the **conversation** project

Hosting and Organizing College/Campus events

The Conversation Project is a national campaign dedicated to helping people talk about their wishes for health care through the end-of-life. Their goal is that everyone's wishes for care will be understood and respected. The Conversation Project (TCP) is for all of us, even those who are in college. The reality is that some people die before they should and college students frequently deal with the deaths of loved ones — at any given time, 22 to 30 percent of college undergraduates are in the first twelve months of grieving the death of a family member or friend.[1] The death of friends or peers can cause college students to reflect on what they might want for their own care through the end-of-life. TCP events can be extremely successful on college campuses to inspire students to start thinking about health care wishes through the end-of-life, early and often. To support student leaders, or others who want to host a TCP event on their campus, TCP has provided sample event materials.

Document Aim: This document is designed to provide student organizers tips or points to consider in planning an event on their campus.

Tips for hosting TCP events on college campuses

Planning

- **Connect with a leader on your campus** — this could be a professor, faith leader, student government, or a student group —who might be a good champion and sponsor for the event.
    - Does the group have a specific focus or theme? Knowing the group's focus will be helpful in giving examples or discussion questions.
        - For example, if the group is focused on public health issues and is made of pre-med students, they may have first-hand experience in working in medical settings to share.
        - For groups working on health equity or immigrant health, they may be interested in how to improve disparities in end-of-life care.
        - Or if there is a guest speaker speaking about death, using some these questions may make the topic more personal.
    - Consider how this could be a requirement for a student group or course
    - They may also have venues you could use for your group.
- When possible, **keep events peer-to-peer**. The facilitator of the event should be a trusted peer of those attending. This helps stimulate conversation and foster trust.
- **Promote the event creatively**—post flyers for the student union, create a Facebook event, tie it to campus events that are already going on

Hosting

- **Tie it to food!** College students (like everyone) love free food.

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[1] Balk, D. E. (2008). Grieving: 22 to 30 percent of all college students. In Servaty-Seib, H. L., & Taub, D. J. (Eds.). (2008). Assisting bereaved college students (pp. 5-14). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

- **Acknowledge different comfort levels.** Students will have different experience and exposure with death and dying. Make it okay for students to feel their feelings. Remember, silence is a valid form of participation.
- **Use technology** or instant voting to get a sense of how experienced students are with terms, like advanced care planning or health care proxy, and how many people have already selected a health care proxy. AV set up to be able to show videos.
- **Get familiar with state terminology (proxy vs. agent, for example)**
- **Use storytelling** to get the conversation flowing. Ask students to break into pairs and share a story of an experience of death in their own lives, or who they would chose as their health care proxy.
- **Let 20 somethings be 20 somethings!** If the questions on the Conversation Starter Guide aren't resonating with the audience, then broaden the questions so they're more relatable and general.
- **Bring materials.** The TCP Conversation Starter Guide or copies of your state's health care proxy forms are useful tools.

Following Up

- **Follow-up** with students after the event! Bring printed copies of an evaluation form with you in real time. If you aren't able to print the evaluations, send them a survey on e-mail or via survey monkey to see what they thought of the event. See the TCP example survey in the Campus Resources folder and evaluation summary sheet.