

# Community Advisory Group: OAH Expectations\*

The OAH Replication of Evidence-Based TPP Programs to Scale in Communities with the Greatest Need (Tier 1B) grant requires grantees to create or utilize an existing Community Advisory Group (CAG) to lead community mobilization efforts. The CAG plays a vital role in community mobilization to make a long-lasting impact.

## Key Definitions

**Community**, in public health, is defined as “a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings” (MacQueen, 2001). Geographically, the community served is defined by the grantee and may be a neighborhood, city, county, etc.

**Community mobilization** is the process of engaging “all sectors of the population in a community-wide effort to address a health, social, or environmental issue. It brings together policy makers and opinion leaders; local, state, and federal governments; professional groups; religious groups; businesses; and individual community members. Community mobilization empowers individuals and groups to take some kind of action to facilitate change.” (CDC, n.d.).

## Community Advisory Group Role & Function

The Grantee is ultimately accountable to OAH for the grant’s progress and success. The role of the CAG is to function as a “leadership team” to assist the grantee in the planning, design, implementation and evaluation of the overall program. The CAG serves as project advisors.

## Community Advisory Group Members

CAG members are leaders and key stakeholders in the target community that are actively involved in implementing or delivering programming and services for youth, as well as those that set and enforce policies that can impact youth. CAG members are those individuals who are empowered to make decisions on planning, implementation, and evaluation of program strategies on behalf of their organizations. Members of the CAG may or may not have a formal role in implementing the TPP program and can include:

- Representatives from local school boards, superintendent’s offices, local department of health, funders, foundations, and elected officials who can open doors for implementation and assist with sustainability
- Implementation partners and representatives from organizations providing critical programming and clinical services to youth in the community
- A representative from the Youth Leadership Council (YLC)

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Depending on program strategies, a CAG typically ranges from five to fifteen members. The CAG will require frequent meetings and regular communication. It is strongly recommended that the same designated person consistently and regularly attend CAG meetings to ensure efficiency and continuity. As appropriate to their role on the program, members need to:

- Assist and advise in the assessment, planning, design, implementation and evaluation of the overall TPP program
- Attend and participate in all CAG meetings
- Participate in project trainings as appropriate
- Work collaboratively with other CAG members and the Tier 1B grantee
- Work collaboratively with the YLC to coordinate an effective community mobilization effort

### **Relationship between the Community Advisory Group and the Youth Leadership Council**

The CAG benefits from a strong collaborative relationship with the YLC.

- The YLC is the direct link to youth in the community for the CAG
- The linkages the YLC members offer the CAG will help open doors to service and program opportunities for youth that CAG members might otherwise not be able to access
- In addition, as the “eyes and ears” for youth within the community, the YLC can provide the CAG with valuable community feedback to enhance both the quality and reach of the TPP program
- It is recommended that a representative from the YLC participate as a CAG member and attend all CAG meetings

### **Community Advisory Group Leader Roles and Responsibilities**

Since the CAG is a leadership team for the Tier 1B Grantee, the Tier 1B Grantee Project Director (or another key staff person from the grant) needs to be the permanent leader of the CAG. The leader needs to attend all meetings and perform all the required roles and responsibilities listed below:

- Set the agenda of each meeting
- Facilitate meetings
- Identify the meeting’s action items and follow-up on them in the next meeting
- Hold team members accountable for action items as needed
- Review work plan and deadlines frequently
- Share meeting minutes with the YLC
- Facilitate communication and collaboration between the CAG and the YLC

### **Getting Started – Meetings and First Steps**

It is recommended the CAG meet face-to-face, regularly and as frequently as needed (at least monthly). The location should be convenient for all at a central location, especially at the beginning of the program. The location can change later according to the purpose of the meeting.

The following steps will help create and establish an effective Community Advisory Group:

1. Recruit and secure commitment from CAG members
2. Plan the date, time and location for the first CAG meeting
3. Create the agenda for the initial CAG meeting and include the following:
  - Introduce the Tier 1B Grantee project staff and CAG members
  - Introduce the Tier 1B grant project including an overview of the project goals and objectives, key activities, and anticipated outcomes
  - Explain the role and purpose of the CAG
  - Introduce a set of team building strategies that the CAG can use to become a high performing team
  - Identify the dates, times, and locations for the next six monthly meetings
  - Write a set of “team agreements” to identify how the group will work together, how decisions are made, etc. that each member will sign
  - Identify tasks and assignments for the next meeting
  - Leave time for Questions and Answers

### **Additional resources**

Advocates for Youth. *Strategies Guided by Best Practice for Community Mobilization*<sup>1</sup>.

Available at <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/publications-a-z/2398-strategies-guided-by-best-practice-for-community-mobilization>.

Advocates for Youth. *Resources for Fostering Effective Youth-Adult Partnerships*. Available at <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/workingwithyouth/910?task=view>.

### **References**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). *Community mobilization guide: A community-based effort to eliminate syphilis in the United States*. Retrieved December 7, 2010 from, <http://www.cdc.gov/stopsyphilis/toolkit/Community/CommunityGuide.pdf>.

MacQueen, K. (2001). What is community? An evidence-based definition for participatory public health. *American Journal of Public Health, 91*, 1929-1938.

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<sup>1</sup> *Strategies Guided by Best Practice for Community Mobilization* was developed by Advocates for Youth as one of five national partners funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) under the Teenage Pregnancy Prevention: Integrating Services, Programs and Strategies through Community-Wide Initiatives program. Advocates for Youth coordinated and provided leadership and support on the Community Mobilization and Sustainability component of the Initiative.