



How to Put On A Concert

A great way to reach young adults or your college peers about mental health issues is to put on a music concert. A concert can bring in people who aren't normally open to mental health messages by providing entertainment. Also, it's a way to raise money for your organization or benefit *mpower*.

The following resource includes overviews and specifics on how to effectively host a concert.

A.) Establish the Goal

1. Set the Goal and Create a Theme: The first steps in putting on a concert are to define your target audience, the goals of the concert (e.g. financial, educational), the message you want to promote and to select a working committee to oversee the event's production. Depending on the specific mental health needs of your community or recent trends and events, such as a suicide or a mental health policy issue, you will need to determine the focus of the event and come up with a working title, i.e. "The MHA of Louisville Presents a Concert to Raise Awareness About College Depression."

2. Form a Concert Committee: Next, put together a committee to help put on the event. Invite local youth or college students to participate. You will need several folks to assist you with:

- booking the talent
- obtaining a venue
- promoting the concert
- running the show

B.) Selecting the Artists

1. Determine the Type of Concert: Decide the genre of music that will attract your target audience and which artists will best promote the goals of the concert. It is preferable to include performers that have a vested interest in mental health or are at least sympathetic to the issues.

2. Working With Bands and Management Companies: In working with local and national acts, you will need to coordinate the specifics of the concert with the artist or their management company well before the day of the concert. If your concert is a benefit, the artist should either play for free or at a reduced rate. It is a good idea to reassure the artist that you will reimburse

them for their costs, which can include sound, travel, food and lodging. The artists' accommodations and special needs are usually defined in the "rider" section of their contract. While some artists and local bands choose not to work with contracts, be mindful of their needs.

3. Sweat the Details: Ensure that everyone is in agreement with the concert specifics well before the event and you will be less likely to encounter any surprises or misunderstandings on the day of the show. Be sure to establish the following details:

- Load-in times for the venue
- The line up of the bands
- Sound check times
- Band set times
- Opening of the doors
- Age restrictions (all ages, 18+ or 21+)
- Ticket prices

C.) Choosing a Venue/Determining Costs

1. Find a Location: For concerts with well-known artists, larger clubs and venues are preferable. For smaller sized events, look for sites on college campuses, VFW halls, coffee houses, youth centers, local clubs and bars. All ages shows are the best way to go for youth-oriented bands. Clubs and bars with an age limit should only be considered if you plan to target an adult crowd. Regardless of the venue, there are several costs to take into consideration before making a decision.

2. Negotiating With A Venue: Renting a venue, staffing it and providing sound (a public address system and engineer) cost money. Some venues charge a flat fee while others will take a percentage off of the door. Ideally, you will want to choose a venue that will donate the use of their space and staff for free. Be wary of venues that want to charge a percentage off the door that exceeds 50%. Also, if a venue has a bar, some places will ask for a bar guarantee. In other words, if a bar demands a guarantee of \$500, but they only make \$400 on food and drinks, the remaining \$100 comes out of the evening's proceeds.

3. Sound Systems: Some venues may include the cost of sound and others may not. In general, smaller venues have their own system while larger venues usually rent the PA from an outside company. Depending on the size of the event, sound can run from \$100 to \$5,000 and up. If you need to hire a sound crew be sure to emphasize the event is to promote mental health awareness. Some sound companies will cut their prices to accommodate your budget.

4. Security: Another important factor to hosting a successful event is providing appropriate security. Like sound, venues may or may not include

the cost of a security service. Depending on the type of concert you are holding it may be prudent to advise the security service on how to approach people with mental illness in case a situation develops.

5. Finances: Once you have figured out the basic costs and have obtained a line up for the evening, you will need to determine the price of the ticket. To do this, estimate the number of people the bands will draw, compare it with the cost associated with putting on the show and determine the price of entry to meet your financial goal. Keep in mind that price of the ticket can also affect the draw. For example, if you are working with a band that usually charges \$10 a head but find you need to charge \$20 to met your financial goal, chances are that less people will attend the event. On the other hand, charging less than what the band usually does rarely increases the number of people who will go to see them.

When setting up a show you will often find that the event doesn't come together in the order described above. Sometimes you have to work backward by obtaining a venue and a date and then recruiting the talent that will fill the venue. Also, do your best to make sure the venue is compatible with the bands' draw. A full venue makes for the best concert atmosphere.

D.) Promotion

1. Flyers and Hand Bills: To have a successful concert, you must adequately promote the event. Often bands will provide you with tour posters and promotional CD's for you to post in your local record stores and establishments. In addition, it is always a good idea to create your own flyers for the show. A great way to get the word out is to hand the flyers out at other concerts where you know the crowd will have an interest in the bands that are playing your show. Great places to flyer include:

- Clubs
- Bars
- Community centers
- College Campuses: Student Unions, Dining Halls, Dorms
- Record and CD stores
- Skateboard/surf/bike shops
- Coffee Shops
- Malls
- Book/Comic Book Stores

2. Advertising and Media Exposure: If you have built a promotional budget into your finances be sure to take out an advertisement in your local newspapers and magazines. You can also submit your event to local newspapers and radio stations for their community calendars. You may also want to record an advertisement for the radio, or even set up an interview for the band with local media in order to plug the event and the cause of the concert. Often you can work with the band's management company, record

label or publicist to accomplish these goals. Always invite local reporters to the concert, often the entertainment pages of the local paper will run a review of the show.

3. Street Teams: Another good approach to spreading the word is to establish a "street team." A street team is a group of individuals who volunteer and are willing to help pass out the flyers and put up posters. It is generally good politics to offer certain perks to those who volunteer to be on the street team. Consider offering members of the street team a free pass to the event, backstage access or free merchandise. See our fact sheet on "Setting Up A Street Team" for more details.

E.) The Day of the Event

1. Set a Schedule for the Day: If you have planned well and advertised the show properly, the day of the concert should run smoothly. Artists should be given ample time to load-in and perform a sound-check. There should be a section allotted to the artists as well as any event sponsors to set up merchandise, mailing list sign-ups, as well as informative literature regarding the cause you are benefiting or raising awareness for. Band order, as mentioned earlier, should be predetermined so that the bands set times will be on schedule. Touring bands often come with tour managers who will assist you in ensuring everything runs smoothly.

2. Get the Message Out: A good way to ensure that the message of the concert is heard is to have guest speaker(s) present at the concert. It is a good idea for a speaker to introduce the headlining artist and to briefly discuss issues relevant to the concert.

3. Backstage: Most venues are usually equipped with back stage areas. These areas should accommodate the performers and staff with refreshments, such as food, sodas, coffee and water (or whatever else that may have been stipulated in the rider of the contract).

4. After the Show: Once the show is over, it is your responsibility to compensate the artists, or their managers, the club, staff, sound company and security. It is a good idea to collect the money from the door just after the headlining act has started their set and find a quiet place to calculate the take of the door and expenses you need to take care of.

5. Follow Up: In the days following the concert, be sure to contact the artist and express your gratitude. Let them know how many people attended the show, how much money was raised for your cause, and provide them with any published reviews of the show.

Shoot us an email at mpower@nmha.org to let us know what you're planning. Good luck and have fun!!