

Engaging Your Church and Community

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

—1 Corinthians 12:27

As Acting on AIDS chapters continue creating awareness on their individual campuses, it is important for teams to take advantage of the numerous opportunities to advocate in their surrounding communities. It is clear that the fight to stop global AIDS—to be the voice of the voiceless—will take everyone's participation to be the voice of the voiceless. Acting on AIDS chapters have the unique opportunity to share the stories of the individuals affected by HIV and AIDS and call their immediate communities to action.

Church Engagement :: Approaches: Awareness, Advocacy, and Raising Resources

Acting on AIDS recognizes that Christ is central to our movement. For that reason, we see the church as a key partner in the fight against AIDS. The Church is Christ's body on earth and serves as the hope of the world. We each have a part in the movement against HIV and AIDS. Acting on AIDS teams have the opportunity to be on the leading edge of the Christian response, encouraging churches to act and advocate for people affected by HIV and AIDS. When engaging a church, it is important for members of Acting on AIDS to serve churches and to assist the church with their response.

1. Find out whom you need to meet. Each church may have a different leadership structure. Meeting with the head pastor of a church is a great opportunity for your team; however, in many churches it may be best to approach a mission pastor or a small group/committee that focuses on global AIDS, social justice, or community service.

2. Plan your meeting

- **Set goals ::** Every Acting on AIDS chapter's church engagement project will look different. Develop your team's focus when approaching churches, whether it is advocacy, education, raising resources, or all of the above. Chapter leaders should seek to help the church with the first steps; however, the ultimate goal is for churches to take ownership of their own AIDS initiatives.
- **Come in numbers ::** Find students who have an interest in church engagement to form the church relations team. Invite students in your Acting on AIDS chapter who may attend each church on a regular basis to join the team. The churches these individuals attend will welcome their members' voices.
- **Use resources available ::** In planning for a meeting with church leaders, use all the resources available to you. Come prepared with statistics and stories to share. Encourage the pastor to order "A Generation to Save—Church Tool Kit" which contains the "Hidden Faces of AIDS" video, a PowerPoint presentation, Pastors' Vision Trips information, Pastor's Speaking Points, "A Generation to Save" Bible Study, "The Church Can Answer" Bulletin Insert, and the latest HIV and AIDS statistics. http://www.worldvision.org/get_involved.nsf/child/hope_pastors_toolkit.



Template Agenda for a Meeting

1. Communicate your passion. It is encouraging for church leaders to have passionate people approach them with ideas. Tell them your story. Let them know where and how this passion for HIV and AIDS started in you. Also, tell them why taking action on this issue is crucial to living out one's faith.

2. Back it up. Communicate to the church leaders some of your chapter's goals and accomplishments. Let them know your vision for the future of the chapter and let them know what role their church can play in helping your chapter raise awareness to the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

3. Ideas on how the church can respond

Awareness

- **Educate ::** Encourage church leaders to raise awareness of the issue. Since leaders may be occupied by projects already established in the church, it may be important for your group to have a service attitude and develop programs for the church to raise awareness.
- **Pastor Vision Trips ::** If a church's head pastor feels particularly led to respond to the crisis, chapter leaders can encourage pastors to participate in Pastor Vision Trips organized by World Vision's Church Relations department. These trips serve as an opportunity for senior pastors to travel with World Vision to personally connect with communities and churches impacted by AIDS.
- **Blog on church Web site ::** If your church has a message board or blog site, communicate stats and write about your personal passion about HIV and AIDS.

Advocacy

- **Link from church Web sites ::** Encourage pastors to create links on their church's Web site that will encourage their congregation to act on the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Links on the Web site might include the ONE campaign (www.one.org), a way to e-mail their congressman, World Vision's Seek Justice (www.seekjustice.org), or UNAIDS (www.unaids.org).

Raising Resources

- **Child Sponsorship Sunday ::** Connect with local pastors about the opportunity to run a Hope Child Sponsorship campaign. The Hope Child Sponsorship program sponsors children all over the world in order to turn the tide of the HIV and AIDS pandemic. The sponsorship provides the children with clean water, nutritious food, health care, educational opportunities, spiritual nurture, and HIV and AIDS counseling. This campaign could be presented in front of the congregation or taken to small groups in the church.
- **Entertainment ::** Raise financial resources by planning an event like a dinner or concert at the church. Invite a speaker from your university or chapter to share their passion for this issue.
- **Develop your own ideas ::** Acting on AIDS chapters are based in a variety of regions. Develop plans of actions that work well with the culture of the churches in your region.

4. Brainstorm and collaborate. It is important for chapter leaders to recognize their role as servant leaders and to first offer to help the church in any way that they need. Chapter leaders are to be a resource for the church. This may mean that their chapter may need to take the first steps and search for ways to serve church leaders. Also, look into ways that churches can help support the campus chapter. Invite church leaders to events that Acting on AIDS has planned during the school year.

Community :: Approaches: Advocacy and Awareness

Acting on AIDS chapters have numerous opportunities to engage many different communities to join the fight to stop HIV and AIDS. By creating awareness on campus, that education can spread to friends, families and the surrounding communities. The following are some sample projects to consider that work to create ways for people to respond to HIV and AIDS.

Sidewalk activism. In metro areas in particular, organize a ONE Campaign and/or Orphan and Vulnerable Children Campaign at any highly trafficked area, e.g., local street corners and malls. Try to flood the area with volunteers to make your presence felt. Use flyers to raise awareness and provide information on the campaigns that people will be joining.

Local events and festivals. Local events serve as great opportunities to reach a large amount of people in a short amount of time. If your community is planning an event, contact the organization in charge and see if you can open a booth or run a campaign at the event. Be sure to be respectful of whatever the event is promoting, but this can also be a time to inform a large group of people and encourage them to participate.

E-mail campaign. Encourage all the members of your chapter to send e-mails that contain links to HIV and AIDS advocacy campaigns. In these e-mails, have team members write to their family and friends about their passion for the fight to stop HIV and AIDS and encourage their contacts to act.

Write editorials in local newspapers. Writing could be a passion for some members of your team. Encourage English and journalism majors to submit articles or opinion columns to their newspaper about the AIDS pandemic.