



## SLEEP OUT AMERICA: YOUR TOOL KIT

Signing up is the biggest step of all. You made the decision to take action and change the lives of homeless youth across the nation. Now the easy (and fun!) work begins!

### SHARING YOUR SLEEP OUT

We're counting on every participant to get the word out about our mission and to spread the word amongst your community – whether that be neighbors, family, roommates, classmates, fellow club or organization members, colleagues, or really anyone open to a conversation in which you get to choose the topic! Spread the word about Sleep Out America with these easy tips and tools:

**Use our pre-written emails** in your Participant Dashboard to send messages inviting your network to join you in your Sleep Out. Is your community spread out? There's no need for everyone to Sleep Out in the same place – a group can be made up of folks from every corner of the country (or world!).

It takes less than 2 minutes to post on Facebook or send a tweet. Use our sample text below. Just copy and paste!

*On November 16th I'm sleeping out so homeless youth don't have to. I'm joining a group from \_\_\_\_\_ and we're joining a movement of people from coast to-coast to step out of our homes – and comfort zones – to sleep outside in support of those who have no choice. Sleep Out America will help Covenant House bring shelter to young people who have no place else to turn. You can sleep out anywhere you choose, on your own, with your family and friends or with a group like me. Will you join us in person or in solidarity? Sign up today at [sleepoutamerica.org](http://sleepoutamerica.org).*

**Download a flyer.** Print and post the **Sleep Out America flyer** anywhere you can think of to help us get the word out:

- Your company (offices, meeting rooms, hallways, break rooms)
- Your organization (religious, community, other)
- Coffee shop bulletin boards
- Local businesses (gyms, dry cleaners)
- Around the neighborhood!

### Consider setting up an official Sleep Out America Group.

If you haven't already, you can set up an official group and receive a special group webpage where individuals can register to join or donate to the group directly.

- A. If you haven't registered, **do so today** and choose "start a group"
- B. If you have registered, just **click** to email us and we'll switch you to a group registration!

## FUNDRAISING

Sleep Out America is primarily a fundraising event. We ask that each participant raise at least \$50 and, if you're fundraising as a group, that each group get at least 25 donations to help support Covenant House's life-changing services. Start fundraising with these tips and tools:

### Step 1: Determine Corporate Support

Ask your HR department or supervisor how you might go about obtaining a corporate donation for your group. TIP: Ask for a large amount, think of your company as the "sponsor" of your group and remind them they'll get the tax receipt!

### Step 2: Determine Your Fundraising Strategy!

Will you fundraise using the group page or will your group members each fundraise individually? Tip: Groups raise the most when members fundraise individually! Customize your fundraising pages accordingly.

### Step 3: Use Your Fundraising Page(s)!

When you registered, we automatically created a fundraising page for you. Right now that page is pretty generic, so your first step is to customize it so that it reflects your commitment to helping homeless kids. Add a photo and get the gang together to write a personalized note explaining why you are participating in Sleep Out America

### Step 4: Quick and easy way to cast a wide net? Post on Social!

Post every week on Facebook or send a tweet letting your social contacts know what you're taking on. Use our sample text below or our full list of [ready to share content options](#), and don't forget to include a link to your fundraising page!

*Did you know that nearly 2 million kids in America will face homelessness this year? On November 16th I'm going to do something about this. I'm Sleeping Out so homeless youth don't have to. Will you support me with a donation of any size? Your contribution will help provide meals, a night of care in a shelter, and save kids from the dangers of a life on the streets. Donate (or join me!) to my Sleep Out at [insert your fundraising page link here].*

### Step 5: Make a contact list

Everyone likes to hear about good work being done, so don't hesitate to include everyone. Remember, you're aiming to get donations from at least 15 unique people!

- Group 1: The circle of people closest to you in the world
- Group 2: Friends and neighbors whom you see often and share common values
- Group 3: Everyone else on your contact list with whom you can share your message about Sleep Out America (teachers, coaches, and youth group leaders)

### Step 6: Send a donation ask

In your Participant Dashboard we've got pre-written asks you can use or you can create your own. You can email donors directly from your Dashboard or send a note through your own email account.

## PREPARING FOR YOUR SLEEP OUT

We want your group to have a safe, meaningful, and impactful experience, and we know you do too. We put together a short list of things to do before the Sleep Out America night to help your group make the most of the night.

**Arm yourself with information.** It can be hard to comprehend the hardships that our youth endure. Learn more about what Covenant House does by reading some [statistics and stories](#).

**Kids in your group? Talk with them about about homelessness and community service.** A good place to start is gauging how much your kids understand about homelessness. Ask them what the word means to them, and what they think of when they think of homeless people. What about homeless kids? Talk about the reality that terrible things can happen to good people. It can be hard to comprehend the hardships that our youth endure. Share your own feelings, and start an interactive discussion about youth homelessness and what [Covenant House](#) does by reading some [statistics and stories](#). Some kids might not know why non-profit organizations need to raise money, or understand how even small donations can make a difference. At Covenant House, for example, \$25 can give a homeless kid a new winter coat.

**Review the Sleep Out America schedule** (posted closer to event night) so everyone knows what to expect. On November 16th, you can start your Sleep Out with a short online video or discussion activity. Plan to have access to a computer and Internet before heading outside if you would like to participate in an interactive experience.

**Choose your Sleep Out Location.** Where you Sleep Out is up to you. While homeless youth don't always have options, for the purposes of your Sleep Out we ask only that you choose a safe location and one that you have permission to use. Suggested Sleep Out locations:

- Grounds/parking lot of your company\*
- Grounds/parking lot of your organization\*
- Your backyard
- Your driveway
- Community facility\*
- \*Obtain necessary approvals and permits/permissions

**Gather what you need to Sleep Out.** We recommend that you Sleep Out with only two basic things: a cardboard box and a sleeping bag. This night is meant to be spent in solidarity, so leave any luxury bedding items - things that homeless youth wouldn't have access to - inside. We suggest wearing layers and considering what those in your geographic area may or may not have for a night on the streets.

**What about phones?** We recommend that at least one member of your group bring a smart phone so as to document with photos and continue to upload them to social media to spread our message throughout the night. Additional details will be provided to you prior to November 16th.

**Make a post-Sleep Out plan.** At the end of the night, we will provide groups with materials to help debrief, facilitate discussions about the experience, and continue conversations about advocacy.

**Plan to rejoin us online the morning of November 17th.** As you go through your Sleep Out experience, take note of what it meant to you, what you experienced and how you now feel. We'll be sharing these together online the morning of November 17th. We know it is a work day, so we promise to connect early.

## **QUESTIONS? NEED ASSISTANCE?**

Contact us at [sleepoutamerica@covenanthouse.org](mailto:sleepoutamerica@covenanthouse.org).