Program Planning Suggestions

Convening your planning team

- Start with members of your coalition who have existing relationships with faith communities in your area.
- Invite local faith leaders to join your planning group.
- Include people who have experience producing professional conferences or seminars.
- Include your presenters in the planning process, if possible.

Adapting the program to your community

- Doing pre-event work (such as end-of-life care strengths and needs assessments with local faith groups) can help insure that the content has relevance for your communities and creates “buy-in” from those you want to reach.
- Seek input from representatives of diverse faiths and both conservative and liberal congregations. This will help insure that the event is meaningful for the greatest number of faith leaders and is sensitive to cultural diversity.
- Strike a balance between theoretical (“head”) content and practical (“heart and hands”) content.
- Determine if local chaplains, pastors, or others have the background to be on your faculty or sit on a panel.

Selecting and preparing your faculty

- Spiritual matters take precedence for faith organizations. Choose presenters who understand this and can integrate spiritual issues and spiritual care with medical issues and physical care.
- If using small-group facilitators for experiential activities (e.g., guided meditation), make sure that they have group facilitation skills as well as experience creating a “safe space” for the sharing of feelings that might emerge. It’s also important that they be able to honor time limits. Social workers and chaplains often have the skills and experience to serve in this role.
- Gather your small-group facilitators ahead of time to review the day’s agenda and walk through the exercise they will be facilitating.
Partners in Caring

End-of-life seminar for faith leaders

- Though not essential, it can also be very helpful to gather your presenters ahead of time to walk through the day’s agenda and share modules in outline form to minimize redundancy of content.
- Determine if you have enough local expertise to feature a panel of faith leaders who can share experience with successful end-of-life related programs within their congregations. If you do assemble a panel, ask them to share lessons learned and concrete, practical tools others can use. Build in plenty of time for Q & A from the audience as well.

Designing the Training

- To employ best practices for adult learning and structure a day of learning that benefits from the wisdom of your participants, make sure your agenda includes:
  - Plenty of interactive participation
  - Opportunities for attendees to share with and learn from each other
  - Skills application where people can practice and learn together
- Choose exercises that are likely to be comfortable for the majority of people in the room. Seek input from faith group representatives if you are not sure.
- If possible, build in some movement-based activities to help break up a day of intense learning and give people a chance to refresh themselves physically.