

# Recruiting For Your Group

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Recruitment is vital to the longevity and success of any youth program. If you want to start a group, good recruiting strategies are imperative. Where do you go to find the right youth for the job, and how do you go about recruiting them? *Where* is easy to answer: anywhere and everywhere. *How* to recruit requires more thought and preparation.

## **Where to Recruit**

Agencies tend to recruit through the following avenues:

- ◇ Your school (of course)
- ◇ Community Clubs (4- H, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, Girl and Boy Scouts)
- ◇ Libraries
- ◇ Teen Centers
- ◇ Service Learning Classes
- ◇ Other School Groups or Clubs
- ◇ Skateboard Parks
- ◇ Teen Concerts or Dances
- ◇ Community events—a table for sign-ups at any event attracting youth
- ◇ Word of mouth—personal contact, members bringing friends
- ◇ Flyers posted at schools, clubs and community centers
- ◇ Schools—student government, classes requiring community service hours as part of the curriculum, peer helper programs, after-school programs, talking to guidance counselors and teachers
- ◇ Probation department—youth adjudicated to serve community service hours
- ◇ Religious youth organizations
- ◇ Recreation departments
- ◇ Sports teams
- ◇ Community centers

# How to Recruit

How programs recruit is an exercise in persistence and creativity. Groups with recruitment success start with a plan.

- One strategy is to put together a presentation that will attract attention and appeal to youth. It may be helpful to have existing or former members of the group at the presentation, so youth do not feel they are receiving a lecture. Or better yet, have youth give the presentation!
- A proven method is to go to any community event that will be attracting youth. Your group can set up a table and take sign-ups or conduct a survey of attitudes and concerns about issues you're working on. Also effective is a table or booth at school during lunch or after school.
- In early fall, many schools have "club fairs" to give students access to the groups available on campus. Set up a table and give away information about the group, as well as incentives, such as pencils, water bottles, T-shirts, etc., to students who sign a guest book. By the end of the week, you will have collected dozens of names of interested youth, which will provide a basis for establishing or enhancing your group.
- An alternative to the club fairs in the fall is attending the first year student orientation sessions at your school in late spring. This gives your group the chance to beat the competition and attract attention early. Be sure to keep in contact with the students during the summer months. One-on-one attention goes a long way to keeping young people engaged.
- If your group is well connected, as some are, you can find a captive audience by making presentations to government or leadership classes or any other classes that have a community service requirement. Also remember that there are young people who are not in traditional school settings and may be eager to join as well.

*With any type of recruitment, having older teens make presentations to younger youth has proven highly effective. Teens have a unique ability to connect with other youth; their presence lends an air of acceptability.*

## Creative Ideas for Recruitment

- Creating a website. Many youth are techno-savvy and could easily create a site at low cost.
- Producing a short recruitment video
- Networking with teachers, parents and students during school open houses
- Attending after-school programs
- Placing statements in school bulletins
- Distributing youth-friendly flyers, working with parent-teacher associations
- Giving away incentives
- Hosting an art or essay contest
- Conducting a community event that allows *for* youth participation, such as a basketball tournament
- Bring a friend night
- Talk to other coordinators/advisors to get new ideas

## How Often to Recruit

Frequency seems to depend on the turn-over rate of the members. Getting a group started will require some intense, constant recruitment. To maintain a sufficient number of participants, the recommendation is to **build recruitment into everything you do.**

Regardless of how to recruit, where and how often you recruit, are two key elements that will make the process more successful.

- ✓ First, it is important to have an experienced, charismatic lead person or group of people doing the recruiting.
- ✓ Second, youth must immediately be made to feel welcome and an important part of the group.

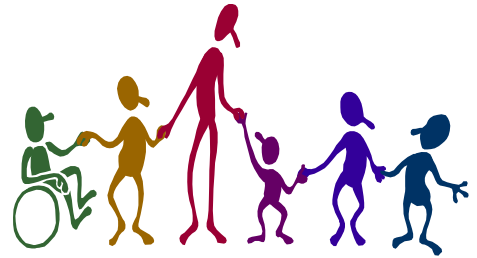
Recruiting youth for a meeting or activity is easier than getting them to come back a second time. **Making the youth feel welcome and appreciated is the easiest, most direct way to encourage them to return.**



## TIPS FOR RECRUITING DIVERSE YOUTH

**When recruiting for your group, you're looking for committed, passionate, and energetic people who will help your group make a difference. That description fits LOTS more people than you think!**

Keep your mind and your eyes open when looking for potential group members. Diversity in your group will create strength, help you to reach a larger population, and create a greater opportunity for positive change to occur in your community because of YOUR GROUP!



**Are you thinking “there’s NO diversity in my community...”??? Think again!**

There is more to diversity than races and culture. People come from different economic, religious, social, and other backgrounds that don’t always show on the surface. Have youth in your program reach out to someone from a different “crowd” or challenge seniors to reach out to younger students.

### TIPS

Be aware of your own assumptions about who that person is.

Find a common connection.

Talk to people one on one.

Recognize what strengths they have that will help reach the common goal.

**Be persistent—follow up on even the slightest bit of interest.**

**Ask “What will it take to get you involved?”**

**Give them a reason why you want them to be involved.**

**Recognize why they are the right person for the job.**

**Tell them how being involved will benefit themselves.**

*Ask for help...tell them you are working together.*

*Be clear about what the commitment entails.*

Give them an incentive to participate.

Ask other youth or adults in your school or community who they would recommend; they just might name someone you haven’t thought of!