



## Starting to Build a Core Group

Groups come together in different ways and for different purposes. Most commonly, one or two individuals notice a problem they want to do something about. They often start by contacting someone in authority whom they believe may be able to solve the problem. But complex problems are not often solved by a single individual, no matter how influential he or she may be. This usually leads people to the idea of generating more awareness of the issue and soliciting support for the solution. In most communities and on most issues, the development of a good *core group* is a logical next step. *The core group is comprised of people who care about the issue, who want to do something about it and who are willing and able to dedicate some of their time to working on the issue.*

Core groups often start as offshoots of existing committees or organizations, but they can start out with one or two concerned individuals. Building a strong core group takes time.

Here's an example:

The sexton of the local Catholic Church notices that Masses held in early hours during the week are attended by a number of people who seem to have nowhere else to go. Some of them aren't all that attentive or may even be disruptive during the service, and they tend not to leave the church after the service is over. In addition, some of these individuals look like they are living on the street. There is a shelter in the Town, but it only has 15 beds and they are always full in the winter months. The pastor and a regular attendee discuss the issue and decide it's important to try to do something for all these people. They agree that they don't know a lot about the issue of homelessness and that they need to educate themselves about the issue and encourage more people to help them with the issue.

Once the decision is made to build the core group, think about some natural places to look for group members. Here are some suggestions.

- Social Justice Committee of local faith or interfaith communities
- Consumers and local family members of persons with psychiatric disabilities through the local affiliate of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill ([www.namict.org](http://www.namict.org))
- The Continuum of Care committee or planning group for your town, if one exists. (Link LIST of COC's)
- Local human services agencies. This would include the area community action agency, local homeless shelter provider (if any), and local mental health agency.
- Town human service agency.

In addition, [CSH](#) can help identify local organizations already involved.

With supportive housing and Reaching Home(LINK)campaign can identify organizations or individuals from the community who may have signed on in support of the supportive housing, or who have attended Reaching Home events.

*Characteristics of a “core group”:*

*Most members live or work in the community.*

*Members reflect diversity of the community, e.g. long-time residents and newcomers; home owners and tenants; local business people etc. and income diversity.*

*Members are willing to use their name and connections in the community (through their faith community, network of friends, business or political circles, civic clubs, neighbors, or other networks of relationships) to help gain support for the effort.*

*Members care enough about the issue to commit time for meetings, planning, participation in events, and making connections with others.*

*Members agree on, understand and stay focused on the group’s mission and what is achievable. Visionary but pragmatic.*

*Members are committed to learning, and will seek out information and people to assist and inform them along the way.*

Leadership – The chair person of the group should be a person who is respected, who knows how to elicit input and assistance from others and who is committed to supportive housing as the solution to chronic homelessness. Other core group leaders should be people who are willing to do outreach to other people either through groups they represent, or through “cold contacts,” in addition to helping with the other tasks the group decides upon.