent groups, non-profit organizations, etc.

For a coalition to be effective, it is imperative to have the right people at the table. The people involved in your coalition should have diverse experience and skills as well as have access to a wide variety of populations. Participating organizations and individuals should maintain their own purpose or identity, but share the coalition's vision and be committed to achieving its goals. Ideally, your coalition members should:

- Have an interest/stake in strengthening marriages, relationships and families
- Be a trusted resource in their community and have access to your target audience
- Maintain a positive reputation in the community
- Be decision makers within their organizations (or be appointed to make decisions on behalf of the organization)
- Have resources (time, staff, funds) to commit to attaining the coalition's goals and objectives
- Represent the diverse interests of your community (urban/rural/suburban, different racial/eth-

nic/religious groups, different political ideologies, different professional backgrounds, etc.)

Gauge the social and political climate of your area to get an idea of what organizations, agencies and individuals may need to be a part of the coalition. You may want to generate a list of the various state/community entities that would make up a diverse and skilled coalition. Then, work to identify the appropriate contact person within each agency/organization.

1. Start by identifying people that you already know (especially those individuals who are concerned with strengthening relationships and/or other similar issues). These people may lead programs, ministries, work with at-risk populations, be involved with the family court system, be teachers or extension office staff, be professional marriage/family therapists, etc. Additionally, you should consider people at various life stages with different perspectives on relationships and marriage.
2. Next, identify groups and organizations that may have a stake in strengthening families and/or who already provide services to families. You may want to categorize these groups on the local, state and national levels to help you prioritize your outreach. Some groups to consider include: social service agencies, Head Start programs, domestic violence organizations, child support enforcement agencies, local health departments, justice departments (including juvenile justice programs), women, infants and children (WIC) programs, fatherhood programs, community action agencies, interfaith ministries, state and county cooperative extension programs, etc.
3. Brainstorm influential people or people with access to key decision makers. Business

and civic leaders, and other active community members who are well-known in various community circles can help advocate for the cause and bring new coalition members on board. Elected officials and/or their staff are also important coalition members. Remember that career civil servants typically have a longer tenure than an elected/appointed official and can be very influential.

4. Finally, consider the skills you need to support your coalition. Do you need an attorney, accountant or public relations specialist? There are a variety of professional skills that will benefit your coalition and people with those skills may care about efforts to encourage healthy marriages or provide relationship education.

Appendix 6 provides an example of the skills, sectors and demographics that you may want to have represented as you identify potential coalition members.

Member Outreach

Once you have decided what the roles and responsibilities of coalition members will be and who you want to reach out to, you should determine how you will reach out to potential members. In the beginning, it may be tempting to accept all interested organizations and individuals. However, you will want to establish a process for selecting coalition members to maintain the group's credibility and to ensure that the members are best suited for helping the coalition attain its goals. Develop a member outreach plan that identifies groups you would like to have represented in your coalition. Remember one person may be connected to multiple groups.

You may also want to develop an application (see Appendix 7) and use a majority voting system for bring-

ing new members on board. Perhaps you prefer to have existing members nominate potential members to a membership committee that would then decide which nominees to accept. There are a number of ways to bring new coalition members to the table. Whatever your leadership decides on, it should be clear to potential members so that they are aware of the membership approval process.

Before reaching out to potential members, you should develop a concise, one-page overview of the coalition's mission, objectives and existing members. Both the overview and a summary of what is expected of a member can be provided to give more details about the coalition and to create credibility. People will be more inclined to join your coalition if they have an understanding of what it stands for and who else is involved.

Examples of outreach strategies include:

- **Personal phone calls and/or face-to-face meetings.** These strategies are the most effective, but are also the most time consuming. They might be appropriate for groups that you have a working relationship with, or for state and local leaders who may receive many requests from a variety of initiatives asking for their support. Personal contact is also the best approach to engage potential members that you view as being a priority for the coalition.
- **Written invitations.** Invitations to join the coalition or attend an informational meeting might be a first step to reaching groups that you do not have an existing relationship with but recognize as an asset to the coalition. Written invitations are less personal but allow you to provide the coalition's specific goals, objectives and mem-

bership requirements to a broader audience. See Appendix 8 for a sample invitation letter.

- **Targeted outreach:** Utilizing opportunities to advertise your coalition with specific audiences may also attract coalition members who share your mission. For example, including information in a United Way newsletter or church bulletin would reach a variety of readers who may be interested in becoming involved.

Be sure that a meeting is planned soon after you extend an invitation to join, or be specific that you are requesting their immediate help with a coalition endeavor. Providing opportunities for potential members to become active right away will help demonstrate that they won't be wasting their time by joining.

Funding your Coalition



Once you have leadership, membership, organizational structure, documentation and goals in place, the question of funding will arise. Funding for the coalition's efforts will likely be an ongoing challenge, so it is necessary to establish expectations regarding how members will contribute to sustaining the coalition and document them. Will they be required to pay membership dues (annually, monthly, etc.)? Will members be expected to actively fundraise on behalf of the coalition? Will members be expected to offer

various in-kind supports to the coalition? Forms of in-kind support include:

- Identifying funding opportunities
- Writing grants
- Providing free legal/professional advice to benefit the coalition
- Providing physical space for coalition activities
- Making photocopies of materials
- Offering staff time to help support coalition activities
- Developing graphics for coalition logo, materials, etc.

Identify expertise in non-profit management or budgeting to support your funding efforts and track in-kind contributions throughout your development as you may need to document this for future funding sources. Your coalition will need to determine if you want to seek 501 (c)(3) nonprofit status (which will allow you to accept donations and may be required to seek some grants) or identify a fiduciary agent. A fiduciary agent can maintain financial records for the coalition.

Early on in the establishment of the coalition, you may want to seek capacity building grants. These types of grants are specifically designed to help develop the infrastructure and capacity needed to generate financial management experience and execute the activities that will help you accomplish your goals.

Consider what your coalition has to offer: can you sell marriage/relationship education services; support a fee for service speakers' bureau; or train organizations on how to integrate relationship skills for a fee? Such strategies can help diversify funding sources and help cover basic operational costs.

Generate and Maintain Momentum

In the beginning, coalition members may feel frustrated because it appears as though the coalition isn't "doing" anything. Help keep the early momentum going by making sure that coalition meetings have a specific purpose. Set objectives for each meeting, create an agenda, and allow members to participate in and contribute to all meetings. Be mindful to celebrate coalition victories, both big and small, and recognize members when they have gone the extra mile on behalf of the coalition. This will help create buy-in towards the process and may ensure long-term participation.

Keep the momentum going by providing consistent communication to members. Distribute meeting notes to: 1) update members who were absent during a specific discussion, and 2) remind members about outstanding action items to be accomplished. Use email blasts and newsletters to keep coalition members informed of activities and information related to marriage, relationships and families.

Evaluate the Coalition

How will you know if your coalition is successful? Implementing regular evaluations of the coalition can help the group assess if goals are being met as well as how the coalition is functioning as a whole. Obtaining structured feedback from members allows the group to make changes and/or corrections to ensure that the coalition is working in line with its mission and is meeting the needs of its members. This is an important step in determining the longevity of the coalition. You may want to offer your coalition members an anonymous survey in order to assess how they feel about your processes, your internal objectives/goals, your representation of their community, etc. An example of an annual coalition evaluation is provided as Appendix 9.

Avoid Common Pitfalls

Establishing a coalition is not easy, but you can learn from those who have gone before you. If you are aware of common pitfalls you can avoid them. A few to consider include:

Anticipate “turf issues” and differences of opinion. Be intentional about addressing the fact that member organizations are not giving up their unique niche in the community. Help them see that by working together, the coalition will not only be able to address their shared goal, but it can also support the individual members’ broader mission. Although diversity is important, it also means that everyone may not see eye-to-eye on the coalition’s priorities. Start by helping coalition members identify the common ground and build from there. The group will have to balance the pros and cons of having a diverse coalition with the understanding that some members may choose not to continue working with the coalition if its mission isn’t as specific as they would like it to be. Coalition members will likely be looking at issues related to marriage and relationships from a variety of perspectives. Whether members are approaching the coalition as veterans in the MRE field, from within a specific population or as a family’s support network after a crisis, the coalition will need to work hard to respect differences of opinion and find common ground.

Document what you have done. Keep meeting minutes, record outreach efforts and notate in-kind contributions of members. These records support your credibility if and when you seek funding.

Avoid being a bad sequel. Most community organizations have had experiences collaborating with other agencies—possibly with other coalition members. Not all of those collaborations may have been posi-

tive, and you may have to spend time proving that the new coalition will not result in another negative experience. Establishing clear goals and objectives, utilizing the diverse expertise and skills of members, sharing leadership, and generating action will help convince members that the coalition is committed to changing the community.

Involve the community. It is common for new coalitions to seek out professionals with expertise in marriage and family issues (agency directors, psychologists, etc.) as well as prominent leaders in the community (politicians, business leaders, etc.) to give their cause credibility. However, it can be damaging to a coalition to not include the voice of those they are trying to reach. Include individuals (or couples) who may be able to provide insight about the true needs of the community and offer solutions that others may not have thought of previously.

Money. The fact that there is limited funding available for most MRE initiatives is well known. Finding resources to support the work of a coalition will be challenging and something that may already be anticipated. What a new coalition may not anticipate is the pitfall of pursuing funds that may not ultimately align with the coalition’s mission. Coalitions should be vigilant about finding available resources to support their efforts and should approach each opportunity with caution—involve coalition members and special committees in the decision to pursue the funding opportunity. Similarly, if one organization is selected to be the coalition’s fiduciary agent, it is essential that the responsibility does not also give that member more control or authority in the coalition.

Be organized. Coalitions that do not have a plan for organizing efforts beyond a first meeting will likely not succeed. Each meeting should have a purpose and members should feel that their skill set, areas of

expertise and participation matters to the overall success of the coalition. This requires coalition leaders to be organized and thoughtful.

Communicate, communicate, communicate.

Coalitions fare better when there is consistent and meaningful communication among its membership. This is no small task for a coalition whose members may be separated geographically. A variety of communication tools are likely necessary to keep coalition members connected across great distances. Quarterly face-to-face meetings are one way to keep members connected to one another and to the work being done across a large geographic area. Between meetings, you should develop other ways of staying connected to members. Electronic newsletters and monthly email blasts about news and upcoming events are other ideas for communicating with coalition members. Special coalition committees or task forces may also plan to meet more frequently to ensure that the team is progressing on action items. Communication is vital to the success of a coalition, and putting measures in place to accommodate members from across the state should be considered from the start.

Conclusion

Starting a coalition can be an effective way to garner community support for healthy marriage and relationship education. A diverse group of individuals and organizations who share a common goal related to healthy marriage and relationship education can build greater credibility and create broader awareness than can be done by a single individual or organization. Although coalitions can be effective, starting a coalition and maintaining its efforts can be challenging. Groups must be strategic and intentional about defining the coalition's mission, selecting coalition members, defining roles and responsibilities, and setting measurable goals and benchmarks.

The National Healthy Marriage Resource Center (NHMRC) would like to thank Courtney Harrison, MPA and Leah Rubio of the Resource Center for their contributions to this How-to Guide. This is a product of the NHMRC, led by co-directors Mary Myrick, APR, and Jeanette Hercik, PhD, and project manager Rich Batten, ThM, MEd, CFLE.

Appendix 1 – Sample Coalition Mission Statements

The following mission statements were pulled from coalition websites in June 2010.

Healthy Marriage Project: Greater Sacramento Region

Vision

A community in which marriages and relationships thrive.

Mission

The Healthy Marriage Project, Greater Sacramento promotes the sustainable development of safe and stable families.

Texas Coalition for Healthy Families

Purpose

TCHF is a member supported organization founded by Marriage and Relationship Education leaders who are passionate about providing Texas families with convenient access to real-world information, education and programs that are relevant, practical and sound and that will ultimately assist them in strengthening Texas – one family at a time.

Vision

Our Vision is to build a stronger Texas by increasing state-wide access to programs that help build family and relationship skills in order to increase the overall relational, physical, and emotional well being of Texas Families.

Miami Valley Marriage Coalition

Vision

The Miami Valley Marriage Coalition promotes happy, healthy, and enduring marriages.

Mission

In order to benefit adults, young people, and children, the Miami Valley Marriage Coalition encourages healthy marriages through marriage preparation and on-going education.

Indiana Healthy Marriage and Family Coalition, Inc.

Mission

The mission of the Indiana Community Healthy Marriage & Family Coalition is to identify and promote the value of healthy marriages and vibrant families.

Vision

The vision of the Indiana Community Healthy Marriage & Family Coalition is to encourage and support healthy marriages and families.

St. Louis Healthy Marriage Coalition

Our Mission

St. Louis Healthy Families educates, trains and advocates for stronger relationships, marriages and communities in our region and state. We provide a variety of services and programs to individuals, couples and families – both directly and in collaboration with other leading social service agencies and employers.

Our Vision

St. Louis Healthy Families strives to become the leading center for relationship education and advocacy that supports healthy family life in our region and state. As an organization, we will maintain a capable professional staff and board, representing diverse cultures and perspectives, and working in innovative, resourceful, and collegial ways. As a partner, we will honor values of commitment, cooperation and respect.

Healthy Marriage Coalition of Central New York

The healthy Marriage Coalition of Central New York is dedicated to strengthening families by promoting and supporting the establishment of lasting, healthy marriages based on mutuality and respect.

This material is for general information purposes only. It does not constitute legal advice and should not be relied upon as legal advice.

Appendix 2 – Sample Coalition By-laws

This sample is from the New Mexico Coalition for Healthy Families and can be adapted to your healthy marriage and relationship education coalition.

The New Mexico Coalition for Healthy Families

ARTICLE 1 – Name, Mission and Vision

Section 1.1: Name

The name of this organization shall be “The New Mexico Coalition for Healthy Families,” hereafter referred to as the Coalition.

Section 1.2 Mission

The mission of the Coalition is to improve the well-being of New Mexico’s children by supporting, expanding, and coordinating programs that strengthen healthy family relationships.

Section 1.3 Vision

The vision of the Coalition is a state where families receive support, education, and nurturing to ensure that couples develop healthy relationships and children achieve their full potential.

ARTICLE 2 – Coalition Membership

Section 2.1: Eligibility

Membership is open to all organizations and entities without regard to race, color, religion, age, sex or national origin of its representatives that embrace the mission and vision of the Coalition. Membership is dependent upon approval of a simple majority of the members at a regularly scheduled Coalition meeting. Anyone interested in membership will submit an application to the Membership Committee. The applicant must be sponsored by a current Coalition member in good standing, as defined by paying annual dues and meeting yearly attendance requirements.

Section 2.2: Dues

Each member organization shall pay annual dues as set by the Coalition.

Section 2.3: Rights and Privileges of Membership

Members have the right to attend all general Coalition meetings, receive general publications and mailings/emails, to be a candidate for an office and participate in all Coalition activities.

Section 2.4: Voting

Each member organization or entity shall have one (1) vote. In the case of a tie, the Chair can vote to break the tie even though his or her organization may have already voted.

Section 2.5: Categories of Membership

Categories of membership shall include but not be limited to the following: Business, Schools and Universities, Civic Groups, Government, Faith Communities and Social Service agencies.

Section 2.6: General Powers

The Coalition shall have direction over the affairs of the Coalition, shall determine its policies or changes therein within the limits of the Bylaws, shall actively pursue its purposes and shall have discretion in the conduct of business and formulation of the rules and procedures of the Coalition, consistent with these Bylaws.

Section 2.7: Coalition Member Attendance

The location of each meeting shall be determined by the Executive Committee. If a member organization or entity does not have a representative present at two (2) consecutive scheduled meetings, unless excused, that membership shall become vacant. Teleconference attendance may be acceptable. The Chair or Vice-Chair shall have the authority to excuse absences. Meeting minutes should note any excused absence(s).

Section 2.8: Recommendation of Coalition Members

The Membership Committee will recommend prospective members to the general membership for a vote. A potential member must attend at least one meeting prior to submitting a membership application. Any agency that submits an application must have a representative present during the meeting in which the vote on the application occurs.

Section 2.9: Termination of Membership

A Coalition member may resign at any time by giving written notice to the Membership Committee. Membership may be terminated through a majority vote for failure to pay dues in a timely manner, lack of attendance, or engaging in actions that are counterproductive to the vision and mission of the Coalition.

Section 2.9: Nomination and Election of Officers

Coalition officers shall be elected by the general membership. Term of office for the Chair and Treasurer will be two (2) years with option of two (2) additional terms. Term of office for the Vice-Chair and Secretary will be one (1) year with option of two (2) additional terms. Nominations for officers will be accepted from the general membership at the meeting prior to the annual election meeting. Term of office will run from January to December.

Section 2.10: Frequency of Meetings

There shall be monthly meetings, with no fewer than four (4) regular Coalition meetings in each calendar year.

ARTICLE 3 - Officers of the Coalition

Section 3.1: Officers

The officers of the Coalition shall be Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, and Secretary.

Section 3.2: Election and Term of Office

The officers of the Coalition shall be elected by a simple majority vote of the members present at the election meeting. Term of office will be two (2) years with option of two (2) additional terms for the Chair and Treasurer. Term of office will be one (1) year with option of two (2) additional terms for the Vice-Chair and Secretary.

Section 3.3: Authority and Duties of Officers

Section 3.3.1 Coalition Chair

The Coalition chair shall develop an agenda for each meeting, preside at meetings, ensure meeting location and times, and promote the Coalition's vision and mission.

Section 3.3.2 Vice Chair

The Vice Chair shall preside at Coalition meetings in the absence of the chair and shall serve as Chair of the Membership Committee.

Section 3.3.3 Treasurer

The Treasurer shall maintain a complete and accurate account of all funds received and disbursed.

Section 3.3.4 Secretary

The Secretary shall keep minutes of Coalition meetings and attendance records, and send meeting notices to the general membership.

Section 3.4: Vacancies

In the event of an office becoming vacant, the Coalition Chair shall appoint a member to serve the unexpired term of office.

Section 3.5: Standing Committees

The Coalition officers shall appoint Public Relations, Political Outreach, and any Ad Hoc Committee Chairs. The Executive Committee shall be chaired by the Coalition Chair, and the Membership Committee shall be chaired by the Vice Chair.

Section 3.5.1 Membership Committee

The Membership Committee shall promote and enhance the membership of the Coalition and present nominations for membership to the Coalition.

Section 3.5.2 Public Relations/Marketing Committee

The Public Relations/Marketing Committee shall increase public awareness of the Coalition's mission and promote activities of the Coalition.

Section 3.5.3 Political Outreach Committee

The Political Outreach Committee shall make contacts and educate state legislators, the Governor's office, and the New Mexico Department of Human Services on this initiative and the need for these educational programs in the state.

Section 3.5.4 Executive Committee

The Chair, the immediate past Chair, the Vice Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, the Committee Chairs, and the Member at Large (who shall be appointed by the Coalition officers) shall comprise the Executive Committee, meeting as needed, with decision making authority on Coalition issues. Effort shall be made to gather input from the majority of the Coalition membership before decisions are made. Decisions shall be made with the best interest of the Coalition in mind and will be presented at the following general membership meeting.

Section 3.6: Ad Hoc Committees

The Coalition Chair shall appoint Ad Hoc Committees as needed.

Article 4 – Amendment to Bylaws

Section 4.1: Amendments

Amendments to these bylaws may be made at any general meeting of the Coalition after the members have been notified thirty (30) days in advance. A two-thirds (2/3) majority of the membership present at the general meeting (1 vote per organization) is required for approval of an amendment.

Article 5 – Fiscal Agent

Section 5.1: Fiscal Agent

A 501 c (3) non-profit organization may be designated to act as fiscal agent on behalf of the Coalition.

Approved 9-24-09.

Amended 11-17-09.

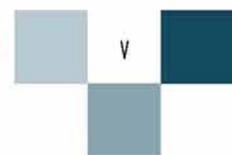
Appendix 3 – Sample Coalition Member Roles and Responsibilities

This sample is from the Wisconsin Clearinghouse for Prevention Resources and was created for a coalition to prevent underage drinking. The roles provide examples of the types of things your members may be required to contribute.

SUGGESTED COALITION MEMBER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Participate in determining the direction of the coalition.
2. Serve as the liaison to the member's organization. Organizations represented should have an impaired driving policy and conduct employee awareness and education.
3. Participate in the completion of a comprehensive needs assessment on the community's underage drinking problem.
4. Assist in drafting a strategic plan on underage drinking and in prioritizing goals and objectives.
5. Assist in the implementation of activities, including those that directly involve or relate to the member's organization.
6. Serve as a resource for the development of program activities.
7. Help to represent the coalition at key official meetings and events.
8. Serve as an ambassador for the work of the coalition and promote its mission when and wherever possible.
9. Gather and relay appropriate information to the coalition to serve as a basis for decisions.
10. Attend meetings on a regular basis.
11. Help to develop and implement a self-sufficiency plan.

Underage Drinking Prevention Project



Appendix 4: Community Assessment Worksheet

Created by the Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood Technical Assistance Team

Community Assessment

What is a community assessment?

A community assessment is a process through which groups identify their assets and needs. Typically assessments are conducted to determine how best to collaboratively address a problem facing a community such as children's exposure to violence, youth crime, teen pregnancy, etc. or better meet the needs of a specific population such as youth, the elderly, etc.

Learning Objectives

- Increased understanding of the characteristics and needs of families in your community/region
 - What are the economic and social conditions of your community/region?
- Increased understanding of the key stakeholders serving families in your community/region
- Increased understanding of how your HM or RF organization/program/services fit into the support system for families in your community/region

**Building and Sustaining Continuums of Care for Families
Roundtable Series**

Community Assessment Activity

Working Together to Meet the Needs of Your Community

Table-top Activity

Teams will work together to answer questions regarding their community. This worksheet will help you record your discussions and ideas.

Who are the families in your community?
What are the services that are needed in your community?
How does your organization fit within your community?

This material is for general information purposes only. It does not constitute legal advice and should not be relied upon as legal advice.

Appendix 5 – Sample Coalition Membership Agreement

This sample is from the Greater Houston Healthy Marriage Coalition and can be adapted to your coalition.

MEMBERSHIP AGREEMENT

The Greater Houston Healthy Marriage Coalition (GHHMC) is a 501-c-3 organization composed of organizations and individuals working together to strengthen marriages in the greater Houston area. Membership in this coalition is open to anyone who believes in promoting healthy relationships and marriages, and agrees with the Coalition's mission, which is to foster the development of healthy marriages in the greater Houston area. The Coalition's strategies include:

- Raising awareness of the importance of marriage.
- Providing relationship skills training to youth, adults, individuals and couples.
- Increasing marriage education services in a planned and coordinated manner.

Coalition members meet regularly to seek ways to better meet the needs of marriages and families in their communities.

By signing this agreement, you and/or your organization are affirming that you are in agreement with the GHHMC mission and will lend support to the mission and strategies of the Coalition. Specifically, this agreement

- Grants the Coalition permission to list your name as a Coalition member.
- Automatically renews each year unless rescinded in writing by either party.
- Places your name on the Coalition's mailing list to receive announcements of Coalition activities.

A voluntary one time only donation of \$50 to support the Coalition's mission would be appreciated at the time of joining, but is not required. If you would like to continue to financially support the coalition with future donations, they will be greatly appreciated.

Organizational (or individual) Member's Name: _____

By: _____
(Authorizing Signature and Title)

The contact person for your organization is _____

To be contacted at _____
(Mailing address)

E-mail Address _____ Phone: _____

Coalition Approval: This membership agreement was approved by:

Printed Name of Coalition Representative: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 7 – New Member Application

This sample is from the New Mexico Coalition for Healthy Families and was designed to be sent out along with an invitation letter (see Appendix 8).

Membership Application

Organizational Name _____

Primary Contact Information

Name _____

Street Address _____

City, State, ZIP Code _____

Work Phone _____ Cell/Other Phone _____

E-Mail Address _____

Secondary Contact Information

Name _____

Street Address _____

City, State, ZIP Code _____

Work Phone _____ Cell/Other Phone _____

E-Mail Address _____

Organizational Focus

Please check the appropriate box if your Organization has been approved for Non-profit Status

_____ State Level _____ Federal Level _____ Faith-Based

Legal Name of Corporation _____

State of Incorporation _____ Date of Incorporation _____

Organizational Mission (use reverse if needed)

What is your organization's mission: _____

Summarize relevant qualifications, accreditations and affiliations:

Community Involvement

Summarize your organization's involvement with other community coalitions/consortiums, Advisory Boards, Board of Directors, and committees.

COALITION INTEREST AREA (S)

Identify Coalition areas of interests:

- Marriage & Family Life Education
- Responsible Fatherhood
- Marketing and Public Awareness
- Other (identify other areas of interest):

Membership Agreement & Signature

By submitting this profile I affirm that the facts set forth are true and complete to the best of my knowledge. In addition, by signing below, this is my written authorization allowing the New Mexico Coalition for Healthy Families to use my Organizational Name for the purpose to secure Funding, Grants, Profiling or Statistical Analysis or any other reasons the Coalition Board may deem necessary.

By signing below you agree to abide by the Membership Agreement.

Name (printed) _____

Signature _____

Title _____

Date _____

Confidentiality Agreement

I agree that the names of Coalition Members will not be used by me, any of my employees, my organization, affiliates or representatives (collectively, your “representatives”) in any way detrimental to the New Mexico Coalition for Healthy Families. It is further understood that no Coalition Members name, address or affiliation may be used for any purpose without the written permission from the Member. This includes using Member Names for Funding, Grants, Profiling or Statistical Analysis.

By signing below you agree to abide by the Confidentiality Agreement.

Name (printed)_____

Signature_____

Title_____

Date_____

Coalition Board Use Only

Application Review by Board (Date: _____)

Review Outcome:

____ *Approved (Date: _____)*

____ *Other (Date: _____)*

____ *Further Action Needed:*



Appendix 8 – Sample Membership Invitation Letter

This sample is from the New Mexico Coalition for Healthy Families and can be adapted to your healthy marriage and relationship coalition.

Date

Dear XXXXX,

I am writing to you on behalf of the New Mexico Coalition for Healthy Families to ask if your organization would be interested in joining this Coalition and working with us to improve the well being of children across our state.

As you know, New Mexico's families and children face many problems:

- The divorce rate exceeds the national average;
- The state ranks second highest in the nation for births to unmarried women;
- Over half of all children in New Mexico are born to single mothers; and
- Over a quarter of children in the state live in families below the poverty level.

There are huge emotional, psychological and social impacts for those experiencing family fragmentation, while research indicates that children living in homes with healthy marriages are physically and emotionally healthier, have more school success, and are less likely to engage in delinquent behavior, abuse substances or rely on welfare as adults. Domestic violence is another issue that has a devastating effect on families and children.

As such, programs that support and encourage healthy relationships and stable families are critical to ensuring that children in our state achieve their full potential. The mission of the newly founded Coalition is:

“To improve the well being of New Mexico's children by supporting, expanding and coordinating programs that strengthen healthy family relationships.”

The Coalition has been founded by the five organizations indicated below each of which has at least one program concerned with promoting healthy relationships:

- New Mexico State University (Family Wellness Program)
- The Family Lifeline, Inc. (New Mexico Marriages First Project)
- Samaritan Counseling Center (Healthy Marriages)
- Youth Development, Inc. (Caring Couples, Healthy Children)
- First Nations (All My Relations Project)
- We are now seeking to expand and strengthen the Coalition by inviting organizations with similar objectives to join us. Membership is open to all organizations that embrace the Coalition's mission

and vision, regardless of the race, color, religion, age, sex, marital status or national origin of its representatives. I have enclosed the Coalition Bylaws for your information and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have about our structure, purpose and objectives.

You will see from the Bylaws that there will be at least 4 meetings per year. These would usually be held in the Albuquerque area. The annual dues have been set at \$50 per calendar year.

Coalition Objectives and Activities

The overarching objectives of the Coalition are:

- To coordinate services and events for families, couples and individuals, including youth and children that promote healthy, stable relationships.
- To operate a mutual referral and recruitment system to ensure that any persons requiring services are directed to the organization that can most fully meet their needs.
- To share resources between Coalition members where appropriate.
- To support the provision of member services.
- To collaborate on promotion and community awareness initiatives.
- To support the allocation of public and private funding for healthy families' skills training, education and support services in New Mexico.
- To create a long term, sustainable model for healthy families' skills training, education and support services in New Mexico.
- To establish a model for state-wide collaboration on healthy families' skills training, education and support services delivery.

The activities of the Coalition will focus on achieving these objectives and any other tasks that are consistent with the Coalition's mission and vision.

Membership Process

If you would like to apply to become a member of the Coalition, please have your application form completed and returned by January 10th. We will then sponsor your application and present it to the next Coalition meeting. Following this, you will be notified of the outcome.

I hope that your agency will feel able to join the Coalition and help us create a State where children and families are nurtured to achieve their full potential through healthy relationship education, support and accessible services.

Sincerely,

NAME
TITLE
New Mexico Coalition for Healthy Families

Appendix 9 – Sample Coalition Evaluation Worksheet

This sample is from the Minnesota Department of Health Community Health Promotion Guide and can be adapted to your healthy marriage and relationship education coalition.

Will the Coalition Be Here Tomorrow?

It's a good idea to have coalition members take a critical look at the coalition and its effectiveness. This worksheet can be a guide in determining what needs to be done to improve the effectiveness of the coalition. This could be an annual task of the coalition, or parts could be administered along the way.

Rate the activities in the space provided:

1=little or not at all

2=to a fair degree

3=to a high degree

Selection and Composition

- _____ 1. The coalition is widely representative of the community.
- _____ 2. The coalition members are very interested in the mission of the group.
- _____ 3. There is a combination of experienced and new coalition members to guarantee both continuity and new thinking.
- _____ 4. There is a formal plan for length of commitment for each coalition member, and this plan includes a system that assures a steady supply of new neighbors.
- _____ 5. Suggestions for new members are solicited from staff, coalition, clientele and organizations on a regular basis.
- _____ 6. There is a written statement of qualifications for coalition members.
- _____ 7. There is thinking ahead toward a pool or reservoir of potential coalition and work group members.

COMMENTS:

Orientation and Training

- _____ 1. The duties and responsibilities of each coalition member are clearly outlined in writing.
- _____ 2. There is an orientation plan, which is followed for all new members.
- _____ 3. There are written orientation materials supplied to each member. These materials are updated annually.
- _____ 4. A plan for training exists and training for coalition members is carried on throughout the year.

COMMENTS:

Organization of the Coalition

- _____ 1. The coalition has a clear mission statement, along with written goals and objectives.
- _____ 2. The coalition has elected officers and agreed upon a way to handle what may come up between meetings.
- _____ 3. When necessary, committees are formed through which work is channeled.
- _____ 4. Assignments of these committees are in writing and are reviewed and evaluated periodically.
- _____ 5. Working relations between staff and the coalition and committees are clearly defined and understood. Staff attend all meetings.
- _____ 6. Coalition members and staff are clear about their duties and responsibilities.

COMMENTS:

The Coalition and Work

- _____ 1. There are regularly scheduled meetings.
- _____ 2. Meetings begin on time and end on time.
- _____ 3. Materials for meetings are prepared adequately and in advance (agendas, minutes, study documents).
- _____ 4. Meetings have free discussion, general participation, and active thinking together.
- _____ 5. Routine matters are handled quickly.
- _____ 6. Regular reports of committees are made to the coalition.
- _____ 7. Minutes of all meetings (coalition and committees) are written and circulated to all members.
- _____ 8. Individual members of the coalition accept and carry out assignments within the area of their special expertise or competencies.
- _____ 9. Assignments (who will do what) are clearly defined/reviewed at the end of each meeting.

COMMENTS:

Evaluation of the Coalition

- _____ 1. Members have a good record of attendance at meetings.
- _____ 2. An annual review of work is conducted.
- _____ 3. There is a strategic plan based on program priorities.
- _____ 4. New leadership is emerging constantly from the coalition and its work groups.

COMMENTS:

