

About this Guide

History of Our Work

This youth community organizing guide is the result of collaborative work between the Tobacco Prevention Project, Community Wellness and Prevention Program, and the TeenAge Program, Family, Maternal and Child Health Program, both located in the Public Health Division of Contra Costa Health Services, California. Funded in part through a grant from the San Francisco Foundation, the Guide reflects experiences that the TeenAge Program (TAP) and the Tobacco Prevention Project (TPP) have had working with youth to build their skills in community organizing for changes in their community through a youth development framework.

Much of what is included in *Youth Power: A Guide to Community Organizing* comes from years of working with young people through TIGHT (Tobacco Industry Gets Hammered by Teens), the TPP's first youth mobilization initiative, and the school-based experiences of TAP. TIGHT was instrumental in a 5-year campaign to pass local tobacco prevention ordinances across Contra Costa County. TIGHT was grounded in what was then known as youth resiliency theory, and provided consistent opportunities for meaningful participation, opportunities for skill development and caring relationships for the youth involved. Hundreds of youth were trained on how to better their community through direct action organizing, utilizing these resiliency principles.

TAP launched several community organizing projects in 2001 as a natural outgrowth of its commitment to youth development and its extensive experience providing health education to thousands of young people in high school, continuation schools and juvenile detention facilities across the county. Using community organizing strategies, students from four Contra Costa communities have been successful in making changes to their lunch menu, working with a local police department to enforce tobacco and alcohol laws, and working with two city councils to develop strong tobacco retailer licensing ordinances.

We would like to acknowledge the youth members from all of TAP's and TPP's youth mobilization projects: TIGHT; ETA Middle College High School; ETA Pittsburg High School; and Bay Point Youth Power. They have inspired us with their passionate dedication and commitment to advancing social justice. It is because of their willingness to share their time and talents that we are able to do this work.

A few individuals merit specific acknowledgement for their contributions to this guide. Colleen Floyd-Carroll, MSW, MPH, was responsible for developing the TIGHT project from its inception through its first three years. Andrea DuBrow, MSW, MPH, saw the project through its second two years and facilitated TIGHT's participation in a community-academic research endeavor that

examined the role of developmental supports in youth advocacy work. Both Colleen and Andrea contributed to the development of many of the concepts that can be found in this guide. Sincere thanks are also extended to Carla Goode, MA, MFT and Cheri Pies, MSW, DrPH for reading the draft Guide and providing valuable suggestions for editing and revisions. And finally, a thanks is owed to Jennifer Dowling and Andi Bivens for their work on formatting the Guide.

Using the Guide

The Guide is a practical training manual with easy-to-follow lessons for adults and high school aged youth, working together to create real changes for youth. It's about teaching youth about activism, leadership and community organizing. It's about how to come together as a team in a positive, creative way; how to explore and select a problem, and how to uncover solutions. It also describes strategies for making your solutions a reality.

We strongly believe that you don't have to be an expert to lead an effective group in organizing for change - you and the youth will learn together. However, you do need to be committed to working in true partnership with youth. In numerous communities across the country, young people have succeeded in making significant advances toward social justice. Using the skills and strategies described in this guide, they have gotten their city to fund youth centers, organized petitions to get laws passed limiting tobacco sales to minors, worked with their schools for better food and campus safety, and much more.

The lessons in the Guide build on the experience and knowledge of previous lessons, and the activities within each lesson are designed to be used sequentially as well. While each of the lesson's activities can be facilitated by an individual adult in the role of adult leader, some of these lessons will benefit from bringing in other adult allies who may have more or different experience in the specific topic area. We have found that youth appreciate bringing in "guest" leaders, so don't feel as if you have to do it alone! Bring in the Media experts to talk about sound bites, or the local expert on Diversity to talk about power. Resources and Background sections of the Guide are recommended for the adult facilitator who is new to working with youth and community organizing. The guide contains 15 lessons. Most have:

- Basic background information for the facilitator
- Activities that address the lesson
- Facilitator preparation
- Materials needed and
- Tools

This guide can be used in two different ways. Youth workers who are new to community organizing can use it as a manual to teach youth the basics of community organizing. As such, the sequence of the lessons provides a

suggested structure for activities. For that reason, sections build on each other and concepts in earlier activities are relevant to subsequent ones. In practice, you may need to adapt the timing or sequence of activities to create a fun, hands-on, meaningful experience for ***your*** group. You may also need to supplement team-building activities to fit your group's needs.

With that said, you are encouraged to use the guide flexibly and creatively to meet your needs, and those of the group. You are welcome to pick and choose lessons to help your group achieve a specific outcome.

The experiences of 'finding out' and 'speaking up' can change a young person's life. The skills gained from organizing, doing research, finding creative solutions and taking them out into the world, learning to work creatively together, and speaking one's truth to power can last a lifetime.

We hope that you find the experiences as rewarding as we have.

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