



HOLDING A VIDEO SCREENING

Volunteer Action Network Toolkit

Holding a Video Screening

Hosting a screening is a simple and engaging way to spark conversations with others who are interested specifically in medical aid in dying or other end-of-life issues. This toolkit offers practical guidance for planning a film screening and includes resources as well as general questions to build a discussion on the title you select.

Consider inviting a subject matter expert, a legislator, someone from the medical community, a faith leader or another special guest to boost attendance and conversation. Screenings can also be an opportunity to raise awareness and action around the medical aid-in-dying movement or state legislation. In the pages that follow, we offer tips and tools to help make your video screening a success. A list of titles to consider is on pages 3-4.

What Do I Need to Host a Screening?

Maybe you wouldn't expect it, but it really is easy to host a small screening event in your home or at a local community space. Screening events are popular activities, and there are a variety of productions that are superb launching points for discussion. These tips will get you started.

1. **Choose the Venue.** It could be your living room, a meeting space at the library, a community cinema, a local community center or a senior center. Many facilities, including senior living residences, have perfectly suited spaces that are designed for and used regularly to show videos. A virtual watch party is also available via Zoom.
2. **Choose your title and how you will show the film.** Netflix, Hulu, YouTube and other on-demand channels are an option. Purchasing a DVD; renting movies from Netflix, Amazon, etc.; or renting from your local library are other options. A few titles to consider are listed on pages 3-4.
3. **Match your hardware technology to the movie format.** Make sure you have the appropriate equipment to screen the title you select. Depending on your technology, and if you are expecting a crowd of 20 or more, consider external speakers so that everyone can hear. Test your technology twice before the event! It's good to have a backup plan in case technology fails.
4. **Make your guest list and start inviting.** Use your contacts as a starting base to create an invitation list. Expect about a 30% response rate. To boost attendance, encourage invitees to bring friends or invite others, and to indicate the guest in their RSVP. You can also make your screening open to the public, post flyers on boards and advertise on social media if you wish. Contact the Compassion & Choices staff working in your state and request that

they send an email invitation to supporters in your area if it is open to a larger public audience.

TIP: Opening your event up to the public allows you to reach more people and cast a wider net. Depending on where you promote the screening event, it may also alert the opposition, so be prepared for that during the discussion. Keeping your video screening private assures that you are in control of who attends.

- 5. Get materials.** You can print factsheets from [Compassion & Choices' Resources webpage](#) or order literature and materials *at least two weeks in advance* through the Compassion & Choices staff working in your state, or email info@compassionandchoices.org.
- 6. Count heads.** Try to get a final RSVP list several days before the screening to ensure you have enough refreshments and seating.
- 7. Provide refreshments.** Beverages and light snacks are recommended, but there is no need to spend a bundle on a catering company. Keep it simple.
- 8. Prep the space.** Be sure to have ample seating. Place the screen/TV, refreshments and materials in a way so that if people get up for refreshments, to use the restroom, to take a break or to get materials, they won't block the view of the screen for others.
- 9. Provide directions.** Include where to park or other relevant logistics in your event invitation. Also, provide contact information in case people get lost.
- 10. Sign in.** Make sure everyone provides an email address — particularly if they come with a friend or heard about the screening on social media — so that you can follow up after the event.
- 11. Take action.** If you're also gathering petition signatures, writing or calling a legislator, or some other advocacy activity, have the necessary materials.
- 12. Go social.** If you use social media to promote your screening, keep the momentum going afterward by posting photos from the event. Be sure to tag Compassion & Choices to help increase your reach and to add photos if possible. Add hashtags like #endoflifeoptions and #medicalaidindying along with our handle to Facebook posts (@compassionandchoices) and tweets (@compandchoices).

What Video Should I Show?

To determine which video to screen, consider your audience, the current status of your state and your objective. If you're heading into the legislative season and working to pass medical aid-in-dying legislation in your state, *The Last Campaign of Governor Booth Gardner* is a great fit. *How to Die in Oregon* is a longstanding favorite on the topic of medical aid in dying. Numerous other titles are good for general discussions about death and dying, but not necessarily focusing on medical aid in dying or a state legislative campaign.

A few titles to consider building a video screening event around are listed below, though it is hardly a comprehensive list. Some titles may be at your local library or available free on YouTube, including the Compassion & Choices YouTube Channel; or other services like Netflix, Hulu, etc.; some may charge a fee or require that you purchase the DVD from the producer or other distribution outlet such as Amazon, PBS, etc.

- ❑ ***Journey Home*** is a recorded webinar of the dynamic summit hosted by the Compassion & Choices African American Leadership Council in Washington, D.C., brought together thought leaders, experts and community members in-person and virtually to empower participants to prepare for life's end. [View the webinar here.](#)
- ❑ ***How to Die in Oregon*** by filmmaker Peter Richardson. This documentary is an intimate, life-affirming, staggeringly powerful portrait of what it means to provide an individual with a full range of end-of-life options. Richardson examines both sides of the Oregon Death With Dignity Act. Release date: November 25, 2011. Documentary. 1 hour 48 minutes. [View the trailer here.](#)
- ❑ ***The Last Campaign of Governor Booth Gardner***, starring Booth Gardner. Filmmaker Daniel Junge follows the medical aid-in-dying ballot initiative in Washington state. Release date: August 1, 2009. HBO2 special Short/Doc. 38 minutes. [View the trailer here.](#)
- ❑ ***Here Awhile***, starring Anna Camp. Terminally ill Anna (Anna Camp) returns to Portland, Oregon, after 15 years to reconnect with her long estranged younger brother Michael (Steven Strait). She reveals to Michael that she plans to end her life utilizing the Oregon Death With Dignity Act. Release Date: October 13, 2019. Drama. 1 hour 25 minutes. [View the trailer and website here.](#)
- ❑ ***The Farewell***, directed by Lulu Wang and starring Awkwafina. In this poignant, award-winning film, Billi's family returns to China under the guise of a fake wedding to stealthily say goodbye to their beloved matriarch — the only person who doesn't know she only has a few weeks to live. Release Date: July 19, 2019. Drama/Comedy. 1 hour 40 minutes. [Watch the trailer on YouTube.](#)

- ❑ ***Being Mortal*** by author and surgeon Atul Gawande, produced by PBS for Frontline: Season 33, Episode 6. In the book and film *Being Mortal*, Gawande explores how doctors care for terminally ill patients. Release date: February 10, 2015. Documentary. 54 minutes. [Here is the link](#) to purchase on YouTube.
- ❑ ***Bob's Choice*** produced by John Sharity and Joseph Huerta at KING TV in Seattle and available on YouTube by HBO. Seattle resident Bob Fuller, 75, shares his journey over the last few months of his life before using medical aid in dying on May 10, 2019. Release date: September 17, 2019. Documentary. 58 minutes. [Here is the link](#) to watch free on YouTube.
- ❑ ***Brittany Maynard's Story With Dan Diaz***, by Compassion & Choices. Twenty-nine year old Brittany Maynard shares the journey of moving with her family to Oregon so that she could access the Death With Dignity law. Release date: October 6, 2014. Short documentary. 7 minutes. [Click here to watch](#).
- ❑ ***Brittany Maynard's Legacy With Dan Diaz***, by Compassion & Choices. Brittany's story and legacy since her death in 2014 are summarized in this powerful story about Dan's work in the movement and the legacy Brittany created. Release date: October 29, 2019. Short documentary: 6 minutes. [Click here to watch](#).

You may also consider titles [from this list](#).

Getting People to Your Screening

Good attendance is critical to a successful screening. A general rule is that your invitation list will generate about a 30% response rate, so try to invite 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
Members of civic organizations
Sports teammates
Faith members

TIP: Beyond your own social circles, invite people in groups that may have a particular interest, such as the staff at a hospice, the board of an organization like the ACLU, or students pursuing a degree in social work or

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.

Managing the Conversation

When you gather friends, neighbors and family members for a video screening, a robust conversation about the issues portrayed is an important and impactful part of your evening. Consider the following tips for a respectful, engaging discussion:

- 1. *Make time.*** Plan your evening and set the tone so that you have plenty of time for discussion, and ample opportunity for your audience to engage and share. Again, the length of the featured film will drive your schedule.
- 2. *Get face to face.*** After the screening, if space allows, have people rearrange their chairs so that the group discussion can take place face to face and everyone can see and hear who is speaking.
- 3. *Read the room.*** Whatever film you choose to screen, it will present topics that can be emotionally challenging, especially for people who may have a new diagnosis, a loved one dying or other firsthand experiences. It's important to be aware of the energy in the room, to be empathetic and to be supportive of those who may be more strongly affected.
- 4. *Provide a retreat.*** If the film or the discussion becomes too intense for your guests, designate a quiet place for someone to take a break or retreat to (the kitchen, porch, etc.) if necessary. Announce this place before the film begins so people are aware of this option. Place boxes of tissue in both the viewing area and the retreat room.
- 5. *Plan an advocacy activity.*** A good group conversation can be paired with a group advocacy activity. Whether advocacy-oriented or educational, audiences will really appreciate the opportunity to apply what they have learned and express how they feel beyond just having a conversation. We provide a couple of examples of activities in the *Resources* section of this toolkit.
- 6. *Share the air.*** Remember to give everyone an opportunity to offer their perspectives. It's important to foster a safe space in which people feel comfortable expressing their views, without fear of contempt or judgment. If someone chooses not to speak, respect that and let them be.

Follow Up

Send a short thank-you email to your guests after the screening. This is also a terrific opportunity to encourage your guests to continue their engagement and support by providing them with a list of specific actions they can take. Invite them to do the following:

1. **Like** Compassion & Choices on Facebook.
2. **Follow** us on Twitter.
3. **Share** posts and/or photos from the event on Facebook and Twitter, including appropriate hashtags and links.
4. **Visit** the Compassion & Choices website and [sign up to volunteer](#) or [share their story](#).
5. **Educate** friends and colleagues about medical aid in dying, end-of-life issues and share Compassion & Choices materials with them.
6. **Donate** to [Compassion & Choices online](#) or with a donation reply envelope.

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

Basic Sign-in Form and Petition

Can both be found and downloaded at the [Volunteer Resource Center](#) landing page.

Screening Timeline and Checklist

4-6 Weeks in Advance: Determine the Details

- ☐ Select a film title and watch it.
- ☐ Determine the date, time and location for your event.
- ☐ If you will have a guest speaker, confirm with them.

- ❑ Gather other important or pertinent details, such as parking directions or building entry.
- ❑ Start building your invitation list.

3-5 Weeks in Advance: Write Your Invitation and Start Inviting

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 for this invitation.
- ❑ The title being screened and any speakers you've confirmed, the date, time and venue. Include a brief synopsis of the title you are screening.
- ❑ Why you support the work of Compassion & Choices and a personal story.
- ❑ Give instructions for how to RSVP. This will be determined by your invitation method. So 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.
- ❑ Develop a method to track RSVPs, make reminder calls and keep inviting those who have not replied.
- ❑ Invitation methods:
 - ❑ Online – You can easily create invitations and manage RSVPs online using Evite, EventBrite or other apps.
 - ❑ Email – You can send a group email, individually personalized emails or a combination of both.
 - ❑ Paper – Personalize, print, stamp and mail your invitations.
 - ❑ In person – Use some of your unstamped invitations or create a simple postcard or flyer with the relevant details so that you can invite people you know when you see them out and about in your community.
 - ❑ Through Compassion & Choices – Work with Compassion & Choices staff working in your state to send a Compassion & Choices message to our list of supporters in your area; if it is open to the public, with enough notice, the event can go on the Compassion & Choices events page.
 - ❑ 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. Include the link to the Facebook event on your Evite or email invitations. Add the event to the state Compassion & Choices Facebook page if there is one.

A combination of several of the above will ensure a well-attended screening.

2-3 Days in Advance: Final Preparation

- ❑ Divide and assign the to-do list with your co host.

- ☐ Shop for refreshments or supplies as needed.
- ☐ Draft your event program or agenda if you are making one (see example on the following page), including any guests invited as subject matter experts or speakers such as a hospice nurse, Compassion & Choices staff, a legislator, etc.
- ☐ Gather your materials or handouts for the information table, if you choose to have one. Please be sure to include a sign-in sheet and/or volunteer sign-up sheet.
- ☐ Test your technology. If you are using a DVD, test it in your own DVD player in advance so you have time to troubleshoot. If you are streaming from Hulu, Netflix, etc., test your internet connection and audio.

Day of The Screening Event

- ☐ Arrange the room and set up a table with materials (agendas, petitions, etc.) and other supplies (pens, tissues).
- ☐ Test your technology again.
- ☐ Put out refreshments, plates and napkins.
- ☐ Take some pictures.
- ☐ Use the question guidelines to start a discussion.
- ☐ Have fun!

After the Screening

- ☐ Follow up with thank-you notes/emails to helpers, and guest speakers.
- ☐ Follow up with new volunteer sign-ups.
- ☐ Send any volunteer names, new supporters and donations to the Compassion & Choices staff working in your state or directly to *Compassion & Choices' Processing Center*: PO Box 485, Etna, NH 03750-0485

Sample Program Agenda

Whether you plan an evening screening or a matinee, the general program to follow is below. How long the program will last is going to be driven by the length of the title you select, the size of the group and how long you and your guests want the discussion to last.

1. Guests arrive, sign in and mingle; refreshments, petitions and materials are available.
2. Host welcomes everyone, makes special guest introductions and outlines the event.
3. Screen the video.

4. Remarks by you and/or a special guest(s).
5. Q&A and discussion.
6. Advocacy activities (if applicable).
7. Allow time for your guests to decompress and chat informally.

Examples of Advocacy Activities – Ask everyone to:

- Write a letter to the editor.
- Write a letter to a legislator or a committee.
- Call a legislator and leave a message.
- Take a picture with each attendee with a placard or statement: *“I’m a New Yorker, and I support end-of-life options”* or *“I support medical aid in dying because ...”* (print several copies and bring black permanent markers for attendees to fill in the blank).
- Add their name to a petition page for you to send in.
- Take a blank petition page to get eight new names to get back to you to send in.
- Visit Compassionandchoices.org and sign up to volunteer.
- Make a donation to Compassion & Choices online or by check/envelope.
- Customize based on what is happening locally.

Sample Printed Program

**Welcome to AJ's home screening of
*Here Awhile***

October 18, 2020, 5-8 p.m.

5:00 Welcome, refreshments and mingle

5:30 Screening of *Here Awhile* (1 Hr, 25 Min)

7:00 Special remarks by Dr. Eric Kress

7:15 Discussion & Q/A and refreshments

8:00 Conclude

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

Post-Screening Discussion General Questions*

Did you learn anything new from the film?

What was the most poignant moment in the movie for you?

How did the ending make you feel?

What did you most relate to in the movie?

Do any of the characters or scenarios remind you of your own life?

Do you think watching this film will help you educate people or help you start the conversation about end-of-life issues and medical aid in dying?

Why is death so hard to talk about openly and seriously?

How did the movie change how you feel about death and dying?

Can you see how a person can support the option of medical aid in dying, even if it is an option they would not seek?

Is your advance directive complete and on file with your providers and copies made for your family and proxies?

Have you talked about death and dying or your end-of-life wishes with your spouse, your children and loved ones, your doctor, or your spiritual advisor?

*Prepare custom questions that are specific to the movie title that you wish to explore.