



Care and Choice at the End of Life

**Volunteer Action Network
Toolkit:**

**HOSTING A
HOUSE PARTY**

Hosting a House Party

In this toolkit, you will find time-tested guidance and materials for a successful education and fundraising event in your home. These resources will help you inform your guests of the importance of Compassion & Choices' work and how they can help further the movement. Advocates like you power our efforts, and we hope your guests will join you in supporting Compassion & Choices.

A Compassion & Choices house party is a great way to accomplish three critical goals:

- 1) Educate your guests about end-of-life issues.
- 2) Motivate them to get involved with this movement.
- 3) Raise money to further our mission.

Consider making it an annual event, and become the Compassion & Choices ambassador in your community.

These house party tips and guidelines can also be used in combination with the toolkits for planning events such as video screenings or book club discussions on *Finish Strong* by Barbara Coombs Lee.

Host Commitments

By offering to host a Compassion & Choices house party, you are agreeing to:

- Provide a space for the party.
- Create an invitation and invite your personal network.
- Provide refreshments.
- Ask people to support our work with a contribution.
- Share guest list, RSVP list, sign-in information and pictures with Compassion & Choices.
- Follow up with everyone after the party.

The Benefits

You and your guests will have the opportunity to participate in an engaging discussion about end-of-life options and decisions. They will learn more about Compassion & Choices' work, as well as what you and they can do to bring about real change. You support the mission and vision of Compassion & Choices by giving financially and inviting others to do the same.

Selecting a Topic

Things to consider when selecting a presentation topic for your house party: include the current status of medical aid in dying in your state; state-specific priorities, plans and strategies; and who your guests will be.

Political Advocacy

Thousands of volunteers and educators are mobilized across the nation, advocating for new laws that authorize medical aid in dying as an end-of-life option. They work to advance Compassion & Choices' initiatives to change policy to improve care and expand options where medical aid in dying is not currently authorized. House parties to build our advocacy supporter base are always an option in states where we are building capacity or advancing legislation.

Implementation and Access

Passing medical aid-in-dying legislation is an important step, but passing a law does not automatically include the support and education that patients and providers need. Too many people in authorized states still can't find supportive physicians or healthcare systems, or they learn about the law too late. Advocates in every authorized state can help with outreach and education about medical aid-in-dying laws by doing provider education, public education and understanding the law clearly themselves.

End-of-Life Issues

In every state, a house party focus can simply be a conversation and presentation focused on end-of-life issues in general. You may choose to discuss dementia, unwanted medical treatment, advance directives, medical aid in dying or other pertinent topics. All Compassion & Choices advocates and supporters can play a role in starting and continuing a dialogue in your community.

Selecting a Speaker/Presentation

When you have determined the presentation topic for your house party, consider inviting a guest speaker to make some remarks. This is optional, and we fully support you taking this role on yourself.

Hosting a Guest Speaker

Find a local subject matter expert who can make some remarks and field questions from your guests. This could be a legislator; family member of a loved one who used medical aid in dying or wishes they could have; a local nurse, physician or hospice social worker; or faith leader. Make sure your guests will be able to see, and most importantly, hear your guest speaker.

Hosting a Remote Speaker

If you decide to host a remote speaker, be sure to have and test the necessary equipment and technology needed for them to join remotely. Google Hangout, Zoom, Facetime or a phone on speaker mode are a few options. Make sure your guests will be able to see, and most importantly, hear your guest speaker.

TIP: As the host, you can either share your own story or find a local legislator, physician or another advocate to be a guest speaker. You can request a Compassion & Choices storyteller from your state if there is one. Contact Compassion & Choices' National Storyteller Program at CompassionAndChoices.org/stories to refine your story or to request a storyteller.

Screening a Video

Compassion & Choices has several short videos including Brittany Maynard, Brittany's legacy, our annual end-of-year video and other options. For other titles, streaming on Amazon is free for Amazon Prime members and for a small fee to others; YouTube, Netflix, HBO, Hulu and other on-demand channels are great resources as well. Some titles may be available at your

local library. Whichever method you choose, make sure you have the appropriate equipment (TV, DVD player, computer, WiFi, speakers or other connective device). If you are streaming, connect to the internet using an ethernet cable, if possible, to decrease possible buffering or WiFi problems. There is a list of video options, discussion questions and more in the Volunteer Action Network (VAN) Toolkit: *Host a Video Screening* on the [Volunteer Resource Center](#).

Host a Fun and Successful Party

Good attendance is critical to a successful party. A general rule is that your invitation list will generate about a 30% response rate, so try to invite a little more than three times as many people as you think your space can hold. Invite people who are:

- Friends, family and neighbors
- Legislators and community leaders
- Your doctor(s)/healthcare providers
- Book club members
- Coworkers
- Civic organizations
- Sports teammates
- Faith members

TIP: Consider finding someone to co host with you. A co host's primary purpose is to expand and diversify your guest list, as well as share the tasks involved in planning and preparation. If you have a great space but not a big social network, or a great guest list but a small space, or a great space and great list but limited time to plan, find a partner to co host. With a co host, you can double the resources, double the friends and reduce the workload.

Creating Your Invitation

Determine the Details

Every party starts by determining when, where, who and what.

- Determine the date, time and location.
- Select a topic. The presentation can focus on end-of-life planning, passing legislation, implementing or protecting a law, medical aid in dying in general, or whatever is currently relevant in your community and your state.
- If you will have a guest speaker, confirm the date with them.

- ❑ Gather other important or pertinent details, such as parking directions or building entry if the party is not at your home.

Decide Which Invitation Method(s) to Use

A combination of several will ensure a full house and a successful party.

- ❑ Online – You can easily create invitations and manage RSVPs online using Evite, Eventbrite or other apps.
- ❑ Email – You can send a group email, individual personalized emails or a combination of the two.
- ❑ Paper – Personalize, print, stamp and mail your invitations; print extra copies to hand out face-to-face when applicable.
- ❑ Facebook – If you use Facebook, consider creating a Facebook event in addition to the other methods. It's easy to invite Facebook friends, provide details about the party, keep track of RSVPs and post reminders. You can also include a link to the Facebook event on your Evite or email invitations.
- ❑ In person – Use your unstamped paper invitations, or create a simple postcard or a flyer with the relevant details so that you can invite people you know when you see them out and about.
- ❑ C&C list – Ask the Compassion & Choices staff in your state to send an email invitation to supporters in the area to boost attendance and meet other local supporters that you may not know.

Customize Your Invitation

Follow the general structure below, dedicating a concise paragraph to each of the following:

- ❑ Your welcoming statement. Let folks know you thought of them specifically.
- ❑ The details: presentation topic, speakers you've confirmed, date, time and location.
- ❑ Why you support the work of Compassion & Choices and a personal story.
- ❑ Mention that all donations collected at the party will go directly to funding Compassion & Choices' important work.
- ❑ Give instructions for how to RSVP. This will be determined by your invitation method. Whether it's a link to an Evite, a reply to an email or a telephone number, make sure it's clear how to RSVP.

TIP: There are invitation letter templates in the Resources section of this toolkit. Personalize them with your state-specific information and party details.

Encourage People to Give

A successful house party depends on several factors: strategic invitation lists, good planning and helpful volunteers. For the event to be a fundraising success, you have to be prepared to ask your guests to give. These simple steps will help you make a successful ask.

- 1. Clearly state the fundraising goal.** "Tonight our goal is to raise \$2,000 for Compassion & Choices so they can continue to do great work here in our state and around the country."
- 2. Make the first donation.** It's more effective and easier to ask others to do something you've already done. Place your envelope in the bowl, vase or basket you have designated for contribution envelopes.
- 3. Be confident.** Show that you are comfortable asking for their support. This will help increase the number of guests who give, along with the amount they give.
- 4. Make giving easy.** Donation envelopes and checks are great! You may also consider putting a tablet and/or laptop computer open to [Compassion & Choices' donation page](#) at the sign-in table to make giving even easier.

TIP: Although the goal of this toolkit is to provide you with everything you need to host your own house party on behalf of Compassion & Choices, you are not alone! We are eager to support you. If you have any questions, contact the Compassion & Choices field staff working in your state, or email us at volunteer@CompassionAndChoices.org.

After the Party

Complete a few simple tasks to maximize the party's impact.

- ☐ **Give thanks.** Send thank-you emails or hand-written notes to attendees, with a special thanks to those who donated, brought food or helped in other ways. If you used an invitation platform like Evite, you can easily generate thank-you emails and share photos of the event.

- ❑ **Social-ize your event.** If you promoted the event on Facebook or other social media, post some photos (with permission of your guests) to keep the momentum going — who knows, you might inspire a friend in another city or state to get involved and host an event of their own!
- ❑ **Follow up.** Be sure to follow up with the people who were no-shows and those who RSVPed no. Get them a packet of information, a donation envelope and any other materials you provided other guests.
- ❑ **Send in contributions and lists.** Within three days, please send your invitation, RSVP and check-in lists, and donations to Compassion & Choices' Gift Processing Center: PO Box 485, Etna, NH 03750-0485
- ❑ **Repeat annually!** Consider having an annual event to share the news and updated information about Compassion & Choices and our achievements, with the help of volunteers like you! You may build an annual event around the following:
 - The anniversary of the passage date of your state law.
 - The anniversary of the effective date of your state law.
 - The anniversary of a loved one's death or diagnosis.
 - The anniversary of your diagnosis (if applicable).
 - National Healthcare Decisions Day (April 16).
 - World Alzheimer's Day (September 2).
 - World Hospice and Palliative Care Day (the second Saturday of October).
 - The anniversary of Brittany Maynard using medical aid in dying (November 1).
 - Día de los Muertos (November 2).
 - Watching the Annual Signature Event (October).

Let Us Know About Your Activity!

Visit the Volunteer Resource Center and log your activity so that we can celebrate and count it! [Our online tool](#) is the best way to help us track all the ways volunteers across the country are taking action.

Thank You

Once again, we're so grateful that you've chosen Compassion & Choices as a place to invest your time, energy and talent as a volunteer.

Resources:

Sample Program Outline

Here is an example outline for your house party. House parties can start at any time, so consider a brunch slot, cocktail evening hour, Saturday tea time or any time that suits you and your guests. Feel free to have an event that is longer than two hours, according to your special guests, video or other factors.

- 6:00 p.m.** Greet, welcome and mingle. Ensure guests sign in and get a name tag.
- 6:30 p.m.** Direct guests to assemble for the presentation.
- 6:45 p.m.** Host welcomes everyone and begins the program, shares their story, explains their support for Compassion & Choices, and introduces the featured speaker or other presentation options (remote speaker, short video, etc.).
 - The featured speaker and/or other presentation option.
 - Leave some time for Q&A and discussion.
 - Conclude with your invitation to donate to Compassion & Choices.
- 7:30 p.m.** Collect envelopes and thank guests for their support.
- 8:00 p.m.** Thank everyone for coming and wrap it up!

Sample Printed Program for Guests

**Welcome to AJ's Annual Birthday
House Party supporting
Compassion & Choices!
October 18, 2020, 6-8 p.m.**

6:00 Welcome, refreshments and mingle

6:30 Screening of Brittany's story (7 mins.)

- Special remarks by Dr. Eric Kress
- Special remarks by AJ Hetzler

7:00 Discussion & Q/A and refreshments

8:00 Conclude

Thanks for coming tonight and for supporting
the work of
Compassion & Choices!
www.compassionandchoices.org

Sign-In Sheet Template

[Click to download a printable PDF sign up sheet.](#)

House Party Timeline and Checklist

4 - 6 Weeks Prior

- Work with Compassion & Choices staff to confirm a featured speaker or storyteller, if applicable.
- Develop an invitation list from your personal network.
- Consider whether you would like to open your party to nearby supporters through a Compassion & Choices Eblast, and contact your Compassion & Choices field staff.
- Start having conversations about your event with your personal network.
- Develop invitation details and messaging using the templates provided in the Resources section of this toolkit.
- Start inviting people up to four weeks prior to your event.

3 - 4 Weeks Prior

- Send out Evite.com, email and/or Facebook invitations to your guest list.
- Make a paper invitation that you can print and hand out or mail.
- Make arrangements to rent a microphone if you are expecting more than 40 guests.
- Reach out to your Compassion & Choices point of contact *at least two weeks in advance* to request Compassion & Choices materials, fact sheets, pens and other Compassion & Choices branded items.
- Contact Development Services at Compassion & Choices at devoservices@compassionandchoices.org to request donation envelopes.

2 - 3 Weeks Prior

- Start confirming and recording RSVPs.
- Send an Evite, Facebook or email reminder to invitees who have not yet responded.
- Make personal phone calls to your special invitees who have not yet responded.
- Draft an "event program" using the example provided in this appendix.
- Have a meet-and-greet phone conversation with the featured speaker (if applicable).
- Arrange to receive a short bio on the featured speaker (if applicable).

- Contact your Compassion & Choices point person to ask whether there are any campaign efforts underway that your guests can support by signing a letter or petition, or writing to a legislator or committee.

One Week Prior

- Send out another Evite, email or Facebook reminder to all yes and maybe RSVPs.
- Make a few more calls to those who have not yet responded.
- Finalize the “event program” using the example provided in the Resources section.
- Purchase refreshments, flowers and supplies like tissues and name badges as needed.
- Recruit someone to be the person who will check in guests as they arrive.

One Day Prior

- Prepare your RSVP list to check people in.
- Print name badges or have markers for blank name badges.
- Create and print a few copies of the “event program” – one each for the host/cohost, featured speaker and include the biography of the featured speaker (if applicable).
- Make sure you have the donation envelopes and Compassion & Choices materials ready.
- Pick up and test rented microphone (for larger parties).
- Reconfirm with the person who will check in guests at the door.
- Send out one final Evite, Facebook and email reminder with address and parking information to all guests who RSVP'd yes and maybe.

Day of Party

- Arrange the room so that guests can see and hear the host/cohost and featured speaker (screen if applicable).
- Set up a check-in table at the entrance with name badges, RSVP/check-in list and Compassion & Choices materials, and space (or clipboards) for guests to sign support letters/petitions or complete donation envelopes.
- Consider having a tablet or computer for people to use to sign up to volunteer or make donations online.
- Prepare and set out the refreshments, plates and napkins.
- Have a camera/smartphone ready to take pictures.
- Have fun!

After the Party

- ❑ Send thank-you emails or handwritten notes to those who attended, with a special thanks to the guest speaker and those who donated, brought food or otherwise helped with the event.
- ❑ If you promoted the event on Facebook or other social media, post some photos and prompt people to contact you for more information.
- ❑ Please send your invite, RSVP/check-in lists and donations to Compassion & Choices' Gift Processing Center: PO Box 485, Etna, NH 03750-0485. Make a note of the date and location of the party, and your role as host.
- ❑ Be sure to follow up with the people who were no-shows and those who RSVP'd no. Get them a packet of information, a donation envelope and any other materials you provided other guests.