



Hosting a House Party

Introduction

A house party is a very effective way to build the grassroots movement for single-payer health care in Minnesota and to introduce people to the Campaign for the Minnesota Health Plan. A house party can meet many different objectives, it can be an opportunity to educate, raise awareness, recruit volunteers, train activists, meet legislators and raise money. The basics are simple, decide your theme, invite your guests, host your event and follow up to keep people involved. This guide will give you suggestions for planning and hosting a house party.

What is a House Party?

House parties are a great way to educate, take action, build the movement and raise money. For relatively little time and effort, a house party can be a very effective organizing tool for the campaign. In general expect a time frame of about four weeks from planning your event to hosting your event.

House parties can take on many forms. Basically, it's your party, it's your house, and usually it will be your friends, neighbors, colleagues and/or acquaintances from your faith community or civic groups that you are inviting. The guest list is up to you. Plan a party where both *you* and *your guests* feel most comfortable and a guest list appropriate to the hosting location. If this is your first time hosting an event, consider finding a co-host or hosts to do this with you.

Basic Steps to Hosting a House Party

1. Decide on the Theme and Format

A liaison at one of the Campaign's organizational sponsors can serve as your resource. If there is great enthusiasm for the MN Health Plan in your area, plan an event around taking action and raising money for the campaign. If your state legislators aren't yet supportive, you can host an event where a legislator can meet face-to-face with constituents. If single-payer isn't even on people's radar screens, you can host an informational house party. You'll want people to leave informed and energized. Having at least one concrete action like letter writing is helpful for engaging people and making the Campaign concrete.

2. Pick a Date, Time and Location

Typically, a house party is held on a weekday evening or a weekend afternoon or evening. Depending on the activities you plan, for instance a speaker or a video clip, you will want an event to last between 1 ½-2 hours. Try to avoid hosting during major sporting political or civic events. Consider your budget, don't host right at dinnertime if you don't want to provide a meal. While it is usually helpful in creating a party atmosphere to have some type of refreshment, don't stretch your personal finances. It is quite acceptable to ask a few of your guests if they would bring something to share.

3. Create a Guest List

Ideally it's a good idea to invite about four times as many people as you would like to have at your event. If you have room for 25 people, you should ask about 100 people to come. You can invite:

- Family, friends, neighbors, and acquaintances
- Professional colleagues
- People from your church or house of worship
- Activists in your community
- Other single-payer supporters that the campaign puts you in contact with.

4. Prepare and Send Out Invitations

Once you have your guest list, there are several different ways you can invite prospective guests – email, a mailed flyer or invitation, or by using an online invitation, such as evite.com. The invitation should contain information on what the party is for, the time and date, your contact information for questions, and a deadline for RSVPs. Depending on the location, you may want to include directions, or a link to mapquest.com. A template invitation is attached. If you are willing to use your event as a fundraising mechanism for the campaign, you can also include a suggested donation or a request that people bring their checkbooks. You should mail your invitation about 2-3 weeks before your event. **You will have a much better response rate if you follow your invitation with a phone call a week before the event!**

5. Plan the Format of the Party

Before your party, it's important to plan the format and schedule. The first 15 to 30 minutes or so should be an informal time for guests to arrive, mingle, snack and review any hand outs or materials you might have. The program portion of the house party should start no more than a half hour into the party so you don't lose momentum, or guests. Decide whether a speaker, a film/slideshow*, or a discussion will be the focus of your program. Decide on an activity that people can do following "the program", such as writing a letter to a legislator, signing a petition, writing a letter to the editor, brainstorming a community action that could garner press attention, or making a plan to go to lobby at the legislature. Plan for a formal closure to the event's activities and a time to make a fundraising pitch if you plan to do that and to thank people for coming.

6. Host the Event

Make sure people sign in when they arrive. Have nametags available for guests and point out the refreshments. Make sure all guests are aware of the campaign materials available.

As you start your program, you may want to go around the room and have people introduce themselves by answering an "icebreaker" question. Ask people to answer in no more than one or two sentences.

Examples:

- What got you interested in single-payer?

- How much is your office visit co-pay?
- What is one thing you won't miss about insurance companies when we enact the MN Health Plan?

Give people an overview of the schedule before you begin. Watch the time and try to stay on schedule. If you make a pitch for money, please review the fundraising pitch information in advance. Make sure people know that contributions to MUHCC are not tax deductible as they will be spent on lobbying, advocacy and staffing directly related to the campaign. Contribution forms and reply envelopes from GMHCC or MUHCC will be made available to you. When the planned program and activity are over, announce a formal end and thank people for coming. Some folks may want to mingle and talk, but others may want to leave and this gives them a comfortable exit.

7. Follow Up

There is still a bit of work to do after the event. If you collected signatures on a petition, get the petition to your Campaign liaison. If people wrote post cards or letters make sure to get them into the mail. Tally up your successes and report them to MUHCC or GMHCC: How many people attended, how much money did you raise, how many letters did you write? What went well? What was challenging? Do you have any recommendations for future events?

If you have time, a follow-up call to attendees a week following the event is a way to keep them engaged. If there is another activity that you can inform them about, that is even better.

* Suggested Slideshows and films:

Sick Around the World, Frontline, PBS. Available for sale on Amazon.com and may be viewed for free online at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/sickaroundtheworld/>

The Missing Piece: Available from MUHCC.

SiCKO, Michael Moore. Available for sale at most retail outlets.

MHP PowerPoint from State Tour. Available in the Activist Toolkit, Campaign for the MHP.

Single-Payer PowerPoint. Available in the Activist Toolkit, Campaign for the MHP.

Sample Invitation



www.mnhealthplan.org



www.gmhcc.org



www.muhealth.org



YOUR NAME

is pleased to invite you to a house party for
The Campaign for the Minnesota Health Plan
Single-Payer Health Care for ALL Minnesotans

Date
Time
Location

Come learn about the MN Health Plan and how to pass
Single-Payer Health Care Legislation in Minnesota

Special Guest:

RSVP by DATE
PHONE or EMAIL

Donations Welcome