

## ***Building POLST Coalitions***

A key component to help ensure effective implementation of POLST (Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment) throughout California is the establishment of community POLST coalitions. Since one of the most valuable attributes of POLST is its use across care settings (hospitals, nursing facilities, residential care facilities, home), it is especially valuable to bring together representatives from a variety of stakeholder organizations to elicit broad support and help guide implementation efforts.

### **Benefits of community coalitions**

- Increase potential for success through broader reach; the group can accomplish more together than if an organization is working alone.
- Build credibility among stakeholders and community at large.
- Raise visibility of issue (and coalition members), including media attention.
- Bring additional expertise and resources to the issue.
- Develop new leaders, strengthening each organization as well as the coalition.
- Increase impact of each organization's effort by providing more people with a better understanding of the issue and creating more advocates.
- Bring energy to the cause.
- Provide participants with new contacts, connections and relationships.

### **Qualities of effective coalitions**

While each coalition is unique and reflects its own community, most successful coalitions:

- Include strong leader – champion, cheerleader.
- Are formalized and well-organized, with a defined leadership structure.
- Include key stakeholders who are recognized in the community
- Have a clear vision and goals; focus on action steps and get things done.

### **Coalition-building tips**

#### *Recruitment*

- Identify champions who are dedicated to the cause.
- Pinpoint organizations that will be highly impacted by POLST.
- Take advantage of members' relationships and connections.
- Appeal to potential for success (people want to be part of new and successful innovations).
- Emphasize benefits of membership.
- Leverage competitive instincts of stakeholders; no organization wants to be left out.
- Use members' time and resources prudently; provide variety of opportunities for participation.

#### *Strategies*

- Begin with a specific goal and develop an action-oriented workplan (process of developing workplan can help in formation/solidification of group).
- Start with one activity that's achievable fairly quickly—celebrate and build on that accomplishment; begin to create cycle of success, enthusiasm grows, attracts others to coalition.
- Serve as a neutral place where competitors can come together and focus on common goal.
- Acquire a paid or in-kind staff member to keep coalition functioning – send meeting notices, distribute minutes, provide follow-up, etc.
- Hold regular meetings to keep momentum going.

For more information about POLST or about coalition building, visit [www.finalchoices.org](http://www.finalchoices.org).