

Changing the Conversation

America's Gun-Violence Epidemic

Screening and Discussion Tool-kit

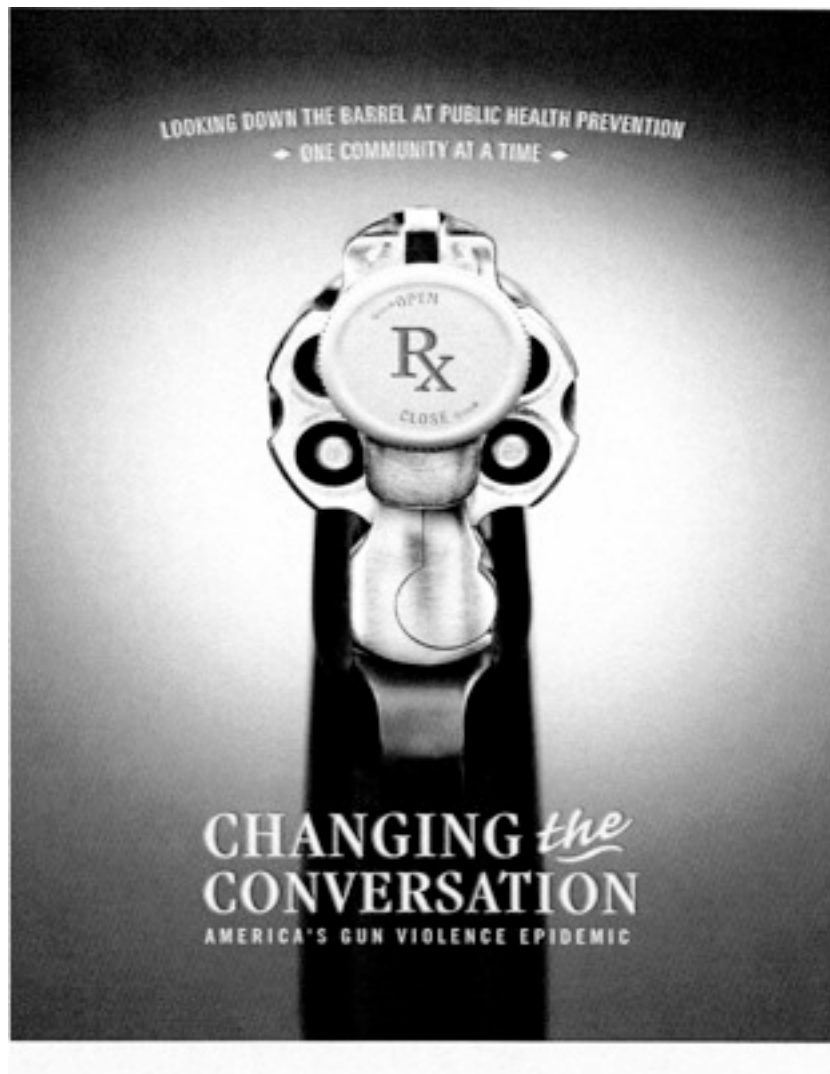


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About the Film



“Changing the Conversation: America's Gun Violence Epidemic”, is the final film in the award-winning 3-part documentary film series Guns, Grief & Grace in America. Gun violence is generally discussed in terms of urban homicides, yet startling statistics tell another story. This film reframes the conversation of America's gun violence epidemic by shifting the focus from Second Amendment rights to public health prevention. Engage in a radically logical approach to restructuring how we think, speak and act on gun violence through three distinct lenses. Hear from lawmakers, activists, urban musicians united for change and a quiet town, searching for answers after a domestic violence murder-suicide. Wisconsin, serves as a model for every state with urban, suburban, small town and rural populations. Public health experts offer impressive evidence as they present the benefits of reframing this currently polarizing conversation to focus on the broader story. Hope emerges with the awareness that diverse populations experience critical social issues in different ways, and that strategies for prevention will

succeed—when driven by data, instead of ideology.

“Changing the Conversation: America’s Gun Violence Epidemic” debuted at the September 2009 Milwaukee Film Festival to a beyond standing room crowd. This successful debut is only one example of how the series combines film with solid research and relationships to create effective community engagement! This tool-kit should help you create your own engagement to help change the gun violence discussion.

About this Toolkit & Community Screenings

This toolkit is for educational institutions, community organizations, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, grassroots and student groups that want to screen “Changing the Conversation: America’s Gun Violence Epidemic” or other films in the Guns, Grief and Grace in America series to draw attention to the gun violence dilemma locally or nationally while creating pro-active discussions around the gun violence topic.

We have made the toolkit comprehensive to help you hold the best event possible. We realize some sections will not be applicable in every case. You should use the tool-kit as a guide and then decide what works best to impact your audience.

Community screenings require a community-licensed DVD or one of our special “Fundraising Screening Kits” that contain posters, postcards and enough extra DVDs so that the kit both “pays for itself” and helps you raise additional funds for your organization.

For more details and to obtain a Community–Licensed DVD or a Screening Kit, visit www.newmoononline.com.

Note that screenings held at universities, colleges, schools, public libraries and government institutions require the educational version of the DVD, which is available from our nonprofit educational distributor. Educational institutions, however, can often use a screening kit or a community licensed DVD.

Getting Started With Your Event

Consider your organization’s goals and needs – and use the film to support them in a practical way. Before any film screening, you should consider the following:

1) IDENTIFY OBJECTIVES

Identifying your objectives will lay the foundation for your event planning. Think about what you would like to get out of the event, how it can benefit your organization, and what is realistic. Here are a few suggested objectives (these are not mutually exclusive!):

- **Raise awareness** about gun violence in communities, about the divisiveness of the current discussion framework, the need for the pro–active public health framework for discussion of gun violence, advocacy and the benefits of organizing community screenings/discussions in communities.
- **Heighten visibility** and spotlight the importance of your work by connecting it with the issues raised in the film.
- **Build bridges** between urban, rural and suburban community members.
- **Educate community members** about gun violence statistics and realities while presenting them with opportunities to learn more.
- **Establish coalitions** with other organizations and inspire the development of new programs that address the gun violence dilemma.
- **Engage general audiences** around how to discuss gun violence/issues in a pro–active way.
- **Prompt local decision–makers** and business leaders to consider how addressing the gun violence dilemma benefits the community.
- **Fundraise for your organization.** You can buy a “Fundraising Screening Kit” to raise funds for your organization. For more information, visit www.newmoononline.com.

2) TARGET AUDIENCE

Once you determine your objectives, consider your target audience. Do you hope to cast a wide net and reach the community–at–large? Or do you want to narrow the focus



to reach out to a specific sector or group? (E.g., religious, educators, mothers, teens or youth, community organizers, health professionals, activists, law-makers, decision makers, foundations, etc.)

Take into account how best to reach your target audiences. Not everyone uses e-mail, and not everyone hangs out at progressive coffee shops. A clear understanding of how to reach each audience segment will make you more effective, and the best strategy is likely to be a combination of the techniques listed below. The best publicity will do more much than attract people to the screening: it

will bring your message to a much wider audience than those that can attend the event itself!

3) FRAMING EVENT TO MEET OBJECTIVES

Will you choose to focus on one particular issue, or a range of issues? You may simply choose to do a screening with brief comments before and after, but it is best that you engage the audience in a way that enhances your work directly.

Here are some suggestions:

- **Community screening:** A screening/panel discussion designed to attract a range of community members – from interested individuals to community leaders – in a broader conversation about the ideas raised in the documentary. (e.g., the implications of gun violence on urban, rural and suburban communities and the divisiveness of the current framework of discussion as opposed to the pro-active public health framework etc.)
- **Party With a Purpose Fundraiser** – You choose the location – home, church or public place – for an evening of food, fun, film and lively, solution-based conversation with a network of your friends. This helps greatly to bring in more people, while also raising needed funds – all to expand the critical mass. This fundraiser benefits the Guns, Grief and Grace in America series and outreach. The parties are easy to plan (we provide you with an outline and encourage no-hassle online invites), and provide a comfortable way for people to engage with this difficult topic. The parties may also take place without being a fundraiser providing you purchase the DVD you want to screen. Please contact us for further information and details regarding rights to hold such an event.
- **Town hall meeting:** A screening and forum for members of the community to learn more about gun violence in a local context, with an opportunity to voice related ideas, questions or concerns. The panel can include various community members, experts on violence, public health, law enforcement, domestic violence etc., a professor or other academic studying the relevant issues and an experienced facilitator. Reserve as much time as possible for dialogue with the audience. **Note:**

You hold this type of event in a neutral space so that all community members feel comfortable expressing their opinions.

➤ **Cross-sector policy review:** An event designed to engage specific sectors, such as policy analysts, local government officials and community leaders in a thoughtful solutions-based conversation. The dialogue would be carefully framed, focusing on ways to better meet the needs of the community surrounding the gun violence dilemma. To keep the conversation focused, this type of event is better as a small, invitational screening.

4) EVENT ENHANCEMENTS

➤ **Keynote Speaker:** Invite a local leader or scholar to speak about some of the themes the film raises, such as political divisiveness, the relationship of domestic abuse and suicides to gun violence, the lack of a comfortable framework for gun violence discussion. Try to screen the film for her/him in advance!

➤ **Invite the Filmmakers:** Depending on availability, the filmmakers may be available to speak about the film and to lead discussions. For more information about availability and fees, contact us at www.newmoononline.com.



➤ **Invite (other) local organizations to speak:** Invite local organizations to come speak about the issues they face and the organizing they are doing in the community. If you are organizing the screening through your organization, you can invite members of other organizations working across issues relevant to gun violence.

➤ **Experienced Moderator:** This is especially useful if you will have a smaller group that wants to tackle some of the tougher issues.

➤ **Reception:** Plan a special meet-and-greet with refreshments to allow opportunities for networking either before or after the screening. Depending on your budget and capacity, this could be open to the public or by invitation only.

➤ **Exhibit hall:** Provide opportunities for co-sponsors to display information about their organizations and relevant programs/services they provide.

➤ **Performances:** Invite a local choir, band, playhouse or dance troupe to perform a piece dedicated to reducing gun violence in the community.

- **Take Photos:** Take lots and lots of photos at every stage of the event. Create a Flickr album or send us the photos and we will create one for you. Also send us the photos so we can include it in our website and photo albums.
- Finally, it's important to have **Action Steps:** Offer motivated audience members suggested ways they can help address gun violence. For example, they can volunteer at a local organization, become more conscious about other communities affected by gun violence, get involved in a letter writing campaign to legislators to initiate anti-gun violence law shifts, create gun violence prevention committees to discuss gun violence issues facing people regardless of whether they live in urban, rural or suburban communities, etc. For more ideas, visit our "Tools for Change" page at www.newmoononline.com.

Getting the Word Out

There are many ways to get the word out about your event. People will feel compelled to attend an event if it feels relevant, important and timely, and if it speaks to them as an audience.

As you may know, Changing the Conversation: America's Gun Violence Epidemic covers many communities affected by gun violence and is a flexible tool for change. The segments are useful together as a series or as stand-alone pieces in order to meet the needs of many audiences or group.

There may be possible tie-ins to current events and "hooks" for particular media outlets or communities. And, because Changing the Conversation: America's Gun Violence Epidemic has been awarded several prizes - including a Telly Award - you should be able to reach "beyond the choir" to more general audiences to persuade them that their attendance at your event will be a rich, emotional and cinematic experience, in addition to an exploration of "important issues", which doesn't necessarily appeal to everybody.

Finally, to reiterate be sure to send us your event information and photos (www.newmoononline.com) so that we can list it for you on our Screenings page!

1) ELECTRONIC/VIRAL OUTREACH

This is one of the most effective ways to reach people, but attention spans are short, and it works best accompanied by additional outreach and publicity. In all of your own electronic outreach, be sure to include a link to www.newmoononline.com so people can view the trailer, or better yet, embed the Changing the Conversation: America's Gun Violence Epidemic trailer on your website so people can see a preview!

- **Newsletter or e-mail announcement:** You can use the downloadable flyer templates or the template e-mails we provide at www.newmoononline.com as the basis to create an email announcement to spread the word about your event. We recommend you send out these emails at least twice: two weeks before, and then a reminder a few days before your event.

- **Blogs:** Reach out to any bloggers you know and to bloggers who are popular with your target audience. Even a brief mention with a link to the event is helpful. Be sure to send them information to link to or embed the “Changing the Conversation: America’s Gun Violence Epidemic” trailer from www.newmoononline.com onto their site for increased impact.

Facebook, MySpace and Twitter: Social networks like Facebook, MySpace and Twitter have become hugely important in reaching certain audiences, and can be especially useful when there’s a Facebook or MySpace group connected to a specific local community such as a university, local organization, etc. We suggest setting up an “event” and inviting members of your community to forward and distribute the event information to friends. (Be sure to enable the features that allow people to forward your event information to their friends.) You can also just send a message with the event information to your friends and to groups that might be interested, including links to the New Moon Production’s website and to our pages on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Milwaukee-WI/New-Moon-Productions/106992985307?ref=ts>).



2) POSTERS & FLYERS

Putting up posters and flyers around your community, in the right coffee shops, and on community bulletin boards can be incredibly effective. Free downloadable template flyers and mini-posters are available www.newmoononline.com. You can customize these marketing materials for your own event purposes. Here are some ideas for use:

- Leave a stack of flyers at local businesses who might be interested in the topic or event and ask if you can place a mini-poster in their window. Try video stores, coffee shops, restaurants, community centers, barbershops/salons, churches, synagogues, schools, campuses, and anywhere else your target audience is likely to frequent. You can also try placing an ad on local bus systems, on school shuttles, and other similar places. (Some ambitious organizers have even gotten sponsorship from the local bus system in the form of free ad space!)

- Distribute flyers at events with similar themes. Be sure to send (or e-mail) flyers to cosponsoring organizations to distribute at their events.
- Go to local organizations working on the gun-violence topic and ask if you can leave flyers at the entrance or if they can put up a mini-poster.
- The Screening Kits available on our website also include striking 27”x39” full-size movie posters and can garner considerable attention for your event! Put them up in strategic locations where they will really make an impact. We recommend attaching a simple flyer at the bottom with the basic details about your event.



3) LOCAL MEDIA

As mentioned earlier, we have designed this toolkit to be comprehensive in order to empower you to do the best event possible. We realize that some sections will not be applicable to every event and this section on local media is a great example – depending on your objectives and your audience, you may or may not decide to pursue

media coverage. That's fine, as it's all about how best to reach and impact your audience. But read on for some guidance for how simple media outreach can be!

If you or one of your co-sponsoring organizations has a communications department that can “take the reigns” on contacting press, get them involved right away. We understand that many community organizations may have limited capacity, so we've put together some basic tips that can be useful to those who are new to working with local media. Beforehand, you may want to do a little background reading to get acquainted with the basic steps and terms.

A good resource is www.causecommunications.com.

For a full tutorial on news releases from the SPIN Project check out: <http://spinproject.org/article.php?id=115> (The Spin Project has many other great resources on their site, a number of which are geared towards using media around economic justice issues.)

Before you make complicated plans about how to promote your event, ask your self who is most likely to understand and appreciate your event, and what is the best media format for your target audience. For example, what do they listen to, read. What websites do they visit or forms of social media do they use?

By targeting your core audience and the method of delivering your message for each group, you might decide that it makes more sense to focus on, say, an alternative weekly paper that already covers innovative community initiatives vs. the headline-driven daily paper that tends to focus on crime and celebrity.

Below are some basic tips for your media outreach:

- Use the template press release available at www.newmoononline.com as a guide to create your own. Interesting details to include would be information on local gun violence statistics and efforts to reduce gun violence, a summary description of each of the important gun violence issues, and a complete list of the co-sponsoring organizations. Be sure to make a special mention if your event will feature the filmmakers or other special guests!
- Ten days before the event, issue the release to a wide range of mainstream, alternative, community and specialized media. Send it to reporters who might

cover violence, community and women's issues. You can also send it to the arts/entertainment and metro sections reporters.

- If press wants photos or a press kit about the film itself, you can always direct them to www.newmoononline.com where those materials are available for download.
- Get the event on calendar listings in your city's weekly publication(s) and on the web.
- Make calls to local television and radio programs. Let them know about your event, and be prepared to give them contact and title information of local experts or advocates that can be available for interviews. Pay particular attention to local radio shows and shows that focus on themes in *Changing the Conversation: America's Gun Violence Epidemic*, as they frequently need guests and may be very happy to promote a local event!
Make sure to contact: local TV news: assignment editors; public affairs or magazine programs: producers; talk radio or local/community radio: producers or hosts. A good way to do this would be to check your morning paper or news website for contact details of the relevant reporters or editors.
- A couple of days prior to your event contact the people to whom you sent press materials and encourage them to attend the event. Pitch the value of this unique screening and the importance of educating people about the experiences of gun violence and relevant issues relating to it.

4) CO-SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS

We strongly encourage including other organizations in your event plans, as it helps you broaden your reach and establish new, potentially long-term coalitions. Allied organizations can get involved in a range of ways depending on their capacity. This can include getting the word out about the film through listservs or websites, contributing time or resources to the screening event and/or participating in a post-screening panel discussion.

Many groups would make good co-sponsors, including health-care, religious, educational and non-profit organizations, women's organizations, universities, and media/film centers.

The key in approaching co-sponsors is to help them understand how your event fits into their priorities as an organization, and how they will ultimately benefit from being associated with your plans. Be sure to allow enough lead-time - building new relationships often takes time.

5) CAMPUS SCREENINGS

As with community screenings, finding on-campus cosponsors is really important. Contact departments, research centers and student organizations that have an interest in the topic and ask them to be part of this event. This will increase the visibility and

success of the event and will help put a spotlight on the issues in the film. (Note that depending how a campus event is sponsored, you may be required to use the educational DVD as opposed to a Community Screening Kit. (See www.newmoononline.com for details.)



In addition to the outreach strategies mentioned above, specific strategies have proven to be especially effective for campus events:

- Post information on websites, listservs and blogs at your and area schools
- Create your own Facebook event and become a fan of the film at www.facebook.com/pages/Milwaukee-WI/New-Moon-Productions/106992985307?ref=ts
- Send press release to on-campus newspapers & publications, on-campus radio & TV.
- Post flyers around campus, for example, tables in the student mailrooms and dormitories, do chalking.
- Make a big banner outside student union and other buildings advertising the event.
- Ask professors to offer school credit – this is a great way to bring students to the event, and they are never disappointed afterwards!
- Ask the departments involved to ask their professors to mention the event in their classes.
- Ask all the organizations and departments involved to include the information about the event in their newsletters

Before Post-Screening Discussion

Before the discussion begins, we recommend that you:

1. Pass out the postcards that came with your screening kit. Audience members can fill out a message that you/we will later send to decision and policy makers.

You should also distribute any other materials (flyers, etc.), at this time, as some people may leave before the end of the post-screening discussion.

There are two types of postcards included in the kit

- a) Postcard describing the film – to be used for advertising, PR and general information.
- b) Postcard with a space for audience members to write a comment to policy makers as to why we need to reframe gun violence to a public health focus on prevention.

At www.newmoononline.com you'll find a one-page "Changing the Conversation: America's Gun Violence Epidemic" Action Guide" flyer.

2. Announce that you will be selling the DVDs that came with your screening kit.

In your Screening Kit, you received extra Changing the Conversation: America's Gun Violence Epidemic DVDs that you can sell so that you can cover the cost of the screening kit and raise funds for your organization. We highly recommend that you announce that these DVDs are available at the beginning of the Q & A and that you have someone stationed with the DVDs at a table at the back of the room so that people will walk by that table as they leave. Our experience is that people normally want to buy DVDs after a screening, and every DVD out there in the world is doing good work!

Tips for Post-Screening Discussion

Complex films like Changing the Conversation: America's Gun Violence Epidemic can raise a range of emotions, questions and/or concerns from the audience, and we recommend you address this with a post-screening discussion. At www.newmoononline.com you will find four issue-based Conversation Guides that will help you lead a conversation around issues of the central issues of divisive politics, domestic violence and suicide raised in the film.

Here are tips and ideas for facilitating solution-based conversation:

1) PANELISTS

Your post-screening discussion will vary depending on your event objectives, but it's always a good idea to have a range of perspectives represented on a panel.

➤ Your co-sponsors are great resources for identifying potential panelists for the discussion and they'll have more incentive to promote the event if they're being

represented on the panel.

- For a cross-sector discussion, you might include a law enforcement worker, a health professional, a domestic abuse worker, law or policy maker, educator, public-health professional, a community organizer with experience working on violence issues.



If you're planning a town hall-style event, it's good to include an experienced facilitator.

- If possible, ask panelists to screen the film before the event so they can prepare.
- Give your panelists an idea of who will be in the audience, so they can tailor the discussion to the audience's needs. For example, if you anticipate a general audience, ask panelists to tone down any sector-specific jargon.

2) MEETING YOUR OBJECTIVES WITH THE DISCUSSION

The way the discussion is framed can be helpful in meeting your objectives.

- If you're hoping to build coalitions or enhance existing programs, the discussion should be action-oriented. Focus on what needs to be done, how to facilitate action, and how various community sectors can contribute.
- If you'd like to raise visibility, showcase your organization's work and make sure it's made clear why your work is important to the community. You'll also want to be sure that key people are in the audience, including press, potential funders and other influential decision makers.
- Offer your audience members ways to get involved, and be sure to bring along information about specific actions that people can take in your community, nationally or globally. You can direct people to New Moon Productions' "Tools for Change" page www.newmoononline.com.

3) FACILITATING A PROACTIVE DISCUSSION

An experienced moderator can keep the discussion moving and field audience questions.

If you have more than one person lined up to speak you should decide whether each speaker should give a brief reaction to the film in context to their work or if you want to go straight into a moderated discussion.



This is largely based on the time limitations you have, but if you have more than 30 minutes available it's a good idea to allow some time for speakers to introduce themselves - who they are and how their work is relevant to the issues raised in the film:

- As the panelists speak, encourage them to choose specific scenes from the film and link them to their comments.
- Be prepared for potential criticism. Although it is a very small possibility, you must be ready in case the film or speakers come under scrutiny. As

demonstrated in the film, it is easy for people to get caught up in the polarized “gun control vs. gun rights” discussion which has a tendency to put unnecessary limitations on finding a proactive solution to the issue. However, a neutral moderator is best to ensure the conversation remains productive and many perspectives are heard.

- Guide any comments or concerns to a positive end that applauds the benefits of sharing information in an open forum. Encourage critical audience members to think about how the film might be a helpful way to address the tensions that they are feeling.

Additional Resources

Explore the Changing the Conversation: America’s Gun Violence Epidemic website’s “Learn More” page at www.newmoononline.com, which contains a great number of additional resources, including links to numerous organizations that deal with the issues portrayed in the film. You may also want to explore these links to find potential speakers or partner organizations in your area.

For more information or to contact the filmmakers please visit the Links page at www.newmoononline.com.

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GUNS, GRIEF & GRACE *in America*

New Moon Productions presents a three-part documentary series shifting the gun violence debate in the United States from Second Amendment rights to public health prevention.

Changing the Conversation: America's Gun Violence Epidemic

Event Planning Checklist

Once you have defined your target audience, objectives, and framing, begin planning the event:

Preliminary planning - at least 6 weeks prior	
Book the venue and date for your screening.	
Recruit local organizational partners to broaden your reach, and help identify roles for each one - such as publicity, panelist coordination, reception planning, etc.	
Determine speakers (including filmmakers), panelists, and moderator (if applicable).	
Logistical planning - 3-4 weeks prior	
Create a flyer to publicize your screening. (template flyers at www.newmoononline.com)	
Confirm that you have the right equipment to screen the DVD. You'll need a DVD player and a large TV: or a DVD player, a projector, screen and sound system.	
Secure food for reception (if applicable).	
Draft agenda and vet with partners.	
Logistical planning - 2 weeks prior	
Create an email blast to publicize your event electronically. (template e-mails at www.newmoononline.com . Try sending an announcement 2 weeks prior and another several days prior.	
Contact community calendars about your event.	
Media outreach - 10 days prior	
Send out press releases to media outlets (template press releases at www.newmoononline.com).	
Contact local television and radio programs.	

Final planning – several days prior	
Important: test the DVD in before the event preferably with the equipment you’ll be using and ensure the screen will be visible to your incoming audience!	
Send second round of email blasts.	
Follow up with press who expressed an interest in covering the story.	
Finalize agenda.	
At the event itself	
As people arrive, ask them to sign up to receive updates from your organization.	
Before the discussion, pass out the postcards that came with your screening kit, along with any other materials.	
Before the discussion, announce that you have DVDs for sale and that these sales will help cover the cost of the screening! Set up a table near the exit and have someone stationed with the DVDs during the discussion.	
If possible, pass a Changing the Conversation: America’s Gun Violence Epidemic sign-up sheet around at your event (for download at www.newmoononline.com) and send it back to us so that we can add interested attendees to the Changing the Conversation: America’s Gun Violence Epidemic community & mailing list!	
Have a timekeeper so that panelists/speakers remain within their assigned speaking time.	
If possible, announce a call to action or have materials available for attendees to follow up.	
Encourage participants to spread the word and encourage them to learn more.	

Portions of this guide were adapted from the Made in L.A. Event Planning Toolkit, created by the filmmakers of Made in L.A. (www.MadeinLA.com) and based on materials developed by Active Voice (www.activevoice.net) with funding from P.O.V. (www.pbs.org/pov).