

Organizing -- Community by Community

"Remaking American Medicine opens a window on what health care could be in all of our communities. The series shows us doctors and health care administrators committed to rigorously evaluating their own efforts and working more closely with each other and with patients to deliver care proven to produce the best results. The series has the potential to help bring this vision into focus in every community."

-- David Schulke, executive vice president
American Health Quality Association



The following is a suggested series of activities that you may wish to undertake when organizing or participating in a RAM coalition.

Log on to RAMcampaign.org. Visit *Connect with Others* to determine if a RAM coalition is forming in your community. If so, contact the chairperson or facilitator. If your community already has a coalition focusing on quality-related issues, you may suggest they bridge their activities with your RAM coalition and join the campaign.

Take Ownership. If a RAM coalition has yet to form, and you want to take charge, meet with your management team. Introduce them to the series and the campaign. Review how the local coalition can be of benefit to your community. If they agree that improving the quality of health care fits within your institutional mission, enlist their support and take a leadership position.

Put Together an Exploratory Group. As previously noted, seek out members of the National Partners and reach out to other local health care organizations, consumer advocacy groups, civic and faith-based

organizations and policy-makers who are involved in health care issues. Invite their leaders to participate in an exploratory meeting. Be sure to include your local PBS station.

Convene the Group. After introducing *Remaking American Medicine* and the outreach campaign, you will want to discuss:

- Health care quality issues that are of concern to the group.
- Preliminary objectives of mounting a local campaign.
- Community leaders who may become involved and champion the cause.
- Coalition structure and decision-making processes.

If there is a consensus to move forward, the group should select a chair and determine a clear delegation of responsibilities including the establishment of a:

- **Steering Committee:** responsible for helping set campaign goals and defining the parameters of the outreach effort. The steering committee should oversee the initial community assessment, create a strategic plan of action and manage the campaign.
- **Development Committee:** responsible for seeking campaign resources.
- **Content Advisory Committee:** responsible for providing advice and support for matters related community events.
- **Communications Committee:** responsible for developing the marketing materials, undertaking a publicity and advertising campaign and leveraging the coalition's internal communications capabilities.

Conduct a Quality Improvement Needs

Assessment. Once the coalition is officially formed, one of the most important first steps will be to properly evaluate and determine the specific quality issue that will serve as the basis for the campaign. This effort will be critical for clarifying the purpose of the campaign and developing a consensus of support.

As mentioned earlier, PBS stations have considerable experience in the area of community assessment, as will undoubtedly other coalition members.

The Community Tool Box provides detailed information on how to conduct community assessments including sample surveys. A summary of their recommendations, together with our suggestions in italics follows:

- Determine the goals for performing the survey, including how the results will be used in the campaign. (*Discuss the expertise of coalition members and what relevant research they may already have undertaken related to the health quality issue.*)
- Decide how to define "community" for this assessment - metropolitan area, county, or state. (*If your coalition intends to conduct a statewide campaign, include individuals who represent urban, suburban and rural areas. Be sure to also include minority and underserved audiences.*)
- Decide how to obtain survey responses, through interviews (phone, e-mail, face-to-face) or written responses. (*An online survey will facilitate the process and minimize costs.*)
- Before rollout, test the survey instrument on a small group to be sure that questions are clear and relevant. (*This should involve representatives from each of the major stakeholders - providers, purchasers, patients, consumer advocates and policy-makers.*)
- Administer the survey and collect, tabulate and summarize the results. (*The assessment should be conducted within 30 to 45 days of the convening of the coalition.*)

Develop an Action Plan. Once the community assessment is complete and the quality issue is selected, the Steering Committee should supervise the production of an Action Plan that will serve as a blueprint for the entire campaign. The Plan should:

- Define the goals of the campaign and the purpose of the coalition.
- Set expectations. Your plan should provide a statement of need and identify key target audiences and other important stakeholders.
- Recommend a series of strategies and tactics to be undertaken by the respective committees, including a reasonable timetable.
- Propose a realistic budget. Define the level of in-kind support expected by each coalition member. Identify local *Champions of Change* and quality experts.
- Provide a list of potential financial supporters for the campaign.
- Recommend a formal method of evaluation.

The Coalition Action Plan may focus on such strategies as:

- Raising awareness of the selected quality issue - motivate individuals to learn more, enhance their ability to acquire and process the information and allow them to be effective consumers of the information.
- Supporting an attitudinal change - inspire and empower the public and providers to join efforts to improve dramatically the quality of health care and become better advocates for their own health care and for the care of their families.
- Mobilizing the community to take effective action - share best-practice models and conduct outreach activities that will provide useful information and inspire audiences to join the quality care movement.
- Pursuing behavioral change - engage the community in a constructive dialogue that will ideally result in sustainable coalitions, i.e., on-going involvement and support of the quality movement.

Chapter 17 provides suggestions on how to formally evaluate an outreach campaign.

Moving Forward. Once the Plan is written and approved, the chair should assign specific tasks to each committee and schedule a regular series of coalition meetings. General guidelines for maintaining a successful coalition are as follows:

- Set realistic goals, including a reasonable timetable of proposed activities.
- Utilize the skills, interests and expertise of each coalition member.
- Communicate openly and on a regular basis.
- Be as inclusive as possible.
- Keep track of the commitments made by the coalition members; follow-up to see they are fulfilling these commitments.
- Be appreciative of the time and resources contributed by each coalition member.

Tip: To facilitate the initial discussions, you may wish to download the RAM PowerPoint™ presentation which provides an overview of the series and the campaign. It is available on RAMcampaign.org.

Tip: Stay in Touch. Devillier Communications, Inc. (DCI), which is responsible for the national campaign, would like to learn about your efforts. We encourage you to get in touch as soon as your coalition is formed. Lee Allen, project director, can be reached at lallen@devillier.com.