

Community Organizing Toolkit

Welcome to Students Demand Action!

We've developed this toolkit because we recognize a need for a comprehensive guide to help community groups navigate the unique process of organizing a group in their local area.

Organizing in your community has many benefits. Students Demand Action's community-wide groups often draw leaders and members from schools across an area, building a diverse membership that represents the larger community.

Your community group can be the start of a community-wide movement—bringing in new voices to the Students Demand Action movement and creating networks across local schools and organizations.

INSIDE THIS TOOLKIT

PG. 03	Steps to Starting a Students Demand Action Group	PG. 13	Finding a Meeting Location
PG. 05	— FIRST MEETING AGENDA	PG. 14	Group Leadership
PG. 07	Connecting With Your Community	PG. 16	Students Demand Action Resources
PG. 08	Recruiting New Members	PG. 17	— NAVIGATING YOUR RESOURCES



Steps to Starting a Students Demand Action Group

01. REGISTER YOUR STUDENTS DEMAND ACTION GROUP

Registering your group with Students Demand Action is simple and quick. Identify one student to submit a [Start a Students Demand Action Group](#) form. Completing this form lets Students Demand Action staff know that you're forming a group and allows you to gain access to materials, resources, and support that will help you and your group organize and succeed in the gun violence prevention movement!

02. GROUP MEMBERS AND LEADERS COMPLETE VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT FORMS

When one member of your group officially completes their [Volunteer Agreement form](#) (and parental consent form, if they are under 18 years of age), you'll get an email recognizing your group as officially registered with Students Demand Action!

While only one leader needs to complete the form to be officially onboarded as a group, **all leaders and members should submit a [Volunteer Agreement](#)** in order to gain access to all of the resources Students Demand Action has to offer.

03. REVIEW STUDENTS DEMAND ACTION AND EVERYTOWN FOR GUN SAFETY RESOURCES

Students Demand Action has a ton of materials and resources to support you on your organizing journey. These resources include but are not limited to:

- Up-to-date information on upcoming events and campaigns
- Leadership calls and training sessions
- Access to our national communications platform to connect with Student leaders from across the country
- Students Demand Action merch
- Canva templates
- An annual \$250 budget for your group
- [Groundbreaking gun violence research](#)

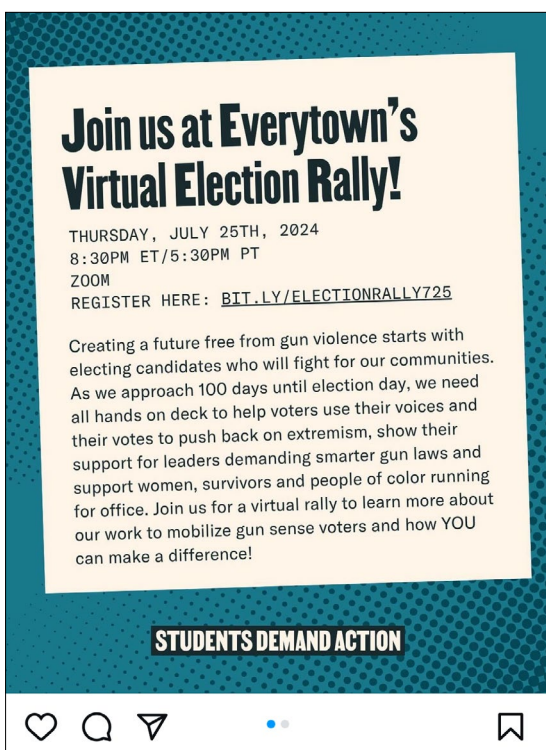
04. SCHEDULE A MEETING WITH YOUR REGIONAL ORGANIZER

Each region (Northeast, South, Midwest, and West) has an Everytown For Gun Safety staff member assigned specifically to support YOU! Regional organizers are experts in grassroots organizing and can help with everything from recruiting new members, planning events, engaging in legislative advocacy, and more!

In this first meeting, you'll get to know each other, learn about the support that Students Demand Action provides to groups, and ask any questions about organizing that you may have. Your regional organizer will be copied on the email that you receive welcoming your group to Students Demand Action.

05. START SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS FOR YOUR GROUP

Instagram, TikTok, and Threads are great places to post updates about your group and can be a great recruitment tool for students in your community. Create an account and use the Students Demand Action Canva templates to make custom graphics.



06. IDENTIFY A MEETING LOCATION OR "HOME BASE" FOR YOUR COMMUNITY GROUP

Community-based Students Demand Action groups should try to meet in person, although Zoom meetings are always an option when needed. Consider reaching out to and researching public spaces in your community to see what options are available for free meeting space. Read more about finding a meeting location on page 13.

07. ORGANIZE YOUR FIRST MEETING

Pick a time and a place and submit your event to the [Register Your Event form](#)! Make sure to pick an accessible time and place, and recruit for the meeting. See page 9 for ideas about how to recruit students to join your club. Your first meeting is an opportunity for you to introduce yourself as a leader and show others in your community what kind of advocacy work Students Demand Action does and why students should care about gun violence prevention.



HERE'S A SAMPLE AGENDA FOR YOUR FIRST MEETING:

1. Leadership Introductions

The leadership team should take time to introduce themselves and their roles to the group.

2. Group Introductions

Depending on the size of the group, allow everyone time to introduce themselves and share one reason why they are interested in getting involved with Students Demand Action. If the group is too large for everyone to have time to introduce themselves, break up into pairs or small groups.

3. Learning and Discussion Activity

Share [EveryStat.org](https://www.everystat.org) and [Everytown's Gun Law Rankings](https://www.everytown.org/gun-law-rankings) with meeting attendees. Allow students 15-20 minutes to browse the resources in pairs or small groups. When the time ends, ask questions to start a discussion. Here are some examples:

- What is one new thing you learned about gun violence in our state?
- What is something that shocked you about gun violence in our state?
- As the statistics appear on EveryStat, what is an issue area of gun violence that you would be interested in working on as a group (ie: firearm suicide prevention, unintentional shooting prevention, intimate partner violence prevention, etc.)?
- Were there any approaches to preventing gun violence in the gun law rankings that you hadn't heard of before?

4. Meeting Wrap-Up

Thank everyone for coming to your meeting and provide a call to action to end the meeting.

Pro Tips:

Always have your next meeting scheduled so your call to action can be "sign up for our next meeting" with specific dates and times.

Make sure to [register your meeting](#) so you have a sign-up link to share.

Encourage meeting attendees to bring a friend to the next meeting!

08. CREATE YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM

It's possible that you had some co-leaders on board with you when you started your group, but it's probable that you need additional support, or students who attended your first meeting are interested in taking on a leadership position within the club! Read more about leadership structures on page 14.

09. PLAN AHEAD

Students Demand Action addresses gun violence in many ways, it would be impossible for one group to do it all! Talk with your group about goals for the year (or the next six months), campaigns you'd like to take action on, and notable dates, seasons, or months. For example: consider state legislative session dates, awareness months, events and moments specific to your school or community, and national moments, like an upcoming general election! Work with your group to strategically map out when your regular meetings will take place and what specific things you want to take action on.

This is a great time to connect with a regional organizer who can point you in the direction of state priority legislation and upcoming important tentpole moments. Stay tuned to Slack, the Demand Action App, National Leadership Calls, and the month-ahead emails for additional information and opportunities to engage in various campaigns.

10. KEEP STUDENTS DEMAND ACTION UPDATED

- Utilize Students Demand Action resources and connect with your regional organizer regularly
- [Register your meetings and events](#)
- Make sure new members and leaders complete the [Volunteer Agreement form](#)
- Post on social media and always tag @StudentsDemand!

If you have additional questions about organizing your group or want to set up a 1:1 meeting with your Students Demand Action regional organizer, don't hesitate to reach out to students@everytown.org





Connecting With Your Community

Odds are Students Demand Action isn't the first or only organization that wants to end gun violence in your community. Make sure you do your research and search for other community groups in your area that have intersecting goals. This might mean searching explicitly for gun violence prevention or community violence prevention groups, but it also can mean finding domestic violence prevention groups, women's shelters, organizations that work to prevent suicide, identity-based organizations, or spaces for LGBTQ+ youth support.

While some communities may have a mix of all of the groups listed above, you should also think strategically about the issues your community faces and the identities most represented by the people in your community. For example, rural, urban, and suburban areas will likely have different community-organized spaces and groups. Additionally, if you live in an area with a large Latinx, Black, Indigenous, or other identity populations, there may be groups that are organized specifically to support them or advocate to resolve the issues the community is facing.

As you work to get your Students Demand Action group up and running, consider reaching out to other organizations for advice and partnership opportunities. Community-based organizations often have incredibly creative approaches to stopping violence and supporting their communities and young organizers can learn so much from experienced activists, community members, and violence preventers. Orienting your group within the community and among existing organizations will only make our movement stronger.

Recruiting New Members

One of the most important steps in getting started is recruitment. Community groups are able to recruit across various spaces – from schools to libraries to community centers – and you have many options to find the best recruitment opportunities for your group.

CONNECT DIGITALLY TO STUDENTS DEMAND ACTION SUPPORTERS IN YOUR AREA

Once you fill out the [Register an Event form](#) which ensures the event is on our radar, you can request Everytown's outreach resources. These resources must be requested via the Outreach Request Google form five days in advance to the time you'd like to begin outreach. This is a great way to extend out to people in your community who have already signed up online to join Students Demand Action or have previously shown interest in our movement.

- **Send an email:** Draft and send an email that includes a call to action or RSVP link. Emails allow freedom for personalization, so you can be as candid as you'd like in discussing your anticipation for your event.
- **Make calls:** Your regional organizer will help create a phone banking script and organize a list of volunteers to contact. Depending on the length of the list and/or your phone banking experience, recruit other Students Demand leaders to help you phone bank.
- **Send texts:** Text banking is easier than ever via the online tool Spoke! Draft the initial text(s) to be sent, submit the information to the outreach request form, and your regional organizer will input it into Spoke.

USE ONLINE SYSTEMS THROUGH SCHOOLS

Many schools have recruitment tools available to registered student groups. Even though your community group is not registered with any specific college or high school, you can still do outreach at various schools in the area and see if they will help advertise your group! Some examples include:

- **Listserv:** a tool that helps you compile email lists to contact a large group of people at once.
- **Campus Calendar:** a central place that allows you to elevate your events to a large audience.
- **Newsletters/Blasts:** submit your event description and RSVP link to student government e-blasts or campus newsletters for publicity that could reach entire student bodies.
- **Campus Newspaper:** reach out to someone on a campus newspaper staff about writing a piece on your community's newest group, or write your own!

SPREAD THE WORD ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a great way to remind your peers about what you're up to while they're scrolling through Instagram, TikTok, or Threads. Follow these tips to make the most of these platforms:

- **Interact with other student or local groups and local organizations:** Follow and share posts from other student and local organizations so that they'll do the same for your group. Many groups focus on issues that intersect with gun violence prevention and have members who will also be interested in joining Students Demand Action. As a community group, you can connect with various groups across your community!
- **Join Facebook groups:** Facebook is huge in broader communities, and it's where a lot of people go for information about getting involved in their local area. Join local community Facebook groups or Facebook groups for schools in your area that your members attend and advertise your group!
- **Inform followers of your advocacy:** Create posts that educate followers on your work to end gun violence in your community, and encourage them to learn more or get involved by joining your Students Demand Action group!

RECRUIT THROUGH CLASSES

Academic spaces are all about collaboration and continuous learning. As a community group, you have the chance to recruit in a multitude of classrooms! Oftentimes, professors and teachers are open to students using classes as a place for recruitment for their student group, particularly if the class is closely related to areas in which Students Demand Action works. Here are two ways to use classes to your advantage:

- **Ask the teacher if you can make a short pitch** for Students Demand Action to your classmates. This could be done before class, immediately afterward, or during mid-class breaks. Have flyers handy, mention upcoming events or membership meetings, and tell everyone to text STUDENTS to 644-33*.
- **Attend events or panels** about topics that cover or intersect with gun violence prevention and pass out information about your group's next event before or after the discussion.
- **Leave physical materials with teachers** to hang up in their classroom and distribute to students.

**By texting, you agree to receive communications to your phone number from Everytown organizations. Msg freq varies. STOP to quit. Msg & data rates may apply. [everytown.org/terms](https://www.everytown.org/terms)*

PARTNER WITH OTHER CLUBS OR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Most students are involved in more than one club, and oftentimes, they're interested in a range of interrelated issues. Below are some ways to tap into the existing population that can be found in other organizations:

- **Co-host an event with another club** or a local community organization to get to know its members and their mission. Students who have heard about your Students Demand Action group may be more likely to attend a meeting or help with another event.
- **Form a coalition with other clubs or organizations** in your area to find ways to collaborate and promote gun violence prevention. You can join them in promoting each other's events in a calendar or an all-group newsletter to share each other's events in one place. This is an actionable way to establish a cooperative relationship with the community, develop a consolidated resource for students with specific interests to find opportunities that appeal to them and increase your group's visibility.

SET UP A TABLE

Tabling is one of the most tried and true ways to recruit.

- **Set up a table in outside areas that have high traffic** such as shopping malls, libraries, and college or high school campuses near you. You can also go to local community centers or events and set up a table. Have your laptop ready for students to RSVP to your event or sign up for your email list, and hand out the bracelets, buttons, or stickers that come in the welcome package to show your appreciation. Have a short pitch prepared about what SDA is, and use the [Find an Event tool](#) to show interested people what kind of work real groups are doing around the country.

PUBLICIZE ON COMMUNITY BOARDS

Many local coffee shops, libraries, or college campuses have physical boards where people can put up posters. Be sure your poster features information such as your next meeting date, time, and location, or social media. Be careful in sharing your personal contact information.

RECRUIT YOUR FRIENDS (+ YOUR FRIENDS' FRIENDS)

Leveraging interpersonal relationships is a great foundation upon which to start a group.

- After meetings, always ask members to bring a new friend to your next meeting as a way to increase participation, but be cautious not to use this as your only recruitment method, as you want to foster an open, inclusive space for everyone interested in gun violence prevention.

CONNECT WITH MOMS DEMAND ACTION

Connect with your local Moms Demand Action chapter or liaison (yourstatename@momschapterleaders.org) and see if they are aware of local community partners to reach out to or community spaces to recruit in. You can even host a joint event with your local Moms Demand Action group and recruit local students to attend!



THINGS TO REMEMBER

Every community is different.

Different communities have different cultures and platforms. If the resources and strategies provided in this toolkit aren't useful for your specific group, reach out to other local community organizers or club leaders to find the best recruitment methods for your community.

Never stop networking.

Your group is never done growing, so you should never stop recruiting. Networking opportunities can happen at any moment, so always be prepared to share your message at an event, in a class, or even when you're out in the community. New members can be found anywhere at any time!

Keep going.

Recruitment can be hard. It can be intimidating to put yourself out there and approach people you don't know. If you don't see immediate results, don't get discouraged — your brand new group is out there somewhere and you can always reach out to be connected to a student leader at another campus or community near you.

Have fun.

Half the appeal of a community group is the opportunity it gives students across the community a chance to come together and take action. Make sure your group comes across as a welcoming, inclusive space for students to share their voice and make an impact on their community to end gun violence. Never forget that your group can make a difference and still have fun!



Finding a Meeting Location

Community groups have the unique task of finding a public meeting location. This can seem like a challenge, but be confident that there will be spaces willing to allow student activists to work together in person. Importantly, though, be sure that you respect the space by leaving it as you found it (or better). Here are location ideas to get your search starting:

- **Library Conference Rooms.** Libraries oftentimes allow people to book meeting or study rooms in advance and at no cost.
- **Open Rooms in Places of Worship.** Reach out to a local place of worship to determine if students can congregate in their space when no other activities or religious observation is ongoing.
- **City Halls/Board of Education Offices/Local Government Buildings.** Especially if you have an established relationship with a member of the local government or board, reach out regarding using an open space at that location.
- **Community Centers.** Many localities have recreation or community centers that are happy to discuss booking a meeting space for your events.
- **College Campuses.** Some colleges have free lecture halls or rooms where your group can look into booking.

Many other groups in your community may also meet in person. Do research on what other organizations and grassroots groups exist in your community—many will be supportive of your organizing work and may have ideas of places to meet or connections with staff at community spaces who support them in securing meeting rooms. Your regional organizer can support you in doing this research if you ask them!

Group Leadership

Starting a group from scratch may seem daunting, but it's easier if you find ways to delegate. Establishing your leadership team is a good way to get your group up and running. You may find that you want to have an executive board before you seek approval, or you might want to make leadership opportunities available at your first meeting. There's no right formula, so explore whatever is best for your community.

ONBOARDING NEW LEADERS

When growing your leadership team, it's important to have student leaders register as official leaders with Students Demand Action by completing the [Volunteer Agreement form](#). Once new student leaders complete the Volunteer Agreement and their parents or legal guardians complete a permission slip (if they are under 18—we will provide the permission slip upon completion of the volunteer agreement), they'll gain access to National Students Demand Action Slack, GSUo, National Leadership Calls, and more.

Having all of your group leaders plugged into these resources ensures that your group will have the most up-to-date information on campaigns and materials at all times, and allows the Students Demand Action team to get to know your group and help support your work.

While only one leader needs to complete the form to be officially onboarded as a group, **all leaders and members should submit a [Volunteer Agreement](#)** in order to gain access to all of the resources Students Demand Action has to offer.

GROUP LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

Students Demand Action uses a distributed leadership model of organizing which allows for groups to have as many students as they wish to serve as leaders in the group. We believe that increasing our number of student leaders working together on gun violence prevention directly strengthens our movement by capitalizing on each student's individual talents.

We also refrain from assigning hierarchy to leadership roles, such as president or vice president, eliminating the need for elections and competition. Students Demand Action is committed to creating a collaborative, non-competitive environment, where everyone's voices and experiences are valued.

These are some suggested roles for your community group:

- Group Leader(s)
- Recruitment Lead(s)
- Events Lead(s)
- Social Media Lead(s)
- Advocacy/Legislative Lead(s)
- Community Outreach Lead(s)

Each of these roles can have multiple co-leaders within them. Further, these aren't the only leadership roles you can create. Think about the types of meetings, events, and actions that your group wants to do, and think strategically about the type of leadership needed to make each of those things happen.

When assigning leadership roles, consider individuals' interests, skills and goals, and remember that having a leadership role in a club is an opportunity to develop as a leader and learn new skills—students don't have to be experts to advocate for gun violence prevention!



Equity and Inclusion for Students Demand Action Leaders

Students Demand Action leaders are provided with resources, trainings, and everyone is expected to learn and develop the following skill set:

- Understanding how stereotypes, bias, and forms of racism in America (including structural racism, implicit bias, gender bias, religious bias, ageism, and bias based on gender identity or sexual orientation) impact our society and an ability to articulate the connection between these large societal issues and the disproportionate impact of gun violence on specific demographic groups in America.
- Understanding how dynamics of power, voice, and privilege impact one-on-one and group interactions, and a commitment to using power, voice, and privilege to make our movement more equitable.
- A commitment to share direct feedback with others and listen to and implement feedback given.
- Commitment to building diverse teams and learning management skills for equity and inclusion.
- Ability to help other people in our movement develop this same skill set and knowledge base. As with all other organizing skills the expectation is that over time leaders would also develop the ability to train other volunteers in these areas.

Students Demand Action Resources

ABOUT STUDENTS DEMAND ACTION

- Our website: StudentsDemandAction.org
- [Values statement](#)

FOLLOW US

- @StudentsDemand on [Instagram](#)
- @StudentsDemand on [Threads](#)
- @StudentsDemand on [TikTok](#)

TAKE ACTION

- [Start a Group](#)
- [Join the Text Team](#)
- [Join the Calling Team](#)
- [Find Students Demand Action events](#)

TEXT KEYWORDS

- Text **STUDENTS** to 644-33*
Join Students Demand Action
- Text **GROUP** to 644-33*
Start a Students Demand Action group
- Text **FUTURE** to 644-33*
Register to vote

RESOURCES FOR LEADERS

- [Gun Sense University Online](#)
username: your email
password: demandaction
- [New Leader Onboarding](#)
- [Join an Affinity Group](#)
- Students Demand Action's national Slack workspace

EVENT TOOLS

- [Register an Event](#)
- [How to Plan an SDA Event](#)
- [Event Host Guide](#)
- [Outreach and Recruitment Request form](#)
- [Guest Speaker Request form](#)

MEDIA + COMMUNICATIONS

- Take a media training with the Everytown Communications team. Keep an eye out for upcoming trainings!
- Email students@everytown.org or reach out to your regional organizer with press questions.

MERCH + BUDGETS

- [Order T-shirts](#)
- [Expense Requests](#)
(Merch, Printing, Food, Supplies)

PUBLIC MATERIALS FOR ALL STUDENTS

- [Black Students Organizing webpage](#)
- [Everytown Research](#)
- [EveryStat](#)
- [Gun Law Rankings](#)
- [CityGRIP](#)
- [School Safety Hub](#)
- [Elections HQ](#)

PERMISSION SLIPS/COMPLIANCE

- [Volunteer Agreement](#)
- [Code of Conduct](#)

**By texting, you agree to receive communications to your phone number from Everytown organizations. Msg freq varies. STOP to quit. Msg & data rates may apply. everytown.org/terms*

Navigating Your Resources

STUDENTS DEMAND ACTION SLACK

Slack is a communication tool with different channels that cover different topics. The Students Demand Action Slack is the primary form of communication groups use to communicate with one another and the best place to get the most up to date information and connect with other Students Demand Action volunteers from across your state or across the country. The best channels for you to join at first are your regional and state channels. All state channels are listed like so: #region-state, e.g. #midwest-colorado.

LEADERSHIP CALLS

On National Leadership Calls, Organizing Board Members share recent highlights and important news and help students connect. These calls are a great way to hear about upcoming events, collect ideas from other groups, and learn about new campaigns.

WORKSHOPS

Our Students Demand Action National Training Team leads trainings several times a month. Upcoming trainings will be posted in Slack and the month ahead email!

GUN SENSE UNIVERSITY ONLINE

GSUo is Students Demand Action's online training platform where you can find toolkits and trainings that guide you in your advocacy and leadership development. This is a great place to look for new ideas and materials to present at your meetings, or resources to plan your events and learn how to best utilize our tools.

RECRUITMENT

After your event is submitted and approved, you can request a text bank, phone bank or email to contact people in your area. These tools allow us to message people in our network to invite them to your event.

BUDGET

All groups receive an annual budget of \$250. Groups use their budget to print flyers, order a large SDA Banner, order food for their meetings, restock Students Demand Action merch, or buy materials for their events. Your budget refreshes every January.

THE MONTH AHEAD

We send out our monthly newsletter, the month ahead, at the beginning of each month, with all the information you need on upcoming Students Demand Action campaigns, calls (national leadership calls, workshops, etc.), and more. Make sure to check your inbox, you won't want to miss it!

WELCOME KIT

Once your group is approved, you'll receive a package in the mail with materials such as Students Demand Action t-shirts, placards, buttons, and stickers.

AFFINITY GROUPS

Affinity groups are a space for Students Demand Action leaders and team members who share an identity to meet, build community, brainstorm initiatives, and work together.