

# Workshop Two

## PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY ACTION

### Objective

- To introduce the principles of community action and practice core skills necessary for relationship building.

### Outcomes

- Participants will be able to identify basic principles of community action.
- Participants will learn one of the key skills of relationship-building—listening—and will practice active listening.
- Participants will learn some of the techniques of open-ended questioning.
- Participants will practice conducting one-on one-interviews.

### I. Group Welcome and Discussion of Previous Homework Assignment

*(20 minutes)*

Welcome everyone back to the group and thank them for coming. Do quick introductions again, so that participants can refamiliarize themselves with each other's names. Ask group members to share some of the newspaper, radio and television news stories they found that reflect family and community risk and protective factors. It will not be uncommon for individuals to find more news stories that talk about risk factors than protective factors. Ask group if they found that to be true and, if so, why they think this might be the case. Note that people often lack information on the strengths and resources in

Some participants may not have turned in the homework. While stressing the importance of the assignments, don't make the participants feel bad if they failed to get the work in. Be extremely positive about participants who found interesting examples of risk and protective factors and encourage those who did not complete the assignment to consider looking for other examples during the coming week.

their communities because of the media's focus on negative stories. Point out that as they move forward in their community action work, this fact will likely be important as they seek to use the media to move a positive community change agenda forward.

### II. Group Ground Rules

*(15 minutes)*

Ask the group if any of them have ever heard of group "ground rules." If they have, ask them to share their understanding of the concept. Ground rules form a set of operating principles that govern the way in which a group works. When individuals join the group, they agree to behave in accordance with a group's ground rules.

Some groups have very formal ground rules for operation, such as "Robert's Rules of Order" or parliamentary procedure. Most small groups do not need such formal rules, but should agree on some basic principles to guide behavior. These rules also provide a structure so that if group members behave in difficult ways during a group, they can be "corrected" in relationship to the group's ground rules.

Ask the group to share some of the kinds of ground rules that they feel are important to work together effectively. As each suggestion is made, solicit discussion about its inclusion in the group's group rules, building consensus for each suggestion or modifying the list as the group provides input. After the group has devised a list, pass out Handout #1 on "Group Ground Rules" and see if any of the ground rules listed have not been raised by the group. If some have been omitted, solicit the group's agreement that they should be added to the list. Post the final list of ground rules on a poster or chart paper in a prominent place in the room.

Building consensus around group ground rules helps reinforce the norm of group decision making. While the process of devising an agreed upon list of ground rules together may be time consuming, it sets an important tone for the group's future work together.

### III. An Overview of the Cycle of Community Action

(20–30 Minutes)

Tell group members that you will begin this workshop with a general overview of the process of community action. Give participants Handout #2 to use as a reference during your discussion. The following paragraphs provide background on the cycle of community action. Use them to frame a "mini-lecture" for the group.

*Working to strengthen our communities is a process; it is a process which takes patience and a willingness to listen and learn. Often it is our desire to make things change "right now." But in order for us to understand the issues in our communities and build the relationships that will be necessary for all members of a community to work together, we need to take certain steps. These steps are often referred to as "the cycle of community action." They include the following:*

- **Listening.** *To begin the process, we need to start by listening to each other. This process is most often begun by initiating a series of informal discussions with community members, so that we can learn about them, their families, their perceptions of their communities, their hopes, dreams, etc.*

In the Kentucky Free to Grow program, relationships between residents and police were extremely strained and eventually deteriorated to bottle and brick throwing. All parties agreed that it was time for things to change. Residents went door to door listening to their neighbors share their perceptions of the police. Similarly, residents and staff working on the project spent many hours listening to police officers share their experiences. These conversations were the first step in the community action cycle.

**POINTER** – Describing the cycle of community action can be very abstract if presented as a straight lecture. It is also possible that the terms "community action" or "community organizing" may carry some old baggage for people (particularly "community organizing," which is often specifically linked with particular confrontational approaches used during the 1960s and 1970s). As you describe the components in the community action cycle, listen for any positive or negative biases that participants may have and try to bring them to the surface. If negative feelings about a community action approach are not voiced, they may hinder a participant's ability to integrate the skills that lay at the foundation of the program's work. The example from the Kentucky Free to Grow program (above) can be used to illustrate each of the steps. If your group has been up and running for a while, use an example of a community action campaign that has taken place in your community to bring the steps alive.



- **Relationship Building.** *As we go out into the community and begin to listen to people, we begin a process of getting to know our fellow community members better and developing ties with them. As we work in the community, we seek to deepen our relationships with other community members, to engage them, to identify those who would like to*

The importance of relationships extends much beyond our personal life. Much of our work is accomplished through the strength of the relationships that we have developed over time with colleagues. These relationships are based on the disclosure of more than just work-related issues. This holds true for our relationships with community members with whom we are working as well as with public officials and other stakeholders in a community. A local police precinct captain with whom we have formed a bond is more likely to care about and be responsive to our concerns than one whom we treat merely as a municipal official. A politician's staff member is more likely to attend a meeting if we have built a relationship before we ask for something than if we wait until we are demanding a response. In the Kentucky program described earlier, the relationships that formed between police officers and residents provided a foundation of greater understanding, shared vision and possibility that allowed their work to move forward.

*join with us in our work to strengthen the community, and to understand their concerns.*

- **Assessment or Challenge.** *Making an assessment or defining the group's challenge is the process through which critical issues affecting a community are identified and defined. This process begins with the leadership team sharing the information they have learned while listening and building relationships with other community members. In some cases, as in this project, a formal community assessment process will take place. From these assessment activities, a particular issue that appears to be significant across a broad spectrum of the community begins to emerge and become defined. Group members may have to return to the community to ask more specific questions in order to better define and articulate the issue chosen, to sharpen the focus of the issue, and to reach consensus about particular aspects of the issue on which the group will choose to concentrate.*

In Kentucky, the assessment was clear—steps needed to be taken to improve police/community relations so that residents could feel that police were responsive and police could feel safe in carrying out their jobs. To jump start the challenge, Free to Grow worked with a group of interested police officers to pilot test a community policing approach within the community. This concrete action allowed all parties to assess how things might be able to be different.

- **Research.** *Once your group has chosen an issue, it is important to take some time to learn critical information about this issue. Good research clarifies the way an issue affects a community. The research phase should identify individuals, organizations and institutions in the community with knowledge of the identified issue. Information about the nature of the issue and its potential influences and solutions is gathered through these knowledgeable community entities. Information*

Research often sounds boring to many community members. However, community members frequently engage in research without knowing it. In Colorado Springs, for example, a group of concerned parents wanted a crosswalk for their children near a school. As a matter of course, they collected accident reports, stationed volunteers to count cars using the street where they wanted the crosswalk, counted speeding cars and collected other information that would convince the city to help them. Each of these activities was a form of research. In the end, the information gathered through these activities was critical for convincing city officials of the potential safety hazard faced by their children. Without it, it is unlikely that the group would have been able to make a convincing case for their perceived need.

*might be gathered from agency and governmental officials as well as community residents affected by an issue. Certain facts and figures may also be useful to understand the complexity of the issue chosen. While doing research, it is very important that the community collect information on funding sources or budgetary allocations that affect the issue they have chosen. The research process should also determine which persons or institutions have the authority to address the issue chosen.*

In the Kentucky community policing example that we have been talking about, police officers participating in the pilot community policing efforts kept logs detailing their interactions with residents and the impact of the relationships they were able to build with residents on enforcement. Community action group members also gathered information on the projected costs of continuing community policing in their neighborhood once the pilot testing ended. The research phase also helped residents to identify those city officials and community stakeholders who were likely to be supportive of their efforts.

- **Mobilization/Action.** *Mobilization is a process of strategy development and gathering group members for collective action. Key to strategy development is examining the contradictions uncovered in the research process. Typically, contradictions are apparent contrasts between expressed values of powerful community entities and the practices, policies or funding priorities of these entities. For example, Free to Grow might determine that attempts to deal with drug issues are skewed to law enforcement and not preventive efforts. Based on the contradictions uncovered, an action strategy is developed. First, Free to Grow must identify the party with the authority to rectify the contradiction; then a strategy must be developed to resolve the issue or problem. Meetings with those stakeholders who hold the authority to act on your group's agenda are critical at this time. Strategies should display community support and often can*

*bring together large numbers of community members, media, public officials and other organizations concerned with the issue. It is particularly important in the action phase to pay attention to the political environment in which your group is acting, and to use existing relationships with those in positions of power to the group's best advantage.*

With all of the groundwork laid, Kentucky's community action group worked to engage both residents and key stakeholders in lobbying to support community policing. Residents flooded the mayor's office with over 600 letters supporting the initiative, while leadership of a local foundation met behind closed doors with the Mayor and City Manager to solicit their support. With this broad-based support, the Mayor agreed to build funding for community policing into the City Council's annual budget.

- **Evaluation and Reflection.** *Once a group has acted on a particular issue, it is time to evaluate what happened. What went right? What went wrong? What might you have done differently next time? How did group members feel about the process of the work? How might it be changed as you move forward?*

The Kentucky Free to Grow program's work to institutionalize community policing was a tremendous victory. At the same time, group members discovered that there was reluctance on the part of stakeholders to acknowledge the role of residents in the decision-making process. Group members came to realize that, while it was all right for public officials to take credit for public changes, they would need to work harder to be recognized for their role and to be considered partners in the decision-making process.

- **Celebration.** *A critical part of the cycle of community action is remembering to celebrate our victories, big and small, and to celebrate with each other, build relationships and affirm one another. Victories on major issues that the group has been working on should also be celebrated with the community as a whole to thank them for the work they have done and to strengthen the group's base for future work.*

In Kentucky residents and police officers held a large community meeting to announce the new community policing program and invited local officials and the media to celebrate with them. The celebration provided an opportunity for residents who had lobbied on behalf of the community policing program to receive public recognition, as well as for police officers to show their support for the community's efforts.

#### IV. Active Listening

(20 minutes)

Before beginning this activity point out that all community work really starts at one place—listening to one another. Note that listening is among the most critical communication skills and that to better understand the issues of our communities, we need to take sufficient time to listen to our neighbors and others who are engaged with us in the community.

Tell group members that this activity involves talking about listening and practicing listening to one another.

Ask each person in the room pair up with another person, preferably someone that they do not know. Before beginning the activity, ask the group the following:

- *How do you know that a person is listening to you?* Solicit examples.
- *How do you know that a person is not listening to you?* Get specific examples.

Ask each pair to choose who is going to talk first and who is going to listen first. Have the person who is talking first take about three to five minutes to describe something that he/she did over the last week that was very enjoyable. The job of the person who is not talking is to listen. When the first person is done talking, the “listener” should paraphrase what the person just said to them. Then switch roles and repeat the activity.

Ask: *What did you notice about what happened when you were in the listening position? What qualities are important in a good listener?*

**POINTER** – Active listening lays the foundation for the relationship building components of the cycle of community action. After group members have completed this activity, it is important to determine those things that kept them from listening as closely as possible. To help people, you may want to share some of the obstacles that you face when trying to listen to another person—common obstacles include jumping ahead and formulating a response before a speaker is done talking; finding your mind wandering to other tasks or things that need your attention; remembering experiences you've had that are similar and anticipating being able to share them.





## V. Building Relationships: The Stick Person Activity

(30 minutes)

Note that listening to one another forms the basis of our ability to form relationships with one another. Another critical skill is the ability to ask open-ended questions. Ask the group if they know what an open-ended question is. Clarify the difference between an open-ended and closed-ended question. Use the example below and solicit other examples of open- and closed-ended questions to make sure that people understand the difference. Practice using open-ended questions to learn more about each other.

- Example of closed-ended question: “Does everyone understand the changes we have discussed?”
- Example of open-ended question: “What ideas do you have for explaining to others the changes we have made?”

Distribute Handout #3: The “Stick Person Activity.” Tell the group that they are now going to conduct an open-ended interview of the person with whom they are paired, using the “Stick Person” as a guide. Go over the questions that are at the top of the stick person sheet, pointing out that they are guides for the conversation and not “required questions.” The lines on the side of the sheet can be used to jot down some of the points that the person makes in the conversation.

Again, have one person go first. Give the pairs about seven minutes to interview their partners, and then have them switch. Point out that this is clearly too short a time, but that the point of the exercise is to learn what it feels like to ask open-ended questions.

After each person has had an opportunity to talk, ask participants to share what the experience was like for them. Use probe questions such as:

The stick person activity moves active listening to the next level and begins the process of relationship building by helping people better understand what kinds of questions can be asked to help get to know another person better. The process is fun and generally well liked by participants because it is so simple and straightforward.

- *What kinds of information did you learn about the person?*
- *How did it feel to answer open-ended questions?*
- *Was it hard to continue to ask open-ended questions? Why do you think that might be the case?*

## VI. One-on-one Interviewing: The Foundation of Community Work

(10 minutes)

Remind participants of the different phases of the cycle of community action discussed at the beginning of the workshop. Point out that in each of these phases, group members will be talking to various members of the community—to get to know them, to clarify and better understand their issues and concerns about the community, to solicit specific information while researching an issue, and even when organizing an action. Much of this work is most effectively done through a process of one-on-one interviewing. Point out that one on one interviewing is personal, continues to build relationships, and offers an opportunity to hear a person’s perspective directly, rather than through a survey instrument or questionnaire.

One-on-one interviews, while open-ended, do have a structure, and the structure may be modified somewhat based on the purpose of the interview. Review the structure of a one-on-one interview with group participants, using the following script as a guide:

*The basic structure of an introductory one-on-one is broken into three parts:*

- 1) **A credential.** *The credential tells someone why you are there; it identifies you as a member of*

*Free to Grow. “Hi. I’m \_\_\_\_\_ from Free to Grow. We are an organization working through Head Start here in \_\_\_\_\_ to help strengthen the communities in which we’re raising our children. I’m just out talking to folks in this neighborhood for 15 to 20 minutes about their impressions of our community and some of their concerns.”*

2) **A conversation.**

*“So, how long have you lived in this neighborhood?”*

*“Has it changed much since you’ve lived here?”*  
OR

*“Where did you live before?” “How’d you get here?” “How do you like this area?”*

*The conversation should encourage respondents to speak as much as they can about themselves, their family, their concerns and their joys. (Some ideas for general topics that might be covered are contained in the handout on interview format.)*

*This is best accomplished by having respondents share stories—descriptions or anecdotes about what has happened to respondents and their families. As you participate in a one-on-one, you should use active listening skills. The purpose of a one-on-one is NOT to recruit someone to be a leader or an organization member. The purpose is to begin a relationship with that person, to get to know him/her and to understand that individual’s self-interest. You may want to share personal information about yourself to reciprocate information shared by the other person, or to stimulate the conversation. However, if you find that you are doing all the talking, you are NOT doing a worthwhile one-on-one.*

- 3) **Next Steps.** *This part focuses on closing the one-on-one. Your goal here is to keep the relationship open. The next step does not have to be fixed or scheduled, but it should give a direction or expectation about the future. A common closing to a one-on-one goes something like this: “Well, thanks for talking with me. I’m out talking to lots of folks in the neighborhood to hear their concerns. Would you be interested in being contacted again as our work progresses? Thanks. I’ll look forward to talking with you again in the near future.”*

## VII. Modeling One-on-one Interviewing

*(20 minutes)*

With a co-facilitator or group member, the facilitator should take a few minutes to model a one-on-one interview as a role play. Spend about five minutes modeling the process for the group. The person playing the community resident should feel free to answer truthfully for themselves or to take on the role of a “typical” resident in the neighborhood. Before moving on, ask for questions.

One-on-One interviewing is at the heart of the community action process. Group members who do not learn this skill well will be at a great disadvantage as they move out into the community to work. Thus, it is critical that the facilitator take the time to help members grasp its core components. Taking the time to role play a one-on-one can go a long way in reducing the anxiety anyone may have about the process. After the role play, the facilitator should walk around the room and see if people are having difficulty with the exercise. Sometimes it is hard for a couple to get started. If this is the case, it is often helpful for the facilitator to ask what the pair is finding difficult and offer suggestions or even role play with one of the members of the couple to get the ball rolling.

## VIII. One-on-one Practice

*(30 minutes)*

Have participants break into new pairs. One person will conduct the one-on-one, the other will act as the community resident. Have participants break the one-on-one into three parts:

- Credential
- Conversation
- Next steps



**POINTER** – Participants will find it helpful to refer to workshop handouts four, five and six, which provide guidance on the one on one interview format. You should take a few minutes to review these handouts with the group members before they begin to practice one-on-ones.

After eight minutes, have the pairs change and have people who directed one-on-ones, take the role of the community resident.

In the large group setting, ask participants to share how the practice one-on-ones went. Use the following questions to guide your discussion.

- *What went well? What didn't work?*
- *Did people tell stories?*
- *Did those playing the role of resident feel like the other person was listening?*
- *Could those directing one-on-ones surface issues? Self-interest? What were they?*
- *How comfortable did people feel in this exercise? When was there tension?*
- *Would you feel comfortable doing this with strangers?*

Remind group members that there will be many opportunities over the course of the group's work to engage in conducting one-on-one interviews, and that they become easier to do with practice. Also note that as they get to know people better and trust builds, they will be willing to share more information with them.

### IX. Closing Activity: A Brief Evaluation (5 minutes)

Thank group members for their participation in the session. Before the group concludes, ask members to share one new thing that they learned during the session with the person sitting to their right. After people have shared their thoughts, ask a few people to share their responses with the group as a whole. If no one mentions the principles of organizing during the evaluation activity, consider prompting to determine if group members recall these key principles. You might want to point out that

there were seven principles of community action discussed, and ask group members to name each one until all seven have been mentioned.

**POINTER** – Be sure to point out that this activity models the evaluation process in the cycle of community action.



### X. Workshop Two Homework

Participants should practice their one-on-one interviewing skills with three friends. They can use some of the general interview guidelines provided in the handouts. Once they have completed these interviews, workshop members should fill out the homework assignment sheets to summarize what their interviewing experiences were like. These will be discussed at the beginning of the next workshop.

#### If Your Community Action Group Is Already Up and Running

The cycle of community action affords many opportunities for new group members to learn how to carry out one on one's. Program staff should take the time to introduce and practice one-one-one interviewing with all new community action group members. In ongoing training cycles, training participants can conduct targeted one on one interviews that can help move action on an existing community issue forward. Thus, for example, if your community action group has begun a campaign to reduce youth access to alcohol, training participants could brainstorm a set of open-ended questions related to the issue, and use these to practice conducting one on one's with residents in the community.

# WORKSHOP TWO

# Handouts



## Workshop Two – Handout #1

### *Group Ground Rules*

- 1) Take responsibility for your own learning.
- 2) Be regular and on time.
- 3) When you speak, speak only for yourself.  
Use “I” messages.
- 4) When others speak, listen without judging or evaluating.
- 5) Give everyone the opportunity to participate equally.
- 6) Respect confidentiality; nothing personal goes outside of the group.
- 7) Participants always have the right to pass.
- 8) No “seconds” before “firsts.”



**Workshop Two – Handout #2**  
*Principles of Organizing*









## Workshop Two – Handout #4

### General One-on-one Interview Format

- ◆ Begin by introducing yourself and identifying the organization with which you are working (credentialing).  
SAMPLE:  
*Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am working with \_\_\_\_\_.* We are visiting families/businesses/community organizations in our community to listen to their points of view and ideas regarding the community. Could I arrange to have 20 minutes of your time to listen to your ideas?
- ◆ Begin the conversation with a question about the person's thoughts on the community. Try to talk about things the person seems interested in and things that are relevant to their lives (see Workshop Two, Handout #5: Interview Ideas).
- ◆ Use follow-up questions for more detail, to stimulate conversation, and for your own curiosity. Ask WHY?  
REMEMBER: You are there to listen to their thoughts, not to talk about your pet projects or your own opinions.  
Watch the time so that you don't stay too long. Twenty minutes is long enough.
- ◆ End the interview by thanking the person for his/her time. Explain that the group will be talking to a large number of people. Later, the group will work on some of the concerns discussed. Leave the situation open-ended, and ask if the person might want to have further information as the group's work continues.  
REMEMBER: You are promising people that you want to listen to their point of view. You are not selling anything, you are not recruiting anyone for a project, you are not preaching to them or judging them. If people ask questions, answer to the best of your knowledge.

#### IMPORTANT...

Do not take notes during the interview. After the interview, spend a few minutes writing about the person and what you learned.

Evaluate whether or not you had a good or bad interview. Generally, it is a good interview if they did most of the talking. If you talked the most, it was probably not a good interview.



## Workshop Two – Handout #5

### *Examples of Questions for an Introductory One-on-One Interview*

- ◆ How long have you lived in the community?
- ◆ What is it like to live in the community? What are some of the changes that you have seen in the community over the period that you have lived here?
- ◆ What are some of the things that you like about this community?
- ◆ What are some of the ways in which this community could be improved?
- ◆ Can you share stories that reflect some of the experiences of children growing up in this community?

*(These questions should form the beginning of your discussion, and should be based on the themes that individuals raise during the interview. Other open-ended questions can follow.)*



## Workshop Two – Handout #6

### Interview Ideas

#### NEIGHBORHOOD

- Comparison with other neighborhoods they have lived in
- Changes in neighborhood since they have lived there
- Possible improvements
- Extent of cooperation among people
- Problems

#### CHILDREN (THEIR OWN)

- Opinion of their school situation
- Recreation opportunities
- Higher education: opportunity and obstacles
- Aspirations for their children

#### OTHER CHILDREN

- Respect for authority
- Concerns about delinquency
- Opinions about cause of youth problems

#### CHURCH

- Attendance
- Involvement in congregational activities
- Extent of community spirit
- Involvement in community development activities

#### ECONOMIC

- Family employment situation
- Job training and education for adults
- Aspirations for a better job
- Cost and condition of housing
- Biggest financial problems

#### SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND RELATED THEMES

- Impact of substance abuse on families and community
- “Hot spots” for substance abuse within the community
- Availability of alcohol and tobacco to community youth
- Police effectiveness in relationship to substance-abuse-related crime
- Community norms regarding substance use
- Access to treatment



# Workshop Two – Homework Assignment

## *Instructions for Doing One-on-one Interviews with Friends*

This homework assignment allows you to practice one-on-one interviews with friends so that you become increasingly comfortable with interviewing people. This skill will enable you to develop relationships that will further your program goals as well as elicit information that enables you to better understand the issues and concerns of community members.

To complete this assignment, interview **three** friends. These individuals may be good friends or casual acquaintances. The interviews should last for approximately 15 to 20 minutes. Your goal is to establish a deeper understanding of key issues and concerns that your friend has regarding the community in which she/he lives or works.

The interview should incorporate the three steps described in Workshop Two. Begin with the credential—representing your organization. Establish who you are and why you are conducting the interview. In this case, be honest about this being an assignment associated with the training you are engaged in. Step two is the “heart” of the interview. Here, you should seek out information about the community in which your interviewee lives or works. Finally, in closing the interview, explore any opportunity to talk with your friend again about the issues that surfaced in the interview. Use active listening skills and seek common ground and understanding. Try to disclose information about yourself that could create new bonds between you and your friend.

Please answer the following questions after you have completed each interview:

- 1) What was the nature of your relationship with the person you interviewed *before* you started?

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 2) In general, how well did the interview go?

.....

.....

.....

.....

3) What difficulties, if any, did you have moving through each of the three stages of the interview: Credential, Conversation, Next Steps.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

4) What did you learn about your friend that you didn't already know?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

5) Was the interview comfortable? Why? Why not?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

6) How could the interview technique be improved?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

7) What other observations do you have about this process?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....