

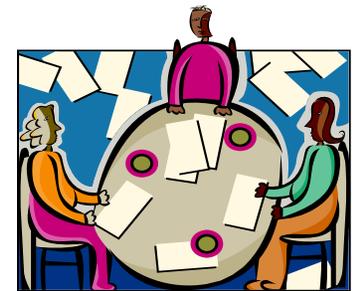
*ABA  
Commission  
On  
Youth at Risk*



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*Commission  
On  
Youth at Risk*



How to Plan  
a Roundtable Meeting  
on Youth at Risk

## How to Plan a Roundtable Meeting on Youth at Risk

So, you're interested in convening a meeting of people in your area who are knowledgeable about the needs of at-risk youth. Where do you begin?

### The Basics

These meetings are a fast and efficient way for the ABA to begin gathering information about what is being done for at-risk youth in a particular community, what else is needed, and how lawyers can help. Attendees exchange information, broaden their knowledge of services in their community, and make new contacts. At the same time, we can educate a wide range of service providers about the work of the ABA Commission on Youth at Risk and enlist their support in our efforts.

### The Logistics

To ensure that there is time for meaningful discussion, it's best to limit the number of attendees to fewer than 20. Plan for the program to last three to four hours, beginning with either a continental breakfast or lunch. Find a sponsor to serve as host for the meeting who will provide the site, pay for the food, and donate other (generally in-kind) services. If your state or local bar association is not able to sponsor the meeting, consider asking a local law firm with ABA ties or your local juvenile court.

When selecting a meeting space, look for a conference room or other room with a setup conducive to a discussion among equals. A conference table or "open square" configuration works better than theater or classroom-style seating. At the meeting you will need to provide an agenda, the ABA handouts, nametags, place cards, and a roster of contact information for all attendees.

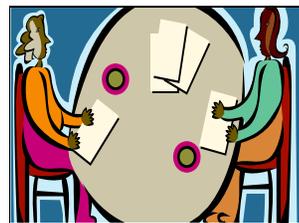
### Who's Invited?

Use your contacts in the legal community to formulate your Roundtable Meeting group. Start with your chief judge and lawyers who represent children

before the juvenile court. Some bar associations also have projects that target at-risk youth. The ABA Young Lawyers Division has focused on child-related projects recently, and many of its affiliates have initiated projects in this area. Your professional contacts can give you leads to other invitees, such as social services workers and child welfare authorities.

Invite local representatives of national organizations such as Boys & Girls Clubs, Boy and Girl Scouts USA, and 100 Black Men. The Commission on Youth at Risk is working with many of these organizations on the national level and may be able to provide you with the name of a local contact.

You'll also want to include representatives of programs that target a subset of the at-risk population (e.g., truants, gangs, juvenile offenders, pregnant teens, etc.) Make a special effort to reach out to the education community—a school board member, principal or school social worker—and to faith-based communities.



Don't forget about minority communities and organizations that serve them. Your local minority bar associations can provide information about services to their communities and can recommend representatives who can join your Roundtable Meeting.

Ask for one representative from each entity. Try to strike a balance between the decision makers—executive directors and policy makers for programs targeting at-risk youth—and those who work in the trenches, who might be the first to become aware of emerging needs or trends.

### Extend the Invitation

When you have developed your list of invitees, it's time to extend invitations to the meeting. While a telephone call to those you know is always the best way to issue invitations, experience has shown that e-mail is an acceptable substitute. If you get a positive response, follow up with a more formal letter of invitation that explains this project in more detail and

asks for their participation. You may be surprised to find that many professionals who work with at-risk youth are enthusiastic at the prospect of enlisting ABA members in these efforts.

Encourage attendees to bring handouts or other information about their program. Finally, send a reminder e-mail the day before the meeting to ensure maximum attendance.

### At the Meeting

Roundtable Meetings are very informal. When everyone arrives, describe ongoing ABA efforts in the area of youth at risk and the work of the Commission. Allow attendees to introduce themselves and provide a brief (5-minute) description of their program. Ask attendees to discuss the unmet needs of at-risk youth, focusing first on the local community and then on the national level. Finally, have attendees brainstorm about how lawyers can help meet the needs by developing policy, providing access to legal services, or otherwise focusing attention in a particular area of need. End the meeting by reminding everyone to support the ABA Commission on Youth at Risk and its initiatives by visiting the ABA's website ([www.abanet.org/initiatives/youthatrisk/home.html](http://www.abanet.org/initiatives/youthatrisk/home.html)) and inputting information about existing programs.

### Follow-up

Remember to mail out thank you notes to all attendees within one week following the Roundtable Meeting. We also ask that you send participants' contact information, as well as copies of your meeting agenda and materials distributed to the American Bar Association in care of:

*Craig Johnson*  
ABA Division for Public Education  
321 N. Clark Street, 20<sup>th</sup> Floor, Chicago, IL 60610  
(or send via email to [JohnsonC@staff.abanet.org](mailto:JohnsonC@staff.abanet.org))

Participants' contact information will be added to the Commission's database and list serve, which will be used to share on-going updates over the next year. Organizational information will be posted to the Commission's web site, and will include live links.