



Organizer Guidebook & Training Materials

The official training guide for Compassionate Coalition members

I. Introduction – About The Compassionate Coalition

The Compassionate Coalition is a nonprofit organization that defends the rights of medical marijuana patients and care providers. We are a grassroots coalition of patients, physicians, care providers, and concerned citizens who volunteer to defend patients' rights through education and community participation.



Our Mission: *To defend the rights of medical marijuana patients and care providers through education and community participation.*

Common volunteer activities include:

- **Educating** service organizations, policy makers and the public about medical marijuana rights;
- **Organizing** and educating the patient community;
- **Networking** and coordinating with other reform organizations and patient-advocates.
- **Defending** physicians and care providers from unwarranted prosecution and harassment;
- **Training** patient advocates to speak to media and government officials;
- **Providing a forum** for patients, care providers and the public to openly discuss medical marijuana issues;
- **Representing patients** in city, county and state government;
- **Providing legal and community support** for patients and care providers in court;
- **Announcing** important meetings and events to media and patients; And much more...



Mailing Address:

The Compassionate Coalition - www.CompassionateCoalition.org

1500 Oliver Road, Ste-K, P.M.B. #248, Fairfield, CA 94533-3473

Important Resources:

- **Forms for Organizers:** www.CompassionateCoalition.org/forms
- **Coalition Workgroup Listservs:** Sign up at <http://www.compassionatecoalition.org/lists>
 - **National Listserv:** For discussing issues relevant to the national organization.
 - **Local Listservs:** We also have listservs for Colorado, Northern California, Central California, and Southern California. *Note: Contact us to create a listserv for your area.*
- **ASA Listservs:** <http://lists.safeaccessnow.org/lists/lists>
- **ASA Discussion Forum:** <http://safeaccessnow.org/punbb/>

II. Operations of the Organization

We are governed by our By-Laws, available at: <http://www.compassionatecoalition.org/bylaws>

We operate using democratic procedures. We do not engage in any handling, distribution or sales of medical marijuana.

Local Chapters:

- A local chapter usually serves one county or region, representing the patients in that community.
- Each local chapter can elect their own officers, vote on local policy, etc.
- Each local chapter elects a Chapter Representative, who serves on the national Board of Directors.

National Organizing:

- All national decisions regarding policy or the overall organization are made by the national Board of Directors. Listing: <http://www.compassionatecoalition.org/BoardofDirectors>
- The Chairman of the Board serves as the leader of the organization and oversees Board operations, also holding one vote.
- National meetings are currently hosted in Northern California.

As a non-profit organization, we can:

- Provide education and share information.
- Defend civil rights.
- Raise funds for the organization.

As a non-profit organization, we cannot:

- Participate in political lobbying.
- Support political candidates.
- Profit personally from the organization.

Affiliations:

- We are an Affiliate of [Americans for Safe Access \(ASA\)](#), and work closely with the [American Alliance for Medical Cannabis \(AAMC\)](#), [Safe Access Now \(SAN\)](#), and other medical marijuana reform organizations.
- We also coordinate with the [National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws \(NORML\)](#), [California NORML](#), the [Marijuana Policy Project \(MPP\)](#), the [American Civil Liberties Union \(ACLU\)](#), and any other organizations that support our mission.



III. Media

Gaining positive media coverage is the BEST way to defend patients' rights. -Our strength is in speaking the truth! Coalition speakers represent the voice of patients in that community, because they are elected democratically by local patients. Anyone can speak as an individual, but you must be authorized to speak on behalf of The Compassionate Coalition. For speaking techniques and practice, see the Advocate Training Institute's Speaker & Media Training:

<http://www.compassionatecoalition.org/Training.pdf>

Newspapers: Very important, read by all important parties, including policy makers, opinion leaders, and other reporters.

- **News Articles: Best coverage.** Reporters usually cover a specific event like a city ordinance vote, court trial, etc. or a hot issue.
- **Letters to The Editor:** LTEs are good, and express community opinion. Should be written in response to an article.
- **Web Comments:** View the article online, and post your comments below.

Television: Very important, viewed by broader audience than newspapers. May be less in-depth. Usually local news coverage.

- **Event Coverage:** Protests, court support, government meetings, etc.
- **General Interviews:** At events or somewhere public, they usually want good visuals.
- **In-Studio Interviews:** Visit the news studio to speak in-person or via video relay.



Internet: Online resources are great for finding supporters and organizing, as well as reporting your own stories.

- **Coalition Site:** Post articles in the discussion forum.
- **Other advocate sites:** Post notices in discussion forums, calendars, etc.
- **All other sites:** Post articles and announcements on any other sites, such as MySpace, Facebook, SecondLife and others. Get your friends and family involved!

Note: If the media does not cover your event, do it yourself! Post your story on the Coalition site, indybay.org, and other discussion boards. These reports are often very valuable, and they help us to break through and 'media blackout' that may be in effect.

IV. Speaking to public officials

In-Person: Meeting with a public official and/or their staff can be very helpful, but meetings may not be granted, and the conversation is not public record. This is probably the best way to communicate with your Congressperson. Other examples include: Meeting with city council members, county supervisors, state legislators, public agencies, and possibly other bureaucrats. To setup an in-person meeting, authorized representatives schedule a meeting with the official or their staff. Prepare, bring materials, plan your strategy.

Congress: Our #1 priority right now is to educate Congresspersons who don't support mmj. This could end the Federal prohibition on medical marijuana right now. (Note: this is NOT "lobbying", it's "education for the defense of patients' rights".)

Public Hearings: The most common way to communicate with local and state officials. Usually you have a *right* to speak, and everything is on public record.

The Importance of Public Hearings: Public hearings are supposed to facilitate community input in order to generate laws in a democratic and legitimate manner. **Why that matters:**

- Sometimes they actually listen to us.
- Hearings often generate media coverage for this issue.
- **Hearings become public record, which can be used later in court to over-turn bad laws.**
- **But: Arguments NOT made at the appropriate public hearing CANNOT be used in court later.**
- **So: We need effective advocates at all important public hearings to represent our side!!**

Preparing for Public Hearings:

- Letters can be sent in advance, and will be included in the meeting agenda. This can be very helpful for presenting your case, and creating public records.
- Speakers should coordinate in advance, and give the appearance of unity.
- Make sure at least 1 speaker is someone who will be directly affected by the outcome of the hearing.
- Non-speakers should be rallied to show up and support also.

Speaking at Public Hearings:

- Look good, be professional, show up early.
- Speakers may have to submit speaker cards.
- Get an agenda, and any related papers.
- Speak to the issue, and focus on legal arguments most.



Task-Forces: A task-force is sometimes created by a government entity to study a complicated issue, and is not as official as a public hearing. A task-force should be attended by a few of your best representatives, with good preparation. May be a good forum to present your case and discover the concerns of others, but the outcome is uncertain.

V. Direct action, protests, emergency response

Protests, rallies, direction actions, emergency responses, etc. can be planned to respond directly to raids or issues, gain public support, and/or gain media attention.

Most common is “emergency response” for a raid in progress. While the raid is happening, supporters and advocates show up to protest and hopefully speak to media. (Protests and rallies can also be organized a day or two after a raid.)



Rallies and events can also be planned for community-building and fun, rather than responding to raids. *The primary purpose of these events should be to gain positive media attention!*

VI. Court support

Coordinate with defendants and volunteers to show up on the day of court, and support. Speak to any media present. Send out a report if possible/helpful.

Why:

- To directly support patients whose rights are being violated.
- To set legal precedent.
- *To gain positive media attention.*
- **And: Defendants often become committed advocates later.** They want justice, they know the system, they have nothing to hide, and they’re well-known already.

How: Notify supporters in advance, ask them to show up. Use any email lists, web sites, discussion boards, phone lists, media coverage, or other means available.



Judge orders retrial in medical pot case

Voters didn't understand issues' of marijuana proposition, S.J. justice says

By Jeffrey M. Barker
Record Staff Writer

STOCKTON — A San Joaquin Superior Court judge Friday criticized voters for legalizing medical marijuana and then ordered a Stockton quadriplegic to appear in court for contempt and sentencing.

“The voters unfortunately didn’t understand the issues at all,” said Judge Terrence Van Ols, while questioning a doctor who had permitted Aaron Paradiso to buy marijuana from a Bay Area dispensary.

Van Ols later declined to elaborate on his statement. But it reinforced medical marijuana proponents’ concerns that Proposition 215 — a law approved by voters eight years ago — is not seen by San Joaquin County law enforcers as legitimate.

“It’s never a good sign when a judge questions the voters,” said Bill Pearce of the Valley Patient Alliance, a group that advocates for people who use marijuana medically.

Paradiso was in court Friday supporting Paradiso, 26, whom he calls “a poster boy for this law.”

Paradiso was injured in a 1980 traffic accident and now is paralyzed from the neck down. As a result of his quadriplegia, he suffers involuntary muscle spasms. His body went into convulsions several times during the court hearing Friday morning, at first alarming Van Ols.

For more than three years, Paradiso has been smoking marijuana, eating it, and incorporating it into his diet by mixing it with butter. It helps him sleep, quiet the pain of the spasms and has allowed him to reduce his intake of harsh prescribed medications, he says.

“I’m not hurting nobody,” Paradiso said earlier this week. “It’s a political issue that I got caught up in.”

“If I were in the Bay Area, this wouldn’t even be an issue.”

The Sheriff’s Office and Deputy District Attorney Phillip Urse don’t believe that Paradiso was growing marijuana solely for personal use. They say the 22 plants found at his home in August 2003, together with already cultivated, dried marijuana found there, totaled more than 100 pounds — an amount that would have taken Paradiso 5 1/2 years to ingest.

Paradiso said the marijuana was to be divided up between four patients authorized to use it. But no evidence of that was presented to Van Ols on Friday.

Sheriff’s Sgt. Steve Foster said during the preliminary hearing Friday that detectives believe Paradiso planned to give or sell his excess marijuana to a collective in the Bay Area that legally

In State
ENFORCEMENT ALL
OVER MAP:
Law unenforced even be an issue.”
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Photos by MARIJUANA, B3

VII. Public Outreach

Educating the general public is vital for gaining support, and keeping public opinion on our side. Our web site provides educational materials and tells the public how to contact us. Our email newsletter, “The E-Dispensary”, provides important updates to supporters. Our brochures, t-shirts, etc. are helpful for informing the public about our cause. These can be placed in dispensaries, distributed at events, given to friends, etc.

Tabling: Volunteers can “table” at events such as festivals, conferences, etc. to hand out brochures, collect email addresses (see www.CompassionateCoalition.org/forms), collect donations, distribute t-shirts, and answer questions. Usually need to reserve table in advance. At least 1 coalition officer should be present. Contact us for forms, brochures, t-shirts.

Other: There are many other ways to reach-out to the public, and inform people about our cause. Get involved in your community!



VIII. Discreet Intervention

“Discreet intervention” = resolving problems through unofficial methods. This often involves using connections and relationships to quietly resolve problems. Example: Contacting a friendly Public Defender or District Attorney to get unwarranted charges dropped before going to court.

Note: Officials are often barred from discussing the specific details of a case (but may discuss anyway). *However they can discuss medical marijuana in general, and you can inform them about the laws, codes, court cases, etc.*

IX. Recruiting Volunteers

“A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history.” – Ghandi

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever does” - Margaret Mead

Why people volunteer: Fun, personal satisfaction, making friends and connections, serving justice and morality, learning new skills, economic reasons, and more.

How to recruit volunteers: Ask people you know who might be interested; post information online asking for people in your area; table at events; advertise your meetings in local newspapers; do anything that works!

Prevent “burnout”: It’s common for a volunteer to become extremely active for a period, then “burn out” and quit. Pace yourself, prioritize, and help others to do the same; we’re all volunteers, and need to maintain balance in our lives.

X. Raising Funds

Local Chapters keep the funds they raise, if they have an elected treasurer (contact us for more information on handling funds). Funds can be helpful for printing educational materials, hosting events, attending classes and conferences, and much more. *However, all income and expenditures must be recorded, and reported regularly to the national organization.*

Methods include: Soliciting private donations directly (best), donation jars at cooperatives & events, giving t-shirts for donations, hosting fundraising events, and more.



XI. Organizing Patient Meetings

Patient meetings are essential to organize support and achieve objectives. It's usually best to have local meetings for supporters in your county, forming a new chapter of the Coalition. Discuss the issues that matter in your area, and what you want to achieve. Get people involved! Send out meeting agendas in advance, and meeting notes after. Attend chapter meetings in other areas, and invite people to attend yours!

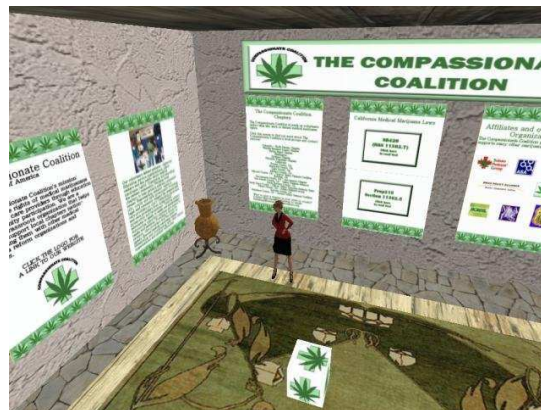
Work with us to promote your meetings and get advice. Collect email addresses, and have Nathan create a group listserv for discussion.

Elect a Chapter Representative to oversee the group and participate in national Board of Directors votes. (Required for becoming a full chapter) Elect other officers as necessary; decide who will represent your group to the media.

XII. Anything that works

The methods outlined in this guide are not the only methods. We need your insight and ideas!

Example of innovative ideas: Linda Jimenez created a Coalition chapter in www.SecondLife.com - which was the first mmj organization represented there. The chapter is very popular and well-received. Linda then organized a virtual benefit concert which was HUGE and raised hundreds of dollars for our organization. Great work Linda!!



Getting Started: Your Action Checklist

- Read the Organizer Guidebook, and become familiar with the organization.**
- Join email lists and discussion boards. Find out what's going on in other areas, and let others know what you're up to!**
- Attend local meetings (+ meetings in any nearby areas) if any.**
- Contact us to start a local chapter.**
- Hold regular meetings for local patients.**
- Organize patients and advocates to take action! Talk to media, public officials and the general public.**
- Participate in court support, direct actions, protests, emergency response.**
- Recruit volunteers.**
- Raise funds.**
- Become a Coalition officer, and help to guide the organization!**

Thank you for defending the rights of medical marijuana patients!!