

A Guide to Organizing A Community Services Committee



Helping Each Other

is one of the oldest traditions of the American labor movement. Being union means having a voice at work. When problems occur, union representatives and co-workers are ready to help.

But working families face problems away from work as well:

- Discrimination
- Housing Redlining (foreclosure etc..)
- Disability
- No insurance, medical bills
- High utility costs
- Financial difficulties
- Personal or family crisis
- Child care



A Community Services Committee can help working families cope with problems through Community Services—helping meet the need—while at the same time helping to mobilize union members around organizing and social justice issues that are the root causes of need.

A Community Services Committee can help your members and help make your community a UNION CITY.

**Who needs a Community Services Committee?
AFL-CIO State Federations, Central Labor
Councils and Local Unions who want to build
strong participation in their communities.**

Within Your Union

The working family is the basic unit of the labor movement. When we improve the lives of workers and their families—at work and in the community—we help create a broad movement of workers with a strong community voice.

...AND YOUR COMMUNITY

Unions and their members work to improve the economic conditions in the communities where they live and work. They build bridges to community allies and power for workers.

THROUGH COMMUNITY ACTION COMMITTEES

To be effective, community outreach requires participation, organization and collective action. This means organizing Community Services Committees in local unions.



The local union Community Services Committee helps members with problems, works to make the community more responsive to the needs of workers and builds union strength by reaching out to others committed to helping people.

As a result, Community Services Committees empower and mobilize union members, enhance labor's image in the community and create strategic relationships in the community that can help union families.

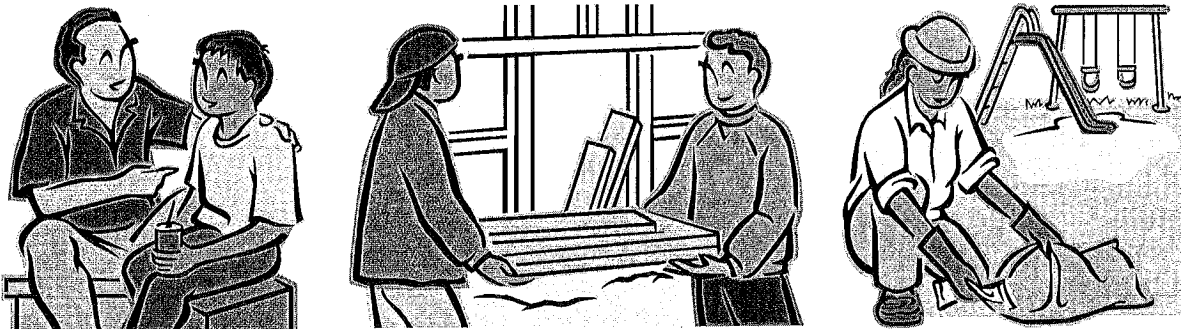
Helping our members and building our communities is a **BIG JOB. Community Services Committees get the job done.**

Local union Community Services Committees involve union members in a range of social action activities.

What does the Committee do?

Here are just a few of the important activities of a Community Services Committee:

- Help union members with problems
- Coordinate assistance to strikers and the unemployed
- Coordinate activities with retirees and constituency groups
- Organize actions, events for Voice@Work
- Support UCAN training
- Build coalitions with community groups; Like Jobs With Justice, Interfaith Worker Justice
- Organize support for Letter Carrier Food Drive each May
- Raise funds for United Way
- Lobby for workers' rights and critical legislation for working families
- Recruit union volunteer activists
- Sponsor blood drives, disaster trainings, CPR, etc..



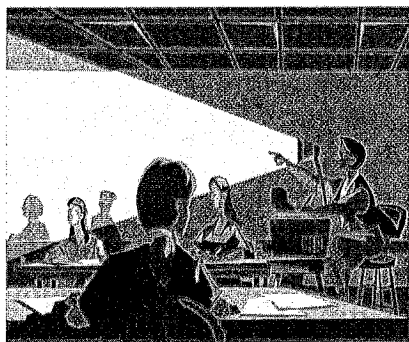
Support the Local Leadership

For any local union committee to succeed, it must have strong support from union leadership. With that support, the committee must then earn the support of the rank-and-file. An important first step is for a local union officer to announce the creation of a Community Services Committee at a local union meeting. Union officers should talk about the importance of the committee to the membership and recruit volunteers to join.

SELECTING A CHAIR

To be a successful committee, an active Community Services Committee needs a good leader. The chair (who is appointed) should be a committed, energetic, knowledgeable and respected member of the union executive board and the community. The chair should be skilled at working with people, delegating responsibilities and involving the whole committee in activities.

Organizing skills and the ability to mobilize are also important.



RECRUITING MEMBERS

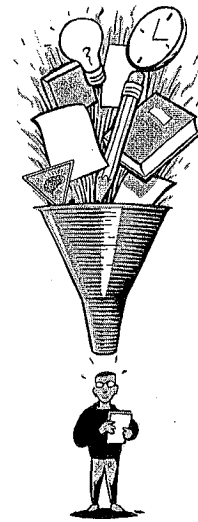
The Community Services Committee should reflect the demographic diversity of the union, with both women and men, and all ethnic groups represented. The committee should also be composed of members from each division of the workplace.

Members of an effective Community Services Committee should understand the importance of humanitarian service to the union and the community. They should be “doers,” active and dedicated trade unionists, willing to attend meetings, mobilize workers, and work with coalitions.

TRAINING THE COMMITTEE

A Community Action Committee can arrange training on the function of the committee through the AFL-CIO State Federation or Central Labor Council and through their AFL-CIO Community Services Liaison or labor agency. AFL-CIO Field Mobilization staff can also help support the committee. Members should attend UCAN training. Many state federations sponsor annual Community Services conferences. They provide valuable information for committee members.

To be effective, the Community Services Committee must meet, plan and implement action. Here are some suggestions for making Committee meetings successful.



PREPARING FOR THE MEETING

Productive meetings require advance work by the chair.

Committee leadership should meet to:

- Plan the time, place and purpose of the meeting
- Prepare the meeting agenda
- Recruit resource people, if needed, to lead discussion on agenda items

TIPS FOR HOLDING PRODUCTIVE MEETINGS

- Meet regularly, at least once a month, to plan activities
- Agree on a time limit for the meeting (an hour is sufficient)
- Present a proposal for action—focus on only one major issue per meeting
- Discuss at least one minor issue or follow up previous projects
- Allow some open time for discussion
- Socialize before or after the meeting to help develop a “team spirit”



The of the Meeting is The Three "D's"

- 1. Discuss the proposal for action**
- 2. Decide on the action**
- 3. Divide the work for action**

Model Agenda

- √ Call to order
- √ Approve agenda
- √ Minutes of previous meeting
- √ Major activity (*a proposal for action*)
 - 1. Discuss**
 - 2. Decide**
 - 3. Divide the work**
- √ Minor issue (*report, discuss*)
- √ Open time (*free discussion, brainstorming*)
- √ Summary (*chair*)
- √ Review the division of labor (*jobs assigned*)

Discuss the proposal for action

Decide on the action

Action	Person responsible	Date
Activate phone tree	Mary	2/17
Recruit Volunteers	Suzie	2/20
Leaflet Plant gates	Sam	2/24
Distribute press release	John	3/1

To help your committees get started and to coordinate your activities with other unions in your area, contact your local Central Labor Council or AFL-CIO Community Services Liaison.

Materials available

- *Union Community Activist Network training guide.*
- *When the Paycheck Stops, an AFL-CIO unemployment survival manual and brochure (www.aflcio.org).*
- *Helping Each Other an information and referral manual for unions.*
- *Strike Assistance Kit (CD).*

For more information call 202-637-5351
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