

# **Ending Poverty in Community (EPIC) Advocacy Appendix**

The Advocacy Appendix provides suggestions, strategies and templates to assist young advocates. This material is organized into three sections: 1) Educating for Justice; 2) Lobbying for Justice; and 3) Building Constituencies for Justice.

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## **Educating for Justice**

Education is a prerequisite to action. The following is a list of suggestions to effectively educate others in a variety of settings. These projects can be completed as a class, across a grade level or may be applied to a parish or school-wide community.

### **Community Service Day**

Most community service is performed in isolation. Consider identifying issues or challenges in the community that could be addressed by an entire classroom, grade level or school. Also remember that service should ideally incorporate ample time for reflection on Catholic social teaching and the root causes of the issues being addressed in service. To implement a Community Service Day (or Weekend), students youth ministry program, grade level, or school. Students and staff first arrange to visit a CCHD-funded group or other community agency to learn more about their immediate needs. Students then spend a block of time (a few hours, a day, or even a service weekend) at school or at their parish responding to this community need. Reflection on Catholic social teaching and the root causes of the problem being addressed should be interwoven throughout the service day and should culminate in action to advance social justice or long-term change.

### **Poverty Awareness Snacks**

Whether at nutrition break or lunch, students are hungry for snacks. Your class or group can satisfy their hunger while simultaneously raising money and awareness. Choose products that are easy to prepare and likely to sell. If your opportunities to sell are relatively infrequent, consider selling homemade baked goods. Bagels and muffins are also a welcomed break from the usual candy, chips and donut fare. As you sell, use a poster backdrop or table signs to raise awareness of poverty in your community. Slips of paper highlighting an important statistic may also be included with each purchase. Donate the proceeds to programs that are committed to addressing the root causes of poverty in your community. Provide free snacks to the faculty and staff and tell them what you're doing. This publicity can go a long way to raise awareness.

## **EPIC (Ending Poverty in Community) Fair**

Organized through student government, individual classes, youth ministries, or Confirmation programs, the objective of this project is to increase student awareness of poverty in their community. Lunchtime events can include a "Take-a-bite out of poverty" Bake Sale, informational booths, and a 1 in every 6 poverty raffle. Students dress up as grim reapers to represent the number of people who die from the effects of poverty in the United States and around the world. CCHD Multi-Media Youth Arts Contest / Art Festival

A school or parish-wide art contest is a powerful way to involve members of the entire community. The theme of the contest should promote awareness and encourage social action. Artworks can include photographs, sculptures, drawings, and paintings. Invite local elementary schools, parents, community members and the media to enjoy the event.

## **Food Fast or Hunger Banquet**

A powerful way to increase student awareness of hunger – particularly hunger around the world – is to organize a Food Fast or a Hunger Banquet. Invite students, teachers, parents, community members and the media to this event. Donate proceeds to groups that address poverty in your community or your own student advocacy group. Find more information at Catholic Relief Services at [www.foodfast.org](http://www.foodfast.org).

Organized through student government, individual classes or Confirmation programs, the objective of this project is to increase student awareness of poverty in their community. Lunchtime events can include a "Take-a-bite out of poverty" bake sale, informational booths and a one in every fourteen poverty raffle. Students dress in all-black to mourn the number of children in the world under the age of five who die in poor countries each year from preventable causes, most of them related to poverty.<sup>1</sup> Balloons, buttons, banners, informational posters and kiosks made from old refrigerator boxes add to the environment.

## **Student Poverty Leadership Conference**

The Student Poverty Leadership Conference teaches leadership skills to students from your school and can be expanded to include students from other schools as well. The theme of the conference can be EPIC (Ending Poverty in Community) or another related theme.). Theme ideas suggested by CASC (California Association of Student Councils) include G.O.M.A.D. (Go

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<sup>1</sup> The World Bank, Millenium Development Goals, Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality by 2015  
[http://www.worldbank.org/mdgs/child\\_mortality.html](http://www.worldbank.org/mdgs/child_mortality.html)

Out and Make a Difference), S.T.A.R.T. (Students Taking Action and Responsibility Today), L.E.A.D. (Leaders Embracing A Dream), and F.L.Y. (Finding Leadership in Yourself). As much as possible, the conference should be organized and presented by students and community members.

### **Community Lobby Day**

Similar to the Community Service Day, the Community Lobby Day could be an outstanding cross-curricular activity that blends civics, current events and Catholic social teaching. Students spend time researching current public policy issues that affect their local community, state or even the nation. Students arrange to visit elected officials either in their home offices or, if possible, at the state building or member office buildings in Washington, D.C. If travel is impractical, consider inviting an elected official or a member of their staff to your classroom or parish. Inform the opportunity to raise the elected official's awareness of the issue and have students offer solutions and ideas for confronting the issue. Seek their support.

### **Pick a Charity: School or Parish Event**

Instead of devoting a day or weekend, students increase community awareness one event at a time. Based on a community needs analysis, students select a program or organization that they would like to highlight or support. Proper advertising will be essential. Use the PA system, bulletin announcements, flyers and posters. Canned food and money can be collected. Boxes and cans can be creatively decorated to draw attention to the important elements of the campaign. Also, be sure to help students discuss and reflect on the root causes of the community issue and to identify social justice responses in addition to charity responses.

### **Pick a Charity: Athletic Events**

Another variation of the above theme is to promote awareness through athletic events. Ask high-profile faculty, students, and parishioners to play basketball on a weeknight, as a double-header with a pre-scheduled game or during half-time. If the game is played during a regularly scheduled event, pass cans around during the event. If it's a stand-alone event, sell tickets in advance. Invite members / organizers of the charity to attend as event VIPs.

Another variation is to sell raffle tickets during the first half of a basketball game. Randomly draw five names. Participants will have a chance to make a basket from the free throw line and/or the half-court line. Some of the

proceeds go to participants who make shots. The remainder is given to the charity highlighted at the event.

### **Ribbon Week**

Provide ribbons, design t-shirts and/or distribute pencils, stickers, etc. to raise awareness about poverty in your community and challenge people to take action. Information booths, lunch activities and special announcements can support the event.

### **Homecoming Activities**

Homecoming is a time for fun, games and tradition. It's also a time to raise awareness about those who don't have a home. In addition to the festivities, sponsor a poster or art contest that is designed to raise awareness of homelessness in your community. Partner with a CCHD-funded group – particularly one that works to promote fair housing in your area.

### **Talent Night / ASB Dances**

Talent Nights, dances or virtually any student government, class or parish event can help to educate others and raise awareness. The method can range from selecting justice-oriented event themes to donating a portion of the proceeds to support social justice causes. Posters, artwork and informational flyers provide a discreet but powerful message.

### **CCHD Multi-Media Youth Contest / Art Festival**

The Multi-Media Youth Contest is a school or parish-wide art program that engages young people grades 7-12 in learning about the root causes of poverty; Catholic social teaching; the two feet of social action (charitable works and social justice); and the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. After learning about these themes, youth create multi-media work, including paintings, videos, photographs, writings or other creative art, to educate their peers and community about what they have learned. After work has been created, students, parents, community members and the media can be invited to enjoy an educational display of the work. Visit [www.usccb.org/youthcontest](http://www.usccb.org/youthcontest) for more information.

### **Community Mural / Garden**

Devoting a wall or a portion of the school or parish to a mural or garden can serve as a symbol of the community's commitment to a particular theme or

issue or as a more general statement about the community's mission regarding charitable works or social justice.

### **Days of Service**

Catholic Schools' Week, School-wide Service Fairs, Cinco de Mayo Fiestas or Martin Luther King Jr. Community Days of Service can be excellent opportunities to educate and to raise awareness. With charitable works as the organizing context, participants can also be encouraged to consider opportunities for social justice.

### **Cross-Age / Community Presentations**

High school students can educate elementary school students, community members or parishioners about issues facing their community and opportunities for social justice. Students can serve as remarkable emissaries and encourage people to look at issues in ways they may not have previously considered.

## **Lobbying for Justice**

In our democracy, elected officials represent their constituents – the people who live in their home district. The problem is that not everyone “back home” agrees on how an issue should be addressed. By communicating our opinions through letters, phone calls and personal visits, we can relay our thoughts and feelings about important community challenges.

When we communicate directly with elected officials, we play an important role in helping to create policies that are more just for everyone in our community.

The following handouts describe how students can do this by writing, calling or visiting their representatives.

# Writing Letters to Elected Officials

## Sample Letter Template

Date

The Honorable (Name of Elected Official)  
Address

Dear (Name with title),

- **First Paragraph**  
Explain who you are and the issue that you're interested in discussing.
- **Second Paragraph**  
Communicate what you think. Make it personal. Use personal experiences or stories to amplify your main points.
- **Third Paragraph**  
Closing. Include appreciation for their time. Restate your position. Request a response.

Sincerely,

Your Name  
Your Address  
Your Phone

# Sample Letter to an Elected Official

May 15, 2014

Sen. Jane Doe  
Capitol Building  
12345 Capitol St.  
Poverty, USA 90210

Dear Sen. Doe,

I am a student at St. Mary's High School and a member of our campus social action committee. I'm writing today to ask for your support in raising the federal minimum wage.

Over 46 million Americans today live in poverty. Increasing the minimum wage to a living wage is a step in the right direction in America's ongoing march against poverty. The minimum wage is currently \$7.25 per hour. Yet in today's world, the minimum wage for a mother who works full-time to support two small children translates to earnings of \$15,080 before any deductions or taxes. That falls \$2,836 below the federal poverty line for a family of three. Our parish has a large number of single mothers with children under 18 who could better provide for their family's basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, health care and education if they only had a slight increase in the minimum wage.

Please support our workforce by raising the minimum wage. I appreciate your leadership on this issue and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Ben Labre  
12345 Main St. Apt. B  
Poverty, USA 44147



# Calling an Elected Official

## Sample Checklist

An important social justice technique is to call elected officials at the local, state or national level. These calls are useful to gather information, to invite the official to speak, or to provide your opinion on how they should vote on an important issue. There are a number of steps that could help to make this a positive experience for everyone.

### **Before the Call**

- Identify your purpose. Know why you are calling.
- Write down your key points. Don't improvise on the phone.

### **Make the Call**

- State your name and affiliation. Who are you and whom are you representing?  
e.g. "Hi, my name is Max Kolbe. I'm calling from St. Mary's High School. I'm a constituent and live in (Name of Official)'s district."
- State the reason for your call.
  - To gather information: Ask for the staff member who handles this issue.
  - To invite the official to speak. Ask for the Office Scheduler.
  - To provide an opinion about an upcoming vote. Ask for the staff member who handles this issue.
- Thank the staff member for his/her time.

### **After the Call**

- Send information if you told someone you would.
- Optional: Follow-up with a letter.

# Visiting an Elected Official

## Sample Checklist

Elected officials decide on policies and make rules that affect our daily lives. Most of the time, these rules help people. Sometimes, they don't. Visiting elected officials is an excellent way to inform them of our positions, to help them create a fairer social structure, and to learn about our political system. There are a number of ways that you can visit with an elected representative or a member of their staff who may specialize in or handle poverty issues. First, you could invite them to your classroom or parish. Consult with their scheduler to find out when they are in their local office. Second, visit their local office if they have one. Finally, you can also visit their office downtown, in the state capital, or in Washington, D.C.

Whichever method you choose, students can meet with an elected representative individually or with other members of their class. If students are traveling, try to arrange meetings with multiple elected officials throughout the day in order to optimize the experience.

### **Arrange for a Meeting**

- Contact the Office Scheduler
  - Arrange for a classroom visit
  - Arrange for an office visit

### **Preparation**

- Prepare your position statement or "talking points." Write bullet points that outline your major positions.
- Prepare questions.
- Group visit:
  - Assign roles. Who will be responsible for introductions, stating positions, asking/answering questions, etc.?
  - Practice.

### **Visit**

- Be prepared. Clearly state your position and requests.
- Be courteous.
- Be professional.
- Leave materials as appropriate.

### **After the Visit**

- Write a thank you note that thanks the official or staff member and summarizes the meeting.
- Follow-up and maintain the relationship.

# Writing a Press Release Template

## Press Release Template

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

(Place this at the top of the page, under your school's letterhead. All letters are capitalized.)

#### **CONTACT:**

Contact Person  
School Name  
Telephone Number  
Email Address  
Web Site Address

(Include as much information as you can to make it easy for a reporter to contact you. An administrator may be able to assist as a point of contact. Consider providing your cell phone or home contact information to make it easy for a reporter to gather information after normal school hours.)

(Skip two lines)

### **Headline (should be in bold type)**

City, State, Date — (This will tell the reporter when you sent the release.)

First paragraph should include the answers to the basic questions like who? what? why? where? when?

The remainder of the text should briefly provide additional details. Include a brief discussion of the community need(s) to be addressed and the contributions of community agencies and experts. Quotes from students about their participation would be helpful.

# # #

(indicates the end of the press release)

# Writing a Press Release

## Sample

Contact: Teresa D'Avila  
Project Organizer  
Cell: 213 555 0191

St. Mary's High School  
12345 Main Street  
Poverty, USA 90210

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## Press Release

### **Homecoming Puts the Spotlight on the Homeless**

Students invite city officials to participate in this month's homecoming festivities – and work to end homelessness year-round.

**Poverty, USA, November 2, 2012:** Homecoming is a time for fun, football games and tradition for high school students and alumni. This year, it's also a time to remember those who don't have a home.

More than 100 students at St. Mary's High School are launching a campaign to end homelessness as their school celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. "More than three million people in America – more than a third of them children – don't have a place to call home," said Teresa D'Avila, project organizer for the event. "As students called to work for social justice, we cannot turn away from our brothers and sisters in need."

Students are flooding City Hall with invitations to this year's football game, scheduled for Friday, November 18, at 7 p.m. The invitations also urge city council officials to provide more job training, transitional housing for battered women and children, and more affordable housing for the city's more than 1,400 people forced to sleep in crowded shelters or on the streets.

"We've been talking with the men, women and kids our age who are living this horror, and so many say they can't afford to get into an apartment," said Paula Martinez, a junior participating in the project.

The students partnered with the Main Street Homeless Action Center, a nonprofit advocacy group that provides education and training to the region's poorest of the poor. The Center was a 2012 recipient of funding from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. "Too often, the homeless go unnoticed," said John Bosco, a senior at the school. "Raising community awareness is a big part of addressing the problem."

###

## Writing a Letter to the Editor Sample

To Whom It May Concern:

If we want to help families succeed, we need to raise the minimum wage in our city. The federal minimum wage and the minimum wage in our city are both currently set at \$7.25 an hour. Yet in today's world, the minimum wage for a mother who works full-time to support two small children translates to earnings of \$15,080/year before any deductions or taxes. That falls \$2,836 below the federal poverty line for a family of three.

Women and minorities stand to benefit the most from a raise. An estimated 3,100 single mothers with children under 18 in our city could better provide for their family's basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, health care and education.

Over 46 million Americans today live in poverty. Increasing our city's minimum wage to a living wage would mean that we are taking a step in the right direction in America's ongoing march against poverty by supporting families right at home.

Sincerely,

Chuck Borromeo  
12345 Main St. Apt. B  
Poverty, USA 44147

# **Building Constituencies for Justice**

Through community service, most students work individually to address social issues through some form of charitable works. Assisting in food pantries, homeless shelters or soup kitchens are examples of actions that can meet people's immediate needs.

Much less common are students who work for social justice. Students can be powerful agents of social change. Their ability is magnified through connections with Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD)-funded groups or other community agencies involved in the work to address the local causes of poverty. These groups can provide important insights into community issues and are valuable resources for student efforts.

Selecting issues, recruiting members, organizing meetings and developing leadership are important ways to begin a long-term program of social justice. The focus of this section is on developing cooperation between groups of people who may be able to respond to community issues in a more sustainable way.

# Selecting a Community Issue

## Sample Issue Checklist

Recommended Issue: \_\_\_\_\_

The issue that we would like to recommend is (check all that apply):

- Clear understood. Our objectives and outcomes are easily understood.
- Measurable We know when we have achieved our objectives. The outcomes are easily defined.
- Doable time, We can work to address this issue given the amount of money and resources at our disposal.
- Important The people working on the project think it's important and worth their time and effort.
- Fun Addressing the causes of poverty is hard work. Choose an issue that generates enthusiasm for the long haul.
- Unifying community Avoid issues that will inappropriately divide the or unfairly pit one group against another. You may need to work with these groups again.
- Consistent Ideally, the issue you select should flow from your understanding of Catholic social teaching and should be consistent with the mission of your school and/or parish.
- Inclusive Many people should be able to be involved in addressing this issue. Ideally, you will be able to partner with a CCHD-funded group or other community agency(ies) that are working on this issue.

# Getting People to Join Your Group

## Recruitment, Involvement, and Action

### Sample Checklist

While work for social justice can be completed individually, its effectiveness is magnified as the size of the group expands. Getting people to join your group and keeping them interested is a challenge for any leader.

This section offers suggestions to encourage people to participate in your social justice campaign. Use this checklist to help you to get more people involved with your issue.

In order to attract people and organizations to our social action, we . . .

- Asked them to join.  
(If you want people to get involved, you have to ask. This also applies to other groups or organizations such as CCHD-funded groups or community agencies. Investigate how you can help each other.)
- Identified a personal benefit.  
The answer to the question, "What's in it for me?" for everyone involved should be clear. Check the benefits that may apply:
  - Personal helps - Involvement looks good on a resume or develop professional skills.
  - Social - This is a good way to meet people.
  - Greater Good - This issue is really interesting to me and to the community in which I live.
- Invited them to be involved but not necessarily attend (all) meetings.
- Listened to hear their needs and what they were willing to offer.
- Involved people in important, but basic activities that got them involved and encouraged their commitment.
- Keep members connected through regular activities or communications.
- Regularly recognize and thank members for their contributions and accomplishments.



# Organizing, Planning and Facilitating a Meeting

## Sample Checklist

Meetings are a necessary part of work for social justice. They provide opportunities to identify goals and encourage involvement. Well-planned meetings can create successful events and attract others to your cause. The following checklist will help you to plan effective meetings.

- Our meeting is well-planned.
- Meeting has clear goals and objectives.  
(A goal is a general statement of direction – e.g. ending poverty in our community. An objective is a specific and measurable action step to accomplish the goal.)
- Agenda is provided.
  - Everyone receives a printed agenda.
  - Agenda items are connected to the goals and objectives.
  - Agenda items have time limits if necessary.
  - Reminders are sent about the meeting time and location.
  - Small groups brainstorm specific solutions.
  - The large group selects from options and makes recommendations.
  - Leaders choose a convenient time for the group to meet.
  - Leaders choose a workable space.
  - A facilitator is selected to run the meeting.

### **Room Set-Up**

- Set-up depends on the meeting's goals, including:
  - Informal discussion – chairs are set up in circles and around tables.
  - Informational meeting – classroom set-up.
  - Refreshment table is set up opposite the entrance.
  - Sign-in Sheet / Name Tags near the entrance.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

- We assigned as many roles as possible. Everyone has a job.
  - Leader / Facilitator
  - Record Keeper
  - Greeter / Welcomer
  - Timer
  - Committee Representative
- Everyone leaves the meeting with something to do for the next time.

## **Materials**

- Agenda is printed.
- Materials / handouts are provided.

## **Running the Meeting**

- Meeting starts on time.
- People are welcomed and introduced.
- Facilitator(s) stick to the agenda.
- Meeting plans for action and is always action-oriented.
- Everyone is involved.
- Everyone commits to something by the end of the meeting.
- Commitments and next steps are reviewed before the meeting ends.
- Meeting ends on time or before.

## **After the Meeting**

- Follow-up provided for all members.
- Reminders are sent to all regarding next steps.

# Leadership

## Identifying and Developing Leaders

### Sample Checklist

Changing the structures of society that give rise to community problems provides a challenging opportunity for student leadership. Two basic leadership styles are helpful: the organizer and the welcomer. The organizer has the ability to get things done. Goals, objectives, agendas and taking action are part of this person's basic nature. The welcomer is naturally gifted at welcoming, introducing, listening and thanking. Both styles are important. Most people tend to be better at one than the other. The goal is to help people develop both of these characteristics or to find people who have them who are able to work together.

Our group grows leaders by . . .

- Assessing the qualities of members who are willing to assume more responsibility.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Organized
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Goal Oriented
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Able to Recruit others
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Good Listener
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Positive
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Honest
  
- Giving everyone a job that that rotates and develops leadership skills.
  
- Encouraging younger students to lead projects to help develop their skills.
  
- Setting goals for leadership development.