



Organizing a forum

We've designed a number of tools to make it easy for groups – or even individuals – to organize forums.

You'll find these resources on our project website (ctjja.org/forum):

- A sample email to invite attendees.
- A sample press release for your local media.
- A poster than you can customize with your time and location.
- A link to the streaming video *Education vs. Incarceration*.
- Sample questions, fact sheets and many other information resources.

Here are some tips to get you started.

- 1. Find a place.** You'll need a large television or projection screen, chairs, a table for literature and a room where it's OK to make a bit of noise during the time your forum is scheduled. Make sure that the building will be open and lit during your forum and that there is parking. Some places that might work: the community room of a house of worship, a school library or auditorium, a town hall meeting room, a library, a senior center.
- 2. Get the word out.** Partnering with an organization that has a mailing list is a great start. You might try the PTA, League of Women Voters or your own faith community. You can also set up a Facebook page for your event and encourage attendees to invite others. Finally, send out a press release to your local Patch.com, newspapers and radio stations. Make sure you send the release to community calendars in your town. These are often maintained by libraries.
- 3. Find a facilitator.** First, contact The Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance at 203-579-2727. The Alliance will provide facilitators for some events, but unfortunately does not have the staff to cover every one. If you need to choose a facilitator from your own networks, look for someone who is comfortable with public speaking and a good listener. Someone who is a bit of a public figure in your community, like a minister, school principal or selectperson, might be able to draw in more people.
- 4. Get RSVPs, but don't count on them.** Some people say they'll attend an event and don't. Others don't RSVP but show up anyway. Often these groups cancel each other out, so an RSVP is still a useful tool to help you plan for logistics.

See *Being a Facilitator* and *The Essentials* for more information