

# **The Medical Cannabis Advocate's Handbook**

## **BUILDING COALITIONS**



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## WHAT IS A COALITION?

A coalition is a group of organizations and individuals working together for a common purpose. There are two types of coalitions:

1) "One issue" or event coalitions where all of the participants have agreed on one particular issue. The coalition is dissolved when the particular issue at hand has been solved or the event has been coordinated.

2) "Multi issue" coalitions have related issues. This more permanent type of coalition recognizes the value of mobilizing together for action over a longer time frame. To be effective, the "multi issue" coalition should have a date or multiple dates set for work to be completed. The coalition can always be reorganized and reconfigured if there is still a need for movement.

## A. THE VALUE OF COALITIONS

Coalition building is needed when one organization recognizes it alone does not have the technical capability or people power to have a real impact on an issue.

Coalitions assist in:

- Setting priorities for action
- Helping to identify specific data and the informational needs from other groups and agencies

- Sharing resources and expertise
- Broadening the development of new audiences
- Improving the chances that the issue (or issues) will get coverage in the media

## B. ANALYZE YOUR OWN ORGANIZATION BEFORE YOU BEGIN

The self-interests of your own organization should be analyzed before asking other groups to join a coalition. Ask yourselves these questions:

- What can be gained from joining with others?
- Will the advantages outweigh the disadvantages?
- How can we best communicate the demands of other groups to our members?

## C. IF YOU JOIN A COALITION, WHAT ARE YOU PROMISING?

Continual assessment of your position as it relates to the position of others in your coalition is essential to creating an effective movement. Successful coalition building is contingent upon the following rules of commitment. These rules should help keep all groups on the same track.

- Each organization must be committed to the problem.
- Each organization must be committed to coordinate to solve the problem, not just gain public recognition.
- Each organization must be committed to the belief that every other organization has the right to be involved.
- Each organization must be committed to open communication.
- Each organization must be committed to coalition recognition, not individual recognition.



#### IV. WORKING TOGETHER: ANTI-OPPRESSION PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

In order to build a non-discriminatory world, we suggest the following principles and practices in our lives and in our work.

##### PRINCIPLES

Power and privilege play out in our group dynamics and we must continually challenge when and how power and privilege play out in our practice.

We can only identify how power and privilege play out when we are conscious and committed to understanding how white supremacy, patriarchy, heterosexism and all other systems of oppression affect each one of us.

Developing an anti-oppression practice is life-long work and requires a lifelong commitment. No single workshop is sufficient for learning to change one's behaviors.

Dialogue and discussion are necessary and we need to learn how to listen non-defensively and communicate respectfully if we are going to have effective anti-oppression practice.

##### PRACTICES

###### Personal Practices

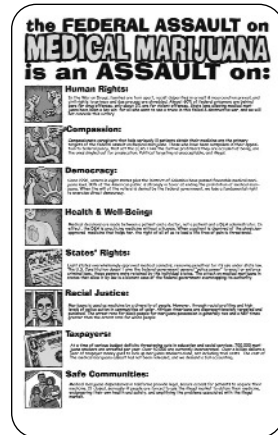
- Challenge yourself to be honest and open and take risks to address racism, sexism, and homophobia head on.
- When you witness or experience an abuse of power or oppression, interrupt the behavior and address it on the spot or

later, either one on one or with a few allies; this is about ways to address oppressive behavior that will encourage change.

- When challenging people's behavior, try to be sensitive to promote open dialogue.
- Don't generalize feelings, thoughts, behaviors, etc. to a whole group.
- Don't make people "prove" their experience of oppression by challenging, calling them divisive or diminishing what they say. Give people the benefit of the doubt and don't make assumptions.
- Challenge "macho bravado" and "rugged individualism" in yourself, your friends, and in activism.
- Take on the "grunt" work of cooking, cleaning, set up, clean up, phone calls, e-mail, taking notes, doing support work, sending mailings. Take active responsibility for initiating, volunteering for and following through on this work.
- Understand that you will feel discomfort and pain as you face your part in oppression and realize that this is a necessary part of the process of liberation and growth. We must support each other and be gentle with each other in this process.
- Don't feel guilty, feel motivated. Being part of the problem doesn't mean you can't be an active part of the solution.
- Maintain these practices and contribute equal time and energy to building healthy relationships, both personal and political.

###### Organizational Practices

- Commit time for organizational discussions on discrimination and oppression
- Set anti-oppression goals and continually evaluate whether or not you are meeting them
- Promote an anti-racist and anti-sexist



message and analysis in everything we do, in and outside of activist space

- Remember, these are complex issues and they need adequate time and space
- Create opportunities for people to develop skills to communicate about oppression
- Respect different styles of leadership and communication
- Don't push people of color to do things because of their race (tokenism); base it on their work, experience, and skills
- Make a collective commitment to hold people accountable for their behavior so that the organization can be a safe and nurturing place for all



## D. GETTING STARTED WITH A PLAN

Coalitions must plan to carry out certain tasks, regardless of the type, in order for them to function efficiently. These tasks include:

- Naming a facilitator or coordinator
- Obtaining commitment from members
- Assessing needs and gathering background data
- Writing a mission statement
- Determining short or long-term objectives
- Evaluating the work as the coalition progresses
- Exploring opportunities for additional funding
- Carrying out the plan
- Determining ways to orient new members

*[Excerpted from "A Process for Building Coalitions" by Dr. Georgia L. Stevens]*

## Meeting Practices

- It is the role of the facilitator to make the space safe and welcoming for everyone
- Become a good listener
- Don't interrupt people who are speaking
- Be conscious of how your use of language may perpetuate racism, sexism, homophobia or ageism
- Try not to call people out because they are not speaking
- Be conscious of how much space you take up or how much you speak in a group
- Be careful of not hogging the show, speaking on every subject, speaking in capital letters, restating what others say or speaking for others
- Respect different views and opinions
- Balance race, gender and age participation
- People who haven't yet spoken get priority
- Racist, sexist, ageist, homophobic remarks must not be tolerated

*{Adapted from the "Anti-Racism Principles and Practices" by RiseUp DAN-LA, Overcoming Masculine Oppression by Bill Moyers and the FEMMAFESTO by the women of Philadelphia. 9/9/01 by Lisa Fithian}*

## ALLIED AND POTENTIAL ALLIED ORGANIZATIONS (AN INCOMPLETE GUIDE)

### AARP

[www.aarp.org/](http://www.aarp.org/)

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization for people aged 50 and over. AARP is dedicated to enhancing quality of life for all as we age. They lead positive social change and deliver value to members through information, advocacy, and service.

### American Academy of HIV Medicine

[www.aahivm.org/](http://www.aahivm.org/)

The American Academy of HIV Medicine is an independent organization of AAHIVM HIV Specialists™ and others dedicated to promoting excellence in HIV/AIDS care. Through advocacy and education, the Academy is committed to supporting health care providers in HIV medicine and to ensuring better care for those living with AIDS and HIV .

### **American Civil Liberties Union**

[www.aclu.org/](http://www.aclu.org/)

The ACLU works daily in courts, legislatures and communities to defend and preserve the individual rights and liberties guaranteed to every person in this country by the Constitution and laws of the United States. Their job is to conserve America's original civic values: the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

### **American Public Health Association**

[www.apha.org](http://www.apha.org)

The American Public Health Association (APHA) is the oldest and largest organization of public health professionals in the world, representing more than 50,000 members from over 50 occupations of public health. APHA brings together researchers, health service providers, administrators, teachers, and other health workers in a unique, multidisciplinary environment of professional exchange, study, and action.

### **Drug Policy Alliance**

[www.drugpolicy.org](http://www.drugpolicy.org)

The Alliance is a high profile organization working to end the war on drugs. The organization envisions new drug policies based on science, compassion, health and human rights and a just society in which the fears, prejudices and punitive prohibitions of today are no more.

### **Interfaith Drug Policy Initiative**

[www.idpi.us/index.htm](http://www.idpi.us/index.htm)

The Interfaith Drug Policy Initiative was established in November 2003 to mobilize people of faith and religious groups behind more compassionate and less coercive alternatives to the war on drugs.

### **International Association for Cannabis as Medicine**

[www.cannabis-med.org](http://www.cannabis-med.org)

The International Association for Cannabis as Medicine (IACM) is a scientific society advocating the improvement of the legal situation for the use of the hemp plant (*Cannabis sativa* L.) and its pharmacologically most important

active compounds, the cannabinoids, for therapeutic applications through promotion of research and dissemination of information. The IACM declares that it is the right of doctors to be able to discuss the medicinal use of cannabis with their patients.

### **International Cannabis Research Society**

[www.cannabinoidsociety.org](http://www.cannabinoidsociety.org)

The ICRS is dedicated to research in all fields of the cannabinoids, ranging from biochemical, chemical, and physiological studies of the endogenous cannabinoid system to studies of the abuse potential of recreational cannabis. In addition to acting as a source for impartial information on cannabis and the cannabinoids, the main role of the ICRS is to provide a forum for researchers to meet and discuss their results.

### **Lymphoma Foundation of America**

[www.lymphomahelp.org/](http://www.lymphomahelp.org/)

Lymphoma Foundation of America is the national organization devoted solely to helping lymphoma patients and their families. They are dedicated to helping you find the best care available for your type of lymphoma. They offer support, experience, advice, and a helping hand. All programs and services are free.

### **Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies**

[www.maps.org](http://www.maps.org)

The Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) is a membership-based non-profit research and educational organization. They assist scientists to design, obtain approval for, fund, conduct, and report on research into the healing and spiritual potentials of psychedelics and cannabis.

### **National Association of People with AIDS**

[www.napwa.org](http://www.napwa.org)

The National Association of People with AIDS is a non-profit membership organization that advocates on behalf of all people living with HIV and AIDS in order to end the pandemic and the human suffering caused by HIV/AIDS.

### **National Multiple Sclerosis Society**

[www.nmss.org](http://www.nmss.org)

The mission of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society is to end the devastating effects of MS. The Society and its network of chapters nationwide promote research, educate, advocate on critical issues, and organize a wide range of programs- including support for the newly diagnosed and those living with MS over time.

### **The November Coalition**

[www.november.org](http://www.november.org)

The November Coalition is a non-profit organization of grassroots volunteers educating the public about the destructive increase in prison population in the United States due to our current drug laws. They alert their fellow citizens, particularly those who are complacent or naive, about the present and impending dangers of an overly powerful federal authority acting far beyond its constitutional constraints.

### **Patients Out of Time**

[www.medicalcannabis.com](http://www.medicalcannabis.com)

The mission of Patients out of Time is the education of health care professionals and the



public about the therapeutic use of cannabis. Their leadership is composed of medical and nursing professionals with expertise in the clinical applications of cannabis and five of the seven patients (two wish to remain anonymous) who receive their medical cannabis from the US government.

### **Students for Sensible Drug Policy**

[www.ssdp.org](http://www.ssdp.org)

Students for Sensible Drug Policy is committed to providing education on harms caused by the War on Drugs, working to involve youth in the political process, and promoting an open, honest, and rational discussion of alternative solutions to our nation's drug problems.

***See following page for Coalition Building Worksheet***