

## Creating Community Events for Affordable Care Act Education and Enrollment: A Guide

**Outreach and Education** goes hand in hand with enrolling members in healthcare coverage as the ACA is still in the early stages of acceptance. Creating a community event to provide education about the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and encourage enrollment falls under the category of “Outreach and Education.” An ACA Outreach and Education event would be *any event or place where you can interact with potential consumers and share information about the ACA encourage them to sign up for health coverage.*

The first step to creating a successful community event to promote ACA education is to **highlight your objective**. As you are in a Direct Service Tribe service area, your consumers will likely be attending Indian Health Service and other Indian Health Clinics. You should promote:

1. Awareness and information about the benefits of the Affordable Care Act for the Consumer, Local Native Community, and I.H.S facilities
2. Enrollment in public and private insurance programs

Now, **define the scope of your event**. How large of an event will you plan? Will you be attending a pre-established event? How many people will be in attendance? Consider:

- Hosting your event or attending events at locations such as:
  - **Hospitals, I.H.S and non I.H.S Clinics, Tribal Offices**-These are good locations because there will likely be a large amount of people already in the Healthcare environment and ready to receive information about their health.
  - **Community Events**-Pow wows, fairs, and sporting events are all great ways to get close to where your consumers will at their most comfortable and receptive to knowledge about protecting their health. Having a presence at these types of events could be very important for building a face to face reputation with your community, you know your consumers best!
  - **Existing Enrollment and ACA events**- Over the last few years, organizations such as NIHB have been hosting awareness events around open enrollment time for health coverage. Keep in the know of when these might be happening in your area, or plan to host your own!

After you have considered the location, type, and scope of your enrollment event **it is important to know the consumers** who will be present and how you may change how you interact with them:

- Remember not everyone is as well versed as you in health insurance language, scale appropriately to what is understandable.
- Follow the proper channels when working with Tribes. Make sure the Tribal leaders are notified and/or asked to participate if necessary.
- Be receptive to the cultural/social/educational barriers that may be occurring in the environments you are attempting to Outreach in. It may take some listening and learning to the best ways to approach consumers for effectively.
- Package the Affordable Care Act as something that is beneficial to American Indian’s and Alaska Natives and can improve the health of themselves and their loved ones. Additionally, it is important to highlight the ability to pick the health coverage that they want and special provisions and benefits afforded to them as Members of Federally Recognized Tribes.

**Messaging at your enrollment event** is important. You want to take consideration into how you are pitching the Affordable Care Act and what messages will be effective for your consumers. An example of a few top messages to convey are:

- i. **Its affordable or Free**
- ii. **ACA accepts pre-existing conditions**
- iii. **You can still use I.H.S or other services**
- iv. **AI/AN have special monthly enrollment status**

For more content on how to message the ACA to your consumers, check out NIHB's Media and Messaging toolkit at:

<http://www.nihb.org/tribalhealthreform/2016-messaging-toolkit/>

Setting up an enrollment event checklist.

- Rally your Staff.** If you work in a clinic, tribal office, or other similar organization select staff members that can help you plan and manage this enrollment events. These types of initiatives take a lot of effort and your co-workers can help you create a great event.
- Recruit other Organizations,** by reaching out to others who share goals or interests in regards to your ACA Outreach and Education efforts, you can often get insider knowledge, additional workers, and other resources. NIHB for example, often sends employees into the field to aid assistors in knowledge about the ACA and engage consumers.
- Select a date or time-frame.** There are many time periods that are ideal for hosting or attending an enrollment event on the ACA because AI/ANs have monthly enrollment periods. Some of these are, but not limited to: Open Enrollment Time (November-January), Tax Season, and Re-Enrollment period (November)
- Pick a Location.** Considering the factors listed in this document there may be a variety of locations that will work best for your situation. Some locations may cost money, while others may be free, these are all factors to consider. Work with your event to figure out which location will be the best to reach the largest number of consumers, effectively.
- Plan the logistics.** There are a lot of moving parts that go into planning community events, even for the smallest ones! Make sure you take plenty of time at scheduled intervals leading up to the community event to discuss the logistics of how the event will be run and expectations. Logistics may include: Staff duties as assigned, materials to be distributed, layout of the event, and food vendors.
- Print and gather materials.** Before your enrollment event, make sure you go through the list of items that you will have to bring and or print beforehand. Such as: fliers, brochures, tables, table cloths, and banners.
- Host the event!**
- Survey your participants, monitor the event, and note feedback for improvement.** This is one of the most important stages of enrollment events. After you have put all this effort into hosting an event, it is important to step back and take time to evaluate your event. You can do this by informally talking to consumers and participants, or formally by creating a survey document of some sort and keeping the responses.

**Best Practice Tips:**

- **Make sure you use a sign-in sheet at some point of your event so you can network with consumers, assistors, and any other individuals in the future.**
- **Think about how you want to set up your booth; take care not to have your table too cluttered with your materials, table cloths and banners are great additions!**
- **Providing food and refreshments is a good way to attract and keep consumers at your events.**
- **Having give away items such as pens, t-shirts, cups, bags, and other goodies promoting your organization or event are a good way to engage consumers.**