

Agent Orange Town Hall Meeting

ORGANIZING

Team – Form a team of 5 – 7 people. Assign each member of the team one priority task and one secondary task. This assures that no one is overwhelmed and that all objectives are met. Some tasks can be combined for efficiency. Example: Location, date & time.

TASKS

Before you do anything CONTACT Sandie Wilson, Committee Chair, 734-216-4862, or Mokie Porter in the national office, 1-800-882-1316 ext. 146. Review materials available at <https://vva.org/what-we-do/outreach-programs/agent-orange/>

NEW with Passage of PACT ACT – Due to shifting status of PACT regulations, be prepared to address: federal admission of toxins on military facilities; Gulf War exposures; Children’s Research law; toxic exposures generally; filing new VA claims based on PACT Act.

Location – Choose a location in your area that is centrally located. This encourages the largest number of attendees. Try to find a *no-cost venue*, i.e. community building, college, other VSO meeting place, hotel willing to donate space. Broader scope of meeting opens new partner options.

Date and Time – To maximize attendance, choose a Saturday that has a minimum of competing activities in your community.

Speakers – Find individuals familiar with toxins used by the military. These people do not need to be scientists but should have personal experience with different toxins and their effects. Mokie Porter at the national office can assist you with a list of knowledgeable people in your area, in addition to printed materials. Videos are also available from VVA national office to aid discussion.

Service Benefits Officer – Now that the government has admitted that toxins used in the military are connected to adverse health conditions of veterans and their families, one or more service benefits officer(s) need to be present to inform and assist on how to file claims.

Moderator – A moderator is an important element in the successful presentation of an Agent Orange Town Hall Meeting. A moderator can keep the dialogue moving and focused. This individual can also identify those who want to speak and maintain order.

Media – Press Releases to all media (radio, television, print) are vital to ensuring a good turnout for the event. After the Press Release has been sent or delivered, make personal phone calls to the media (usually the Assignment Editor) and encourage them to assign a reporter/crew to the event. Don’t forget to use “social networks” to spread the word. Facebook, Twitter, and the AgentOrangeZone blog are excellent resources for distribution of the information.

Audio/Visual – Determine your needs and then secure the equipment such as PA, microphones, video camera, etc. Most venues for large groups will have their own A/V equipment but there is a

cost associated with use. Check your chapter or state council for a member who is proficient with a video camera to save money.

Invite elected officials – These are your representatives, and they need to hear your concerns. Urge them or a senior member of their local staff to attend. You can't visit their office in Washington, DC but they can and should be willing to be part of the Agent Orange Town Hall.

Sign-in – Everyone who attends should sign in with name, address, phone number and e-mail address. This provides a database of affected individuals and is a terrific way to continue providing information as it is developed. Attendees should also be given a packet of resource materials, an agenda, and an Evaluation Questionnaire to submit after the meeting.

Funding – Nothing is free so you will need to find a sponsor or a location that is willing to "comp" the meeting space. If you choose to provide coffee or other refreshments understand that hotels typically charge \$40 - \$50 gallon for coffee in these environments. Enlist the support of your local chapter or state council to help underwrite these expenses.

Follow up – One week after the event contact everyone who signs in and ask for their input on the event. Did it meet your expectations? Why or why not? Did you learn anything new? **OR**, distribute an Evaluation Questionnaire with the same questions to submit after the meeting. Collect them at the end and encourage people to send them in to you, at their convenience. Use this resource to develop subsequent meetings and adapt the agenda to address these issues.