

Benefits and Challenges of Community Mobilization for Domestic Violence Programs

BENEFITS

- Expands the base of community support for the organization
- Brings new volunteers who otherwise might not get involved in your organization
- Deepens the analysis of transformation and provides an opportunity for the organization and individuals to evolve
- Creates public presence/pressure to change laws, policies and practices that a single individual could not accomplish or may be at risk to accomplish
- Infuses new energy into the organization
- Promotes community ownership for a problem and expands the base of support for the work
- Offers women's organizations an opportunity to work in partnership with progressive men in the community
- Creates strategies that are effective in reaching underserved populations and communities of color by directly involving people from those communities
- Helps organizations develop new leadership skills in the area of community development
- Helps promote sustainability for work (beyond funding cycles for projects) and long-term commitment to a social change movement
- Helps all of us celebrate positive change in our communities

CHALLENGES

- May create tension for the organization, including deciding how much authority will be given to activist groups associated with the organization to decide the agenda
- May create backlash/tension as a result of a more direct action agenda
- Requires leadership skills that may not readily exist within the organization
- Requires expanded personal commitment from people doing the work, i.e. walking the talk
- Can open the door to new constituencies/communities; is the organization committed to doing whatever it takes (e.g. dealing with institutional racism)?
- Requires an intense commitment of resources and leadership; community mobilization may be perceived as less important than direct services, requiring consensus or buy-in on priorities
- May bring up internal tension because a community mobilization agenda can challenge the status-quo mindset of the organization
- Challenges the organization to decide what kind of partnership it wants in working with men at the community level ; may require new training program for women and men working as allies
- Challenges the organization to develop new ways of working with youth as agents of change instead of recipients of services