



Communities Mobilizing for Change on Alcohol: A Guide for Implementation

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Acknowledgements

This handbook is built on previous work from the original CMCA trial, application and training by the Youth Leadership Institute, and updated based on the experiences of the CMCA community organizers in the Prevention Trial in the Cherokee Nation.

The Prevention Trial in the Cherokee Nation was supported by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, with co-funding from the National Institute on Drug Abuse, under Award Number 5R01AA02069. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the views of the NIH or the Cherokee Nation.

Paris Harper assisted with editorial suggestions, copy editing, and designed the final layout.

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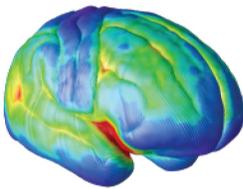
Introduction

Communities Mobilizing for Change on Alcohol (CMCA) is listed on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices. CMCA uses a community organizing process to make changes in communities, local institutions, and families. These changes are focused on reducing underage access to alcohol in social circles, stores, and the community.¹



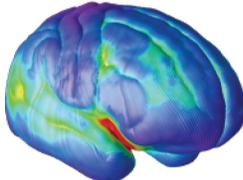
Describing the Problem

Teenager's brains aren't fully developed yet. The teen years are an important time when the parts of the brain involved in self-control, emotions, and high-level thinking are growing and maturing. Because of the toxic effects of alcohol on the brain, heavy drinking in adolescence can change how the brain grows and can affect mental processes for the rest of a teen's life. The risks increase the younger someone is when he or she starts drinking.^{2, 3}



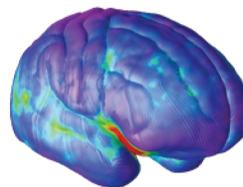
Age 12

During adolescence, the brain goes through a lot of changes. Gray matter diminishes as connections between neurons are cut back.



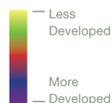
Age 16

Because the brain is still developing, it is more sensitive to the effects of alcohol.



Age 20

By adulthood, the changes caused by beginning alcohol use are less likely to "stick" and become hardwired as addiction.



Normal brain development can be harmed by excessive alcohol use in the adolescent years. Image used with permission from the Genetic Science Learning Center, <http://learn.genetics.utah.edu>

Treatments for teens that are already high-risk drinkers are sometimes necessary, but to prevent problems before they arise by changing behavior of teens throughout a community requires a different approach. Part of this has to do with the way teenagers are wired—they seek risks and act impulsively without considering how their actions today will affect their future. Instead of focusing on changing behavior of certain individuals, we use a public health approach to reduce risks for all teens in a community by changing the things in their environment that put them at risk.

Environmental Prevention

CMCA works because it combines multiple, evidence-based alcohol prevention strategies to create changes at the community level. Changing things in the environment that put teens at risk for drinking is what we call an environmental prevention strategy. Every day, teens are exposed to messages from media and from their communities that influence their opinions about alcohol. Seeing a liquor store on the way to school, weakly enforced underage drinking laws, invitations to parties with alcohol, and other environmental cues make alcohol use more appealing. Environmental prevention goes beyond scaring teens into avoiding alcohol (which doesn't work well) by changing the environment that makes drinking alcohol easy.

Environmental prevention focuses on:

- **Norms:** The rules of acceptable behavior in a group or community.
 - Teenagers learn norms by observing the people around them and learning what kind of drinking behaviors are normal and accepted in their family, their community, and among their friends.
- **Media messaging:** The beliefs and expectations about alcohol that teens see through the internet, magazines, billboards, movies, and TV.
 - Some kinds of messages, like funny beer commercials, are obvious, but even product placements on a TV show or lyrics in a song can influence teenagers' ideas about drinking.
- **Laws, rules, and policies:** Different levels of governance, such as city and county councils, or administrations of businesses and schools can determine and enforce rules about alcohol use and availability.
 - Examples of these kinds of policies include: limiting where and when alcohol can be purchased, limiting areas where people are allowed to drink, how schools handle alcohol-related disciplinary issues, how local police departments enforce liquor licensing laws, age of sale laws, etc.
- **Accessibility:** How easy it is to obtain alcohol.
 - Teens can be influenced by how many stores selling alcohol are in the area, how cheap alcohol is, the presence of alcohol in the home or workplace, etc.

Environmental prevention strategies include:

- **Targeting adults** who provide alcohol to underage teens and getting them to stop.
- Setting up **DUI checkpoints** to prevent drunk driving.
- Performing **compliance checks** to make sure stores aren't selling alcohol to minors.
- Encouraging law enforcement to conduct **hot-spot policing** in places where teens are known to gather and drink.
- Enforcing **administrative penalties** on businesses that violate alcohol sales laws.
- Gaining support from the public and policymakers through news **media coverage**.

What Does NOT Work?
Fear-based and Information-only Programs

Programs attempting to persuade students not to use alcohol by scaring them do not work to change behavior. Emphasizing the dangers of alcohol may even attract those who tend to be risk-takers. Programs providing information about the pharmacological effects of alcohol may arouse curiosity and lead to drinking.⁴



School Zero Tolerance Policies

Zero Tolerance policies automatically punish students who bring alcohol or drugs on school property or to school events, without exception. The objective is to scare students so they won't break the rules, but these policies can lead to unreasonable punishments, for example, students being expelled for possessing "drugs" such as cough drops or



mouthwash. These policies also discourage students from reporting dangerous behaviors in order to protect their peers from extreme punishments. Zero Tolerance is also associated with poorer grades and higher rates of dropout and expulsion.⁵

Previous CMCA-Related Projects

Communities Mobilizing for Change on Alcohol (CMCA) Initial Study

CMCA was evaluated in a randomized research trial across 15 communities. Data collection included: in-school surveys of ninth and twelfth graders, telephone surveys of 18- to 20-year-olds and alcohol merchants, direct testing of the likelihood of alcohol sales to youth (using underage-looking youth to attempt purchases), and monitoring changes in relevant practices of community institutions. Because the study communities were randomly selected, they did not request the introduction of CMCA and were not necessarily ready to address the issue of underage drinking.^{6,7}

Results showed:

- Alcohol merchants checked IDs more often and were less likely to sell to minors.
- 18-20 year-olds were less likely to provide alcohol to other teens and were less likely to try to buy alcohol, drink in a bar, or consume alcohol.
- Arrests of 18-20 year olds for driving under the influence decreased.

Complying with the Minimum Drinking Age Project (CMDA)

CMDA was designed to test two interventions for reducing alcohol sales to minors: training managers of retail alcohol establishments and enforcement checks of alcohol establishments. The project was conducted in 20 communities in four geographic areas in the Midwest. The study lasted four years and included 602 on-premise alcohol establishments (restaurants and bars) and 340 off-premise alcohol establishments (liquor and grocery stores).⁸

Results showed:

- A 17% reduction in likelihood of sales to minors in the particular outlet that experienced a police check.
- These effects decayed within 3 months of the police check, showing that a regular schedule of enforcement is necessary to maintain deterrence.

Prevention Trial in Cherokee Nation

This prevention trial was conducted in northeastern Oklahoma within the 14-county Cherokee Nation jurisdictional service area. It involved two distinct interventions randomly assigned across six communities. Several communities received a community organizer to initiate the CMCA intervention. Each CMCA chapter chose a specific focus. These included: conducting alcohol outlet compliance checks, improving local alcohol control ordinances, working with law enforcement to increase social host enforcement, and policing efforts.⁹

Results showed:

- High school students were less likely to drink alcohol and drink heavily (5 drinks in a row).
- High school students reported fewer alcohol-related consequences.
- Reductions in alcohol use varied over time and were most pronounced when the CMCA chapters were most active.

How CMCA Works



CMCA is science-based and the strategies listed in this guide are known to be effective. But each local community is different. You as a community organizer, along with local citizens, must decide which specific strategy or action is best to focus on right now.

Community organizing is a process in which community members come together to act in their own shared interest. When political leaders or official institutions (such as police or schools) are not meeting the needs of community members, community organizing is a way to declare the community needs and **make changes happen**. In regards to underage drinking, the goals of community organizing should include:

- Creating awareness about the problems associated with underage drinking.
- Creating awareness about commercial and social sources of alcohol to youth.
- Mobilizing community members to take public action on remedies that reduce the exposure of alcohol to teens.
- Educating people about evidence-based formal and informal alcohol prevention measures, including policies, practices, and family rules.
- Increasing active enforcement of alcohol regulations at city/county, institutional/organizational, and family levels.
- Changing community norms regarding underage alcohol use.

Community organizing efforts like CMCA are also called *grassroots organizing* because their goal is to develop the leadership skills of ordinary people so that they become community leaders. We provide citizens with organizing knowledge and skills that can be applied to any community problem. Essential steps to successfully implementing CMCA include:

- Identify a lead community organizer
- Conduct at least 100 one-on-one conversations
- Assess the community norms, resources, and institutions
- Identify passionate people to participate in an Action Team
- Build a base of support for underage alcohol prevention efforts
- Develop and implement an action plan
- Continue to evaluate changes achieved and add more actions

“Good community organizers are good researchers *and* planners!”
—Kathleen Kennedy, CMCA organizer

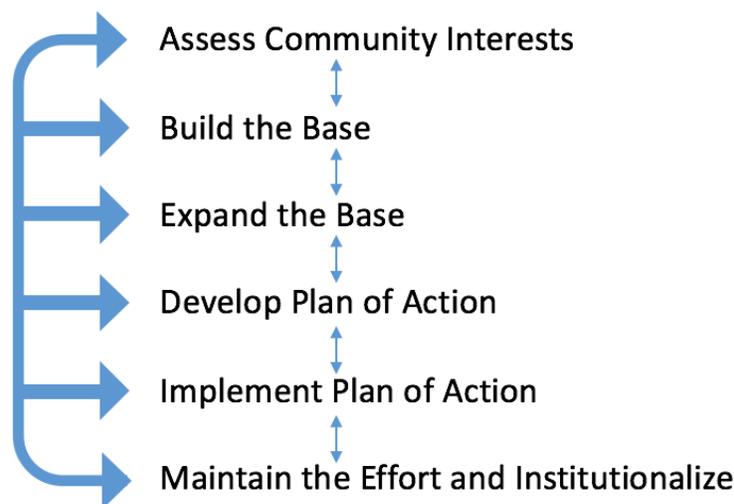
As a community organizer, you will build a base—a group of people to fight for a common cause. Your task is to identify a (relatively small) group of citizens with passion and commitment to taking action and provide them with the information and skills to be successful. The ultimate goal of an organizer is to create a powerful and sustainable citizen group that can make positive change. Anyone can learn to be a community organizer, but there are some key skills, knowledge, and traits that help make them successful.

Key Skills, Knowledge & Traits of a Community Organizer

- Active listening to others
- Building relationships
- Developing others as leaders
- Passion about doing what is right
- Believing that change can happen
- Fortitude and persistence
- Flexibility
- Community pride
- Creativity
- Learning through experience
- Questioning tradition
- Understanding power dynamics in the community
- Political and policy making knowledge
- Communication skills

The steps to implementing CMCA can be broken down into six stages. At its core, CMCA consists of ordinary citizens demanding that community institutions prioritize the prevention of underage drinking. This is accomplished by creating strong laws, regulations and rules on alcohol, and enforcing them in order to create a culture that cares for youth by ensuring the adults in the community act to prevent access to alcohol by minors. In the next several chapters, we will provide you with the information you need to successfully organize your community to prevent underage alcohol use and the damage it causes.

Stages of CMCA Community Organizing



Stage 1: Assess the Community's Interest

Assessing the community's interest is the first stage in community organizing. The best way to form your assessment is by talking to lots of community members to determine what they want, what they need, and what resources they already have to make it happen. A large part of this process is conducting one-on-one conversations with community members. After you have completed around 50 to 100 one-on-ones you should begin to see emerging patterns. Try to use what you learn to answer the following questions:

- What does the community want?
- What does the community need?
- What resources does the community have?
- Who has power in the community?
- Who are the influential people and community leaders?

Conducting One-on-One Conversations

One-on-ones are the most important component of building relationships that mount into a groundswell of community support for reducing underage alcohol consumption. A one-on-one isn't a traditionally structured interview, but a conversation between you and a community member during which both of you get to know one another by discussing thoughts, opinions, and values. These relationships will serve as the basis for developing support within the community. People are much more likely to get involved with an issue in response to an invitation from someone they have met in a face-to-face conversation. Take note: one-on-ones are the best way to get a broad perspective of what's going on in a community, but it's best to wait until an Action Team is formed to speak with individuals in power positions such as police chiefs, mayors, city counselors, or school board members.

The one-on-one helps you identify:

- A person's existing talents
- Motivations
- Self-interests
- Leadership skills
- A person's feelings about underage alcohol use
- What is happening in your community
- Who key power holders are

One-on-ones may occur in:

- A workplace
- A coffee shop
- At home
- Wherever it is most convenient for the community member

“Everybody is motivated by something. To have influence you need to find out what a person cares about. Are they driven by a quest for attention, power, money, or values and ethics? You will need to make your action match their motivation.”

—Kathleen Kennedy, CMCA organizer

Who to talk to

It is important to speak with a diverse group of community members. To get comfortable with the one-on-one process, consider scheduling your first few one-on-ones with people you already know. Don't think only about people in relevant positions of authority, but identify informal leaders, active and influential members of the community. End every one-on-one with "who else do you think I should chat with about this?" Keep a list of names of people who have been recommended to you.

Consider approaching:

- Faith community
- Health care providers
- Educators and school administrators
- Social service providers
- Business leaders
- Community service organizations
- Youth, their parents, grandparents and family members

"If you are trying to meet with someone go to their workplace and ask for the meeting. It is harder to say no to a person standing in front of you!" —Kathleen Kennedy, CMCA organizer

Organizing a One-on-one

There is no patented formula for having a good first visit with someone you've just met. Enjoy yourself and be friendly. A relaxed conversation can help people feel comfortable opening up about community issues, so don't underestimate the power of chit-chat. Be sure to introduce yourself and explain the purpose of your visit. When possible, mention the names of mutual acquaintances or other community members to build your credibility. It can be helpful to prepare an "elevator speech," a short story that explains who you are and why underage alcohol use is important to you. You may have a story about someone close to you who has been negatively impacted by alcohol, or about how you have witnessed the powerful impacts of community organizing in the past. These stories can motivate and inspire others. As you talk, gently direct the conversation toward underage drinking and be sure to let the other person express his or her own perspective on the issue. Learn what motivates and excites them. Use some of the sample questions below.

Questions About the Community

- What makes you proud of our community?
- What motivates residents to go outside of their doors aside from work?
- What do you see as challenges for our community?
- What attracted you to our community? (for someone who has moved recently)
- Why have you stayed in this community? (for a long-term resident)
- Why did you come home? (for someone who has moved away and returned)
- What community groups, boards, or committees are you involved in?
 - What motivated you to join these organizations or groups?
 - What in your opinion has made these groups effective or ineffective?
- What types of problems are facing the youth in our community?
- What are the positive ways our community is providing for our youth?
- How effective do you think our community is in solving its problems?

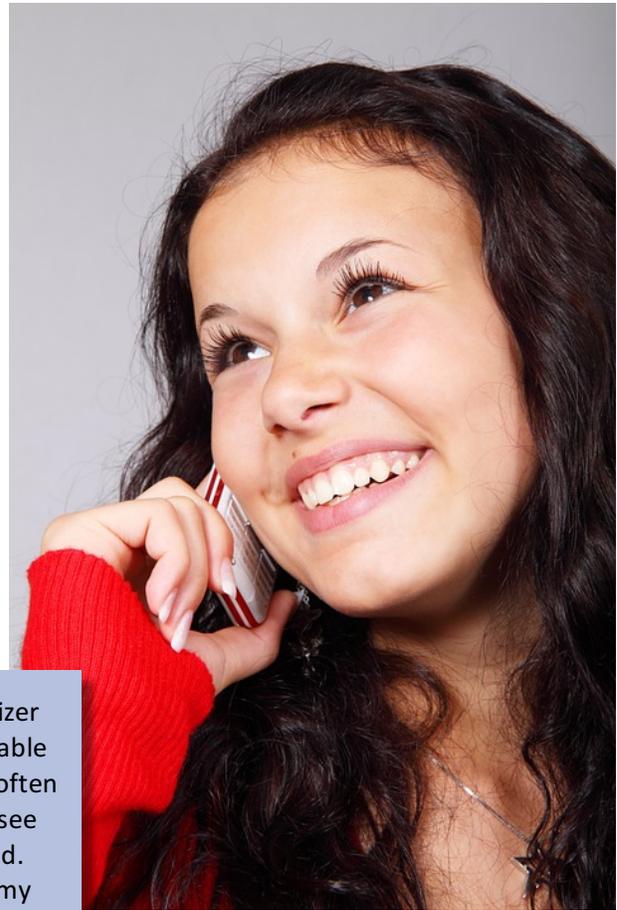
Questions About Underage Drinking

- What efforts have been made in our community to resolve the problem of underage drinking?
- Has your family been touched by the ill effects of drinking?
- What makes underage drinking a significant problem in our community?
- Do you think the risk is significant enough we need to do something more to reduce underage drinking?
- What might be the best way to educate/inform people about the problem of underage drinking?
- What are some ways you think this issue could best be handled?
- Where do you think the power lies in this community to make changes?

Sample Appointment Call

“Hi! My name is ____ and I live and work here in (NAME OF COMMUNITY). I am working with people here to reduce underage drinking. I am taking some time to meet with people who live in (NAME OF COMMUNITY) to learn about our community, as well as learn more about you and your ideas regarding youth and alcohol. Could I arrange to have 30 to 45 minutes of your time to listen to your ideas?”

If this person was referred to you by someone, mention his or her name to help get the appointment. For example, “A.J., who lives on your street/who works at the ____ suggested I talk to you.”



“A good community organizer selects a role that is acceptable to people. I’m a mom and I often bring my child with me to see how other people respond. People often understand my passion better when they know I am invested because I care about the future of the children.”
—Kathleen Kennedy, CMCA organizer

Closing the Meeting

Remember to be respectful of people's time and try to keep meetings brief. Always thank the person for talking with you, even if in your opinion, the meeting didn't go well. Provide them with a business card or handout about the effort with your contact information and ask for suggestions of other people that you should meet with for more perspectives on how things really work in the community. Finally, ask if they would like to receive updates and newsletters about this work and the methods that they would prefer to be contacted. Don't add anyone to your mailing list without their permission.

Document Your Conversation

It's common to forget a lot of what was discussed in a one-on-one, even after just a short amount of time. Take some time immediately after each meeting to make note of what was discussed. This can be done in a notebook or on a computer with a program such as Microsoft Word or Excel. Here are some key points we recommend you write down:

- Participant's name
- Contact information
- Job and other positions (e.g., PTA member)
- Whether they might be a potential Action Team member
- If they indicated any special skills like graphic design, writing, etc.
- What community knowledge they shared
- Places they mentioned for where teens are getting alcohol
- Times and places they said teens are drinking
- People they mentioned that would be supportive or opposed to these kinds of prevention efforts

One-on-one conversations are an essential part of sustaining your organizing work. Even after you've had 100 one-on-ones and you've built your Action Team, you'll benefit from continually having one-on-one conversations to help you meet new people and add to your list of contacts.



“Community organizers are communicators and planners.”
—Kathleen Kennedy, CMCA organizer

Stage 2: Build the Base

After the completion of 100 or more one-on-one interviews you, as the community organizer, will start to identify local citizens who are willing to plan and implement a campaign against underage drinking, these core supporters will be your CMCA Action Team members. Aim to recruit people who represent diverse backgrounds and skill sets. Unlike a coalition prevention effort, Action Team members are *not* selected to represent organizations. In a coalition, people are invited to represent their institutions or sectors, such as someone from law enforcement to represent the police, someone from the local hospital to represent health care, etc.; but in an Action Team, members are selected based on their passion and commitment for preventing teen access to alcohol and their willingness and skills in speaking up, taking action, and making change. Because the Action Team must challenge local institutions to do better, those who might have vested economic or political interests that conflict with the group's goals (such as liquor store owners, law enforcement officers, city council members) should generally not be on the Action Team. Most importantly, your Action Team should be passionate about putting an end to underage drinking and willing to act as part of a team.

Action Teams

Your Action Team is a group of about 8 to 15 citizens whose purpose is to work together to implement action plans for enforcing laws, making it harder for teens to get alcohol, and building support for preventing underage drinking in the community. Select team members who have expressed strong interest in preventing underage drinking, willingness to take public action and “stick their neck out a bit,” and enthusiasm for creating change. Make sure to select your Action Team members strategically—those supportive of cutting off the tap of alcohol flowing to youth and those most likely to move to *action*.

The Action Team is the voice of the community. Their primary job is to understand the community dynamics and make decisions on how to address the issue of underage drinking. Once they have been engaged and educated about the issue of underage drinking and the science-based ways to reduce it, the Action Team begins to strategize about how to raise community awareness of the problem. Action Teams employ a variety of activities to build community awareness, including:

- Present information to civic and community groups about CMCA.
- Attend meetings with local officials and law enforcement.
- Develop marketing for social media, newsletters, newspapers, etc.
- Lobby for change in policies and practices.
- Request letters of support from key community groups and members.
- Plan and implement community forums.
- Prepare and handout educational material to the community.
- Request meetings with the local officials; such as the district attorney to understand local ordinances and law enforcement practices.
- Record concise meeting minutes of actions decided and a timeline for doing them.

Invest in Your Action Team

A good community organizer is an information resource for the Action Team, providing information about evidence-based practices and knowledge about the community organizing process. A good community organizer also provides advice and trains the team to take over the job of the organizer in order to create sustainable, long-term change. The organizer's responsibilities are to identify members' talents, educate, facilitate actions, and help the group record and assess efforts.

Action Team Meetings

Action Team Meetings are a space where the team can come together to brainstorm goals and actions, break down actions into smaller tasks and assign those tasks to team members to complete by specific dates. It is also a space where you can educate and bring new information to your team members, collaborate on tasks, and celebrate your victories.

As a community organizer, your job during these meetings is to keep your Action Team on task and make sure conversations stay relevant and positive. Try to engage every member of your team and make sure everyone is on board with team decisions before moving forward with actions. Most importantly, make sure that everyone understands what needs to be completed and how to complete it.

A good activity for the first Action Team meeting is creating a vision. Ask your team members to work together to think about these questions and write the answers down so they can be revisited later.

- What community norms do you wish to change?
- What type of working relationship do you want to have with religious groups, civic organizations, government, and the school system?
- What priorities do you want your local law enforcement to have?
- What type of supporters are you seeking?
- What type of resources do you need?

Action Team Meeting Advice:

- Set a regularly scheduled time and place for your meetings.
- Create ground rules and member expectations and hold each other accountable.
- Create an agenda for the meeting and email it to members before the meeting starts.
- Take minutes and send the minutes out to members after every meeting.
- Set aside time in the meeting to discuss what is happening in the community.
- Create an action item "To Do" list for members to work on before the next meeting.
- Discuss each member's group role and write down what each person agrees to do.
- Spend some time each meeting to provide education about teen alcohol use and effective ways to make alcohol harder for teens to obtain.
- Provide binders for team members to keep information together and organized.
- Celebrate victories at the beginning or end of each meeting.
- Have the team discuss ways to communicate with each other between meetings.
- Bring snacks.

Possible Actions for Action Team Members

Targeting merchants:

- Provide education on state and local laws
- Develop and distribute a merchant policy manual
- Perform alcohol compliance checks
- Warn merchants before prom and graduation
- Provide rewards for checking ID's

Targeting community events where alcohol is served:

- Limit hours for alcohol sales
- Limit promotion of alcohol
- Create designated roped off drinking areas
- Provide ID check training
- Install warning signs

Targeting law enforcement:

- Apply pressure for regular continuous alcohol compliance checks
- Provide safe party dispersal training
- Advocate for hot spot policing
- Establish reporting hotlines to identify and prevent underage drinking parties

Targeting media:

- Use Facebook, newspaper articles, newsletters, and Twitter to educate the community on alcohol prevention and build support for your cause

Targeting religious groups:

- Spread education and build support for actions
- Spread marketing on signs, websites, and in bulletins
- Provide letters of support, editorials, and speeches
- Be physically present at important meetings and events

Other Good Tasks for Action Team Members:

- Speak to others about the issue of underage drinking
- Conduct one-on-ones to identify supporters, building a base for action
- Distribute fliers and marketing materials, such as the CMCA Community Factsheets. See page 27, "Doing Your Research," for more information.
- Make phone calls
- Help create marketing materials, newsletters, and press releases
- Bake cookies for supporters and those you are trying to influence: law enforcement, city council, etc.
- Send thank you cards to those who help
- Coordinate fundraising efforts
- Pair up with a person of influence to build relationships

"Find the right person to speak with key community members about the issue of youth alcohol prevention. If you need to get the attention of a law enforcement officer find out who he is close to that believes in your cause and can get the message through."
—Kathleen Kennedy, CMCA organizer

Stage 3: Expand the Base

Once your initial Action Team is in place, you'll be able to begin building additional rings of supporters around your core group and identifying additional resources that you may be able to take advantage of in the future. While rings of supporters won't be as active as members of the Action Team, they should be supportive of your campaign and willing to take part in some action when asked, such as attending city council meetings or writing letters of support. Your first ring, "supporters," may be around 50-100 people. After that, start identifying an additional ring beyond them. These "fans" should support your plan, but may be somewhat less committed to participating in actions.

Rings of Supporters



Questions to ask while expanding the base and identifying additional resources:

- Do you have the ability to raise money for a specific action?
- What "in-kind" contributions would be possible to use when needed? This could be space to meet, food for meetings, copying/printing services, people willing to drive, etc.
- Do you have all areas of expertise needed to implement your action plan within your core group or do you need outside technical assistance in a specific area?
- Are you thinking about tasks each person is most jazzed about and most able to do well? Some are great public speakers, while others are great at working behind the scenes. Some are good at collecting local data needed to support an action, others at framing and describing those data in a most persuasive manner.

Keep in mind your most important resource is your base of citizens in the community who can be mobilized at particular times when necessary. The larger your set of mobilized citizens, the easier it will be to achieve objectives.

Expansion Strategy 1: Hosting a Focus Group or House Meeting:

The Action Team may choose to host focus groups or house meetings about underage alcohol use after one-on-ones are completed to grow the base of support. Focus groups/house meetings are usually casual gatherings of people who may or may not know each other. You will need one person to lead the discussion and another to take notes. A sample agenda may include,

- Introductions of the Action Team members and attendees
- Information about CMCA and local group
- Discussion of possible actions of CMCA Action Team
- Sharing opinions of the proposed actions and other ideas
- Invitations to the guests to join CMCA or sign up for newsletter/email updates
- Thank everyone for their time
- Follow up with a thank-you letter or e-mail

Expansion Strategy 2: Door Knocking

Simply knocking on doors is a strategy that can be used to build your base or to mobilize the community about the issue. For this strategy, Action Team members break into pairs to go door to door in neighborhoods. The best time to go is on weekends and after 5:30 p.m.

- Create a map for each of the groups that will be door knocking.
- Provide your team with a short introductory statement to memorize.
- Wear a button, badge, or t-shirt that identifies you with CMCA and dress in a similar manner as those you are visiting.
- Create a handout with information about the problem of underage drinking, list an action that they can take to help solve the problem, and provide them with contact information for your CMCA chapter.
- Listen to people's stories and build relationships.
- Take a notebook to write down important information.

"Always try to meet face to face with people. Relationships do not develop by email or text."
—Kathleen Kennedy,
CMCA organizer



Expansion Strategy 3: Community Presentations

It is important to speak with the community and to educate them about the issue of underage drinking. Action Team members should provide alcohol facts, statistics, and examples of how they can help prevent the problem and keep teens safe.

- Presentations at community organizations like chambers of commerce, civic groups, parent associations, and faith-based organizations are important.
- Provide a PowerPoint presentation or handout for the community.
- People are attracted to personal and local stories; relate the presentation back to the community.
- Use local statistics on underage drinking and DUI, if possible.
- Share information on how to join CMCA and when the next meeting will be.
- Help them feel like part of the solution by providing ways to participate through taking action. This can include reporting underage drinking parties or stores that sell to youth and supporting law enforcement.
- Take a notebook to write down people's contact information.

“Community organizing is all about building grassroots support. It's about identifying the people around you with whom you can create a common, passionate cause.”
—Tom Peters, businessman and author

Community Mapping

It is important to understand the demographics, culture and politics of your community. Team members should know if key groups in your community, or individuals within these groups, support or oppose your strategies. Groups to consider include:

- Town/city council
- Local school administration
- Parents
- Chamber of Commerce
- Local religious groups
- Charitable organizations
- Civic groups
- Health care groups and practitioners



“You cannot be successful without good community relationships. People may not like my beliefs concerning teen alcohol use, but I still want them to respect me as a person.”
—Kathleen Kennedy, CMCA organizer

Stage 4: Develop an Action Plan

An action plan is a detailed outline of the steps that need to be completed to accomplish one or more goals. Developing an action plan will allow you to create a timeline for implementing actions, scientifically-proven strategies, and break big projects down into easily managed steps. A good action plan keeps Action Team members accountable for their tasks, and helps everyone to be efficient with their time and resources.

Each local CMCA chapter chooses a specific focus based on proven prevention strategies. These can include conducting alcohol compliance checks, improving local alcohol control ordinances, and/or working with law enforcement to increase social host enforcement and hot spot policing efforts. All of these strategies have the primary goal of changing adult behavior, thus preventing teens from obtaining alcohol.

“Always have a second action planned before you begin the first one. You never want to fail and then wonder what is next. You never want to lose momentum after a win. The sooner you begin the second action the better. It motivates your team and keeps the opposition guessing.”
—Kathleen Kennedy, CMCA organizer

The core of a good action plan is *strategy*. It always has a next step in place, regardless of the success of the previous step. Thus, *first* we are going to do action A and if that is successful, *then* we will move on to doing action B. But, if A turns out to be not very successful, *then* we will move on to doing C. And once action C is done, then we will build directly on that by moving to action D, and so on. The point is to have a cascade of specific, planned actions that move toward the goal of eliminating teen access to alcohol while always being flexible and responding to the current environment and the level of success of each step. Every action should help lead to the ultimate outcome of reduced alcohol access to teens. The Action Team does not want to waste time on actions that are not effective in helping achieve reduced alcohol access.

Steps in Organizing an Action Plan

1. Identify the specific issue(s) that the team wants to tackle.
2. Research issues and feasibility of approaches:
 - a. Redefine the issue and break it into more manageable steps, if needed.
 - b. Identify possible solutions, strategies, and actions.
 - c. Identify other community members who should be involved.
3. Make an action plan:
 - a. Define your goal: What are you going to do and when?
 - b. Break your work into manageable tasks that volunteers can help with.
4. Get support from key community members and groups.
5. Take action.
6. Assess results, celebrate successes, and plan for next steps; or modify your strategy and try again to continue towards the final goal.
7. Remember that these steps building upon each other: It will take many actions to reach the final goal of reducing alcohol access and improving teens' health.

Action Plan Example: Social Hosting as a Community Problem

1. Speak with community members to find out where and when these drinking parties are happening.
2. Learn about state and local laws related to Social Hosting.
3. Speak with law enforcement about social host issues and learn about what they think about them and how they respond to such parties.
4. Educate the community about the state and local social host laws.
5. Create a social host pledge for community members to sign and post the supporters' names to the local newspaper and social media.
6. Work with law enforcement to create a campaign to report hosted teen drinking parties.
7. Work on a tougher local ordinance related to social hosting, if needed.
8. Gain support for social hosting ordinances through local groups (churches, civic groups, etc.).
9. Discuss detailed drinking party prevention and containment/dispersal plans with law enforcement.

“To be successful as a CMCA Action Team you need to work well with other community groups. Supporting them when they need manpower can provide you with support when you may need people for a city council meeting to push for an action.”
—Kathleen Kennedy, CMCA organizer



Stage 5: Implement the Action Plan

The 5th stage of CMCA focuses on implementing activities designed to achieve your goals, continuing to build community support, and ultimately changing the structures and practices in longstanding community institutions, such as law enforcement, schools, and businesses. Action teams will engage in a variety of specific actions that build off one another and lead to the larger goal of the prevention of underage alcohol use. During your Action Team meetings you should discuss with team members who will complete specific actions as part of the overall plan. Even though they will complete actions separately or in smaller groups, actions build off one another and lead to the completion of larger goals in the prevention of underage alcohol use.

Advice for implementing your action plan

- Break large jobs into smaller, easy-to-complete tasks.
- Always think ahead.
- Keep team members engaged, informed, and involved.
- Always give credit to others and encourage them to move forward. Don't take too much credit for yourself.
- Be responsive and reliable for your team and help your team get what they need to succeed.
- Don't let opponents get your group off track.
- Celebrate every victory, no matter how small.
- Templates for various action items can be found in the CMCA Handbook Tool Kit. See page 27, "Doing Your Research," for more information.

"Always ask for what you want. People may be surprised by a bold request at first, but the more you ask the more seriously they consider the request."

—Kathleen Kennedy,
CMCA organizer

Follow-up

Consider an action's possible outcomes: 1) you achieve the outcome you want; 2) you partially achieve the outcome you want; or 3) you don't achieve the outcome you want. It is important to plan for how the group will respond to all three of these three potential outcomes—always know what the next step will be.

Celebrate your team's successes!

Recognizing and celebrating success is vital to the organizing process. Organizing work can be difficult and time consuming. Make sure that your group takes time to celebrate accomplishments.

Decide where to go next

Once you've reached a goal, your Action Team needs to decide its next steps: Do you want to continue with similar goals or move in new directions? You may need to go all the way back to the building the base organizing stage; new people may need to get involved.

Stage 6: Maintain the Effort and Institutionalize

As a community organizer you will be a driving force in your community's attitudes and behaviors around underage drinking, but your ultimate goal should be to create a campaign that is *self-sustaining*. A community organizing approach may need to be implemented for three to five years before institutions in the community change their policies and practices.

As your Action Team implements actions and achieves goals, you will need to figure out how to maintain the change and ensure that the desired results are accomplished. Prevention approaches will not be successful unless implementation and enforcement provisions are included in the plan.

Institutionalization occurs when community leadership officially recognizes policies that have been proven to reduce underage alcohol access. For example, local police should establish written policies and procedures for dealing with sales to minors, procedures for enforcing social host laws, etc. Build on the laws and policies on the state or local level to limit social and commercial access to alcohol by teenagers. Here are some examples of how you might institutionalize certain policy strategies:

Social host liability laws

Adults can be held legally liable for allowing underage drinking parties on their property. Well-enforced social host ordinances lead to fewer teen drinking parties.¹⁰ Strategies to strengthen your local social host ordinances include: educating alcohol buyers about social host liability laws, encouraging community members to report underage drinking parties to law enforcement, and working with law enforcement to help them understand the dangers of underage drinking parties and how to prosecute adults who host.

Steps to institutionalize

- Learn about current laws and policies related to underage alcohol use.
- Identify potential community members who support or oppose efforts to enforce the social host liability law.
- Establish connections with the local police department to foster interest in enforcement of the social host liability law.
- Discuss enforcement of social host liability as a potentially effective strategy and resources/strategies for increasing enforcement in your community.

Supportive actions for your Action Team

- Spread information about social host laws through a variety of media including letters to families and schools that contain educational information.
- Implement a "Reporting Underage Drinking Campaign" to encourage community members to call law enforcement about drinking parties.
- Combine your effort with strategies for institutionalizing Noisy Assembly and Keg Registration laws to reduce the number of gatherings where teens are drinking.

Hot-spot policing

Hot-spot policing is a tool that can be used to enforce drinking age and social host laws in locations, or “hot-spots,” where teen parties or parties hosted by adults or slightly older peers are frequently held. Hot-spot policing strategies include police identification of specific places in the community where underage drinking occurs and increased patrols, visits, and warnings in hot-spot locations. Strategies for identifying hot-spots include:

- Mapping 911 calls for service, particularly those regarding alcohol/other drug-related crime.
- Tapping informal communication networks in high schools or on the internet to identify teen drinking events.
- Ranking areas based on police and community members’ perceptions of alcohol/drug hot-spots.

Steps to institutionalize

- Become familiar with current laws and policies related to underage alcohol use in your community.
- Identify individuals who might support or oppose efforts to implement hot-spot policing.
- Establish connections with the local police department to foster interest and support for underage alcohol prevention.
- Discuss hot-spot policing as a potentially effective strategy and resources for identifying hot-spots in your community.
- Gain support from the community and influential people to help facilitate the adoption of the hot-spot policing strategy by local law enforcement.

Supportive actions for your Action Team

- Advocate for Social Host Liability laws, Noisy Assembly laws, and alcohol-use restrictions (e.g., no alcohol in city parks).
- Implement a “Reporting Underage Drinking Campaign.”
- Spread media about increased hot-spot enforcement.
- Implement a campaign to thank law enforcement for supporting underage drinking prevention efforts and keeping youth safe and healthy.



“A community organizer should always be flexible. Be open to shifting priorities if changes in the community occur.”
—Kathleen Kennedy, CMCA organizer

Compliance checks

These checks are a tool that law enforcement officers can use to identify establishments that sell alcohol to minors. Usually, an underage adult (18-20 years old) is sent into a store to attempt a purchase. If the seller does not ask for age-identification, they receive a citation. Vendors that accumulate many citations can have their alcohol licenses revoked. Compliance checks not only reduce the likelihood that the particular business will sell to minors in the near future, they also reduce the likelihood that neighboring businesses will sell to underage teens.¹¹

Steps to institutionalize

- Identify potential community members who may support or work against efforts to conduct compliance checks.
- Establish connections with the local police department to foster interest in underage alcohol prevention.
- Discuss compliance checks as a potentially effective enforcement strategy and the need for frequent checks at all establishments.
- Develop a media campaign to correspond with the implementation of the compliance checks so that alcohol establishments are aware of the potential for a compliance check in the future. Do not publicize the outlets that fail a check, since that just notifies teenagers where to go to buy alcohol.
- Develop resources for alcohol establishments, including information on responsible beverage service training workshops, to encourage establishments to be proactive in preventing underage alcohol sales.
- Consult with a local attorney to become more familiar with state law.
- Review local laws (or work to change them) to be sure penalties for alcohol sales to minors are assessed against the owners of outlets, not just the clerks.

Supportive actions for your Action Team

- Advocate for responsible beverage service trainings.
- Create educational newsletters for merchants.
- Write letters to merchants about prom or graduation nights with educational information.
- Advocate for a local alcohol compliance check ordinance.
- Advocate for local administrative penalties for vendors who sell to minors.



Administrative Penalties

These legal penalties are administered by government through the city or county in which the establishment resides. Penalties can punish merchants for any violation of state or local alcohol sales laws. Your state alcohol laws may allow local cities or towns to pass stricter ordinances than state standards.

Steps to institutionalize

- Become familiar with current laws and policies related to underage alcohol use in your community.
- Identify current alcohol outlets in violation of underage alcohol sale policies (see Compliance Checks).
- Consult with a local attorney to become more familiar with state law requirements.
- Review model ordinances from other localities.
- Pass strengthened local ordinances.

Supportive actions for your Action Team

- Enforce local or state laws.
- Create media or educational materials about the need for administrative penalties.
- Perform alcohol compliance checks.
- Advocate for responsible beverage service training.

DUI Enforcement

DUI (driving while under the influence) laws prohibit driving a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. The most effective DUI enforcement is conducting visible sobriety checkpoints which stop and check all or a random sample of motorists for alcohol. The result is reduced driving after drinking.

Steps to institutionalize

- Become familiar with the current frequency of sobriety checkpoints within your community.
- Identify potential community members who may support or work against efforts to increase the use of sobriety checkpoints.
- Establish connections with the local police department to foster interest in increasing the frequency of sobriety checkpoints.
- Support the local police department's efforts to identify funding sources to update equipment and develop a protocol to integrate sobriety checkpoints into the regular operations of the department.
- Garner support from community to help facilitate the adoption of DUI enforcement and frequent sobriety checkpoints by local law enforcement.

Supportive actions for your Action Team

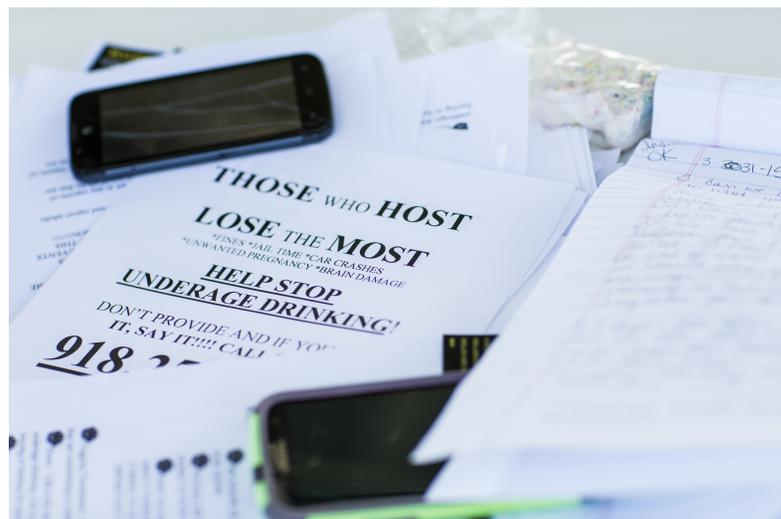
- Encourage media coverage of DUI checkpoints.
- Pass a local ordinance requiring DUI checkpoints.
- Advocate for increased hot spot policing.

Institutional Actions

CMCA involves motivating community members to seek out and achieve change in local and state policies and the practices of community institutions in order to limit youths' access to alcohol. In addition to any public policies that may exist in your area, rules and practices can be established by any group, including workplaces, schools, and households. For example:

- Families can agree to not social host.
- Schools can require employees to report on underage drinking and planned parties. They can also teach alcohol refusal skills and create and enforce policies restricting alcohol use and access, both on school property and in the surrounding community.
- Civic groups can adopt policies to prevent underage drinking at organization-sponsored events and initiate and participate in community-wide efforts to keep alcohol out of the hands of youth.
- Faith organizations can provide a link between prevention organizations, youth, parties and social events, and the community. They can offer education and develop internal policies to prevent teens from accessing alcohol at their events and participate in efforts to keep alcohol away from youth.
- Community groups can volunteer to monitor, prevent, or control the availability and use of alcohol at public events such as concerts, street fairs, and sporting events.
- Local police or licensing authorities can mandate regular compliance checks by local police or licensing authorities. Police can also encourage and support the use of administrative penalties for failure to comply with state or local laws relating to the sale of alcohol to minors.
- Liquor licensing agencies offer and promote mandatory or voluntary programs that train managers, owners, servers, and sellers at alcohol outlets on how to avoid selling to underage youth and intoxicated patrons.
- Alcohol outlets can be influenced to remove alcohol advertising from public spaces or wherever youth can be exposed to these messages. Communities can restrict or prohibit alcohol companies' sponsorship of community events.

“The power of community to create health is far greater than any physician, clinic or hospital.”
—Mark Hyman,
American physician
and author



Doing Your Research

As you start the process of designing and implementing your Action Plan, it is important to know what laws relating to alcohol sales and use already exist in your community. A combination of Federal, State, and local laws decide how we can use alcohol in the United States, but most alcohol laws are state-specific. States have very broad powers to decide how alcohol is accessed, including:

- Who can sell alcohol in the state (wholesalers, retailers, etc.)
- Systems of licenses for different types of sellers (bars, groceries, etc.)
- Rules types of alcohol sellers (what products, minimum prices, hours of sale, etc.)
- Taxes on alcohol sales
- Where alcohol may be consumed (indoors only, on the streets, etc.)
- Where alcohol advertisements are allowed and not allowed

“Change means movement, movement means friction.”
—Saul D. Alinsky

However, State governments vary in how much power they give to local governments to decide and enforce alcohol laws. When alcohol policies are decided on a local level, it's possible for laws to be different in different parts of a state. To find out how your state alcohol laws are structured, visit your local city hall or government office, consult a local attorney, or visit the alcohol regulation section of your state government's website. You can also learn more from The Alcohol Policy Information System (APIS). APIS is a web site operated by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism which provides detailed information on different kinds of alcohol policies in all 50 states. Find the URL in our list of Community Organizing Resources below.

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For further information and resources, please download the additional CMCA resources provided with this manual. The “Sample Tool Kit” offers various templates useful to complete action items. The “Community Factsheets” provide additional information regarding underage alcohol use.

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