

How to Involve People Who Use Drugs

We Have a Lot of Experience So Please...

Do invite several of us

Do invite a peer-based group to select representatives

Do invite people who actively use drugs

Do invite people who formerly used drugs, in addition to people who actively use drugs

Do listen to and integrate our answers

Do financially support peer-based organizations if you expect representatives to consult with members of their community before the meeting

Do give us information about what the meeting is about, what our role will be, and how we can contribute

Don't invite just one of us

Don't hand-pick the same person you know and are comfortable with every time

Don't only invite people who formerly used drugs – it is OK to invite them and they have lots to offer, but they are not the same as people who are actively using drugs, who also have a perspective that is valuable and needs to be heard as well

Don't ask a question or invite us to your meeting just because it is politically correct

We May Not be Used to Your Style of Meetings So Please....

Do provide us with training and a support person

Do ask us to help define groups expectations

Do show flexibility with meeting styles (times, agenda, level of participation)

Do ask us what we need

Do train us for ongoing or future committee or board events

Do acknowledge that you may have needs, too, and that unfamiliarity may make you uncomfortable

Do consider providing oppression informed training specific to the issue of peer involvement, and ask us to participate

Do ask for our participation in planning sessions for consultations or meetings

Don't run your committee or board meetings without considering that it may be the first time for us to be on a committee or board

Don't hold a meeting or consultation just the way you are used to; work with peers to make it inclusive

Don't hold a meeting at 9 a.m. or on cheque issue day

Don't be afraid to ask for support from a peer committee or group that have experience

Don't assume that we are the problem and the only ones who need to learn

Don't think that you can't learn how to integrate us and our experience

Don't think that we cannot do more, such as work for you in a paid position

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We May Not be Very Mobile or Wealthy So Please...

Do hold a meeting or consultation in a low-key setting or in a setting where people who use drugs already hang out

Do provide a stipend – contrary to most people who attend your meetings, we are not paid to attend by our jobs, but still need to look after our needs

Do give us money in cash

Don't hold meetings in a government building

Don't assume that we don't need a stipend or would just spend it on drugs
(or that it wouldn't be justified even if we did)

Don't write us a cheque or give us a coupon

Don't ask us to come and meet you in Ottawa unless you provide us with adequate support and compensation

We Value Our Privacy So Please ...

Do guarantee and protect confidentiality

Do let us know who else will be at the table including law enforcement, social workers, parole officers, religious groups and city officials

Don't identify what a particular person said in the proceedings of the meeting

Don't require us to disclose: HIV (or other health) status, exposure to trauma, or proof of income when involving us or as a requirement for participation

If You Want Us to Travel Please ...

Do help with arranging Methadose carries and Suboxone or opioid replacement medication

Do arrange for advice from a local person who uses drugs – drugs may be more dangerous in a different city and travelling puts us at risk

Do provide accommodation close to the meeting space

Do have a healthcare provider available to support us

Don't invite us at the last minute and assume we can deal with this alone

Don't just leave us on our own in cities we don't know

Don't assume we have identification (or credit cards) to check into hotels or board flights