



PLANNING SUGGESTIONS



NOW ON CAMPUS: ACTION ESSENTIALS

An action can be a protest, rally, march, vigil, letter-writing campaign, or any other activity which brings awareness and/or makes change on an issue that affects women's lives. Actions can help draw attention to an issue, change attitudes, gain influence with communities, attract members, raise money, and publicize your CAN.

Organizing Action

Below are six steps to help you successfully plan and accomplish an action. They are only one way to strategize; if you have others that work well for you, you can use those as well. The steps are: Pick an Issue, Educate Yourself, Decide Goals, Set Logistics, Act, and Follow Up. Each of these steps will be explained in more detail below.

Reminder: NOW is not a service organization. We take action to bring about social change for women and for the broadest possible solution. No matter what the action the goal must be to help others realize how they are affected by the issue and move them to take action.

#1 Pick an Issue

This is a straightforward step. Choose an issue to focus on. It can be local, statewide, national, or even international, as big or small as you would like. Make sure you carefully define the issue, and you're set.

#2 Educate Yourself

Doing research is a critical part of taking action. Find out NOW's policy (if there is one) on your chosen issue. Who in your community has commented on it? What do they have to say? What do people on the other side (anti-choicers, the campus police, whomever) have to say? Try to have everyone in the group participate in this process, it will help each person feel confident during your action. Try putting together a fact sheet or talking points on the issue. You can also organize a teach-in (an event where people who know a lot about an issue share their knowledge) before your scheduled action. Lastly, don't forget that your local NOW chapter can be an excellent resource.

#3 Decide on Goals

This is the big picture part of the planning. Decide what type of action would be most effective (for example, a candle-light vigil is rarely considered a celebratory event!), keeping in mind what has worked well on your campus in the past. Identify your target audience. Is it a certain group of people, anyone on campus, or somewhere in between? After you have hammered out these ideas (and probably taken a break) you will want to discuss tangible goals, to help measure the success of your event. Do you want to attract a certain number of people, hand out a number of flyers, raise an amount of money?

Though your general goal and target audience will change with each event there are several measures of success which are frequently used:

- Building your membership base. Attracting new members at an event through flyering and an email list help measure how interested people are in what you're doing and bring attention to your CAN.
- Building your financial base. Try to incorporate a little bit of fundraising into each event: sell buttons or bumper stickers, or have a donation basket. That little bit goes a long way.
- Increasing your CAN's visibility in the campus community. The more times you're in your campus paper or on the radio, the more people will start to know about you. Publicity, though sometimes costly, should always be a priority.
- Strengthening community and coalition contacts. Try working with your local NOW chapter and be sure to seek out groups that share your position on issues. When working in coalition with other organizations make sure that all possible allies are represented, and seek other organizations that you haven't had much opportunity to work with. NOW's role is frequently to see who is NOT at the table and encourage her/his participation.

Once you have the big ideas down, you're ready for the details

#4 Set Logistics

This is the section for nitty-gritty event organizing. Pick a date, time, and location--be sure to consider things like campus holidays, exams, how pressing the issue is, when folks are on campus, and how many people you expect. Decide on a publicity plan, budget, any fundraising efforts, and coalitions. Set up volunteer sheets with shifts, ask people to get their friends and classmates involved, consider writing an editorial. Also, be sure to plan the setup, cleanup for your event, and a bit of troubleshooting.

#5 Act

Yep, the big day. Take a deep breath and try to stick with your plans. Some improvising will probably be necessary, but staying calm and trying to have some fun will make the day and your event more enjoyable for everyone.

You may want to bring things like duct tape, extension cords, scissors, a small stapler, safety pins, a bull horn, rope or string, pens, a first aid kit, sunscreen, and water to your actions.

#6 Follow Up

Don't forget to give thanks! Thank all your volunteers and organizers, those who donated and your coalition organizations. Also, if press or a student paper covered the event, thank them, too.