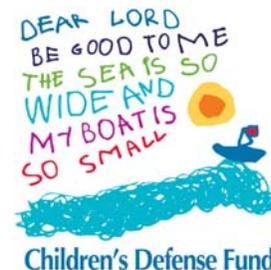


Children's Defense Fund

Planning a Cradle to Prison Pipeline[®] Event

July 2009



Thank you for your interest in organizing an event to raise awareness and plan action to dismantle the pipeline to prison. In planning a *Cradle to Prison Pipeline* event you may find the following checklist useful.

Establish Overall Event Objectives

1. To raise public awareness of the urgency to dismantle the pipeline.
2. To create strong interdisciplinary coalitions with diverse key stakeholders to design activities that can significantly address the underlying conditions that create the pipeline. Individuals to consider include: youth and families affected by the pipeline; elected and appointed officials; business leaders; representatives from the media entertainment industries; and professionals from a variety of child-serving systems).
3. To promote a plan of local or state action to dismantle the pipeline.

Plan Timeline

- Allow sufficient planning time: depending on the size of event, you may need 4 to 6 months.
- Engage multiple stakeholders from the beginning to design the event.
- Define clear objectives such as the program agenda, speakers, location and dates.
 - How will the event help address state/local concerns about the pipeline?
 - Who is the target audience? Do you want a public event or invitational only?
 - What content or speakers will most likely attract the participants who can best advance your goals?
- Discuss potential post-event actions that are needed to advance your goals.
 - Develop "action items" to share with participants to maintain momentum.
 - Schedule a "next steps" session where you can review and discuss participant comments.
 - Create a tentative schedule to discuss specific activities for your action plan. Consider ways to organize workgroups or coalitions that can assume responsibility for different parts of the action plan.

Consider the Key Components

- Select a keynote speaker. This person will set the context and provide an overview of the *Cradle to Prison Pipeline* Campaign including key policies that contribute to its creation and those that can dismantle it.
- Select a moderator to guide productive discussions.
- Design panels/workshops that can both provide information and allow time for participants' own observations about the issues.
- These smaller sessions should focus on problems that push children into the pipeline: 1) pervasive poverty; 2) inadequate health and mental health care; 3) lack of quality early childhood programs; 4) disparate educational opportunities; 5) overburdened child welfare systems; and 6) juvenile justice systems oriented toward punishment rather than early intervention.
- Allow time to discuss solutions.
- Structure the event so that participants can spend the majority of their time sharing promising practices and approaches to dismantle the pipeline, such as those outlined in CDF's America's *Cradle to Prison Pipeline*SM Report.

We must work with national and state leaders to advance a child policy agenda to:

- End child poverty;
- Ensure all children and pregnant women access to affordable, seamless, comprehensive health and mental health coverage and services;
- Provide high quality early childhood development programs for all;
- Ensure every child can read at grade level by fourth grade and guarantee quality education through high school graduation;
- Protect children from abuse and neglect and connect them to caring permanent families; and
- Stop the criminalization of children at increasingly younger ages and invest in prevention and early intervention to reroute children and teens caught in the juvenile justice system on to successful life paths.

We must call on local government leaders to:

- Use their convening powers to bring together other elected officials and community leaders for a firsthand examination of the pipeline problems in their community and how they can accelerate actions to dismantle the pipeline;
 - Ensure quality after-school and summer programs to give children an alternative to the streets; and
 - Work with local churches to provide role models for children, including those in foster care.
- Discuss follow-up action steps. Discuss how to create and maintain a “Cradle coalition” to advocate for policy changes.

Select an Appropriate Meeting Space

- Identify dates and program format before securing your space.
- When negotiating the space agreement, think about incorporating diverse session formats (i.e., panels, working groups, workshops, etc.) and maximizing opportunities for interaction between participants.
- Consider the acoustics and audience capacity before selecting the event facility.
- Try to find a place where you can serve food, which will help keep your group together.
- Consider locations that are accessible by public transportation and for people with disabilities.

Plan Publicity and Pre-event Outreach

- Illustrate the urgent need for action with photos and stories of children and families caught in the pipeline in your state.
- Offer Continuing Education Unit (CEU) and Continuing Legal Education (CLE) credits as an incentive to attend. Ensure sufficient time to share advance event materials on the web (registration forms, agenda and background reading).
- Engage the media. Meet with reporters in advance to talk about the *Cradle to Prison Pipeline* crisis and the goals for the event. Give them a local hook through your stories, data or innovative leaders.

Design a User-friendly Registration Process

- Use online registration to facilitate tracking participant RSVPs.
- Consider offering discounted registration fees if you have funds to support youths and/or representatives from non-profit organizations.
- Monitor registrations to ensure diverse participation and consider the need for special outreach to organizations or individuals you especially want to attend.
- Distribute and collect evaluation forms throughout the event because participants often leave at the end without completing them. Be sure to share evaluation results with them.
- Record names and contact information for all event attendees, especially email addresses, for post-event follow-up.

Develop Panels

- Structure panels around topics that will engage participants.
- Identify panelists who reflect the relevant stakeholders and communities who can dismantle the pipeline, including youths and families who are personally affected by it.
- Include community leaders and representatives of each major child-serving system with particular attention to those disproportionately affected (i.e., Blacks, Latinos).
- Provide moderators with talking points to highlight key themes you want addressed and key questions for panelists. Include biographical information about the panelists.

Follow Up, Follow Up, Follow Up

- Send a thank you to all event participants, speakers and attendees.
- Create a listserv so that participants can stay in touch, start coalitions and develop action plans.
- Maintain contact with media representatives who attend and cover the event by providing ongoing information about families affected by the pipeline and work done to address the problems.

For more information on the *Cradle to Prison Pipeline*, please visit www.childrensdefense.org or contact us at 800-CDF-1200 (800-233-1200).