



Ten Ways to Get Started

The following ideas come from members of On Earth Peace's Encountering Recruitment network.

1. **Get oriented.** Google “counter-recruitment” and take a few minutes to get acquainted with the wide variety of resources that are available. This movement continues to grow and learn, and there are resources being created every week. Find out who is on the scene, if there are groups already in your state or region, and what kinds of resources are available for help. The best place to get news about counter-recruitment is the listserv counter-recruitment@yahoogroups.com. To sign up, send a blank e-mail to counter-recruitment-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.
2. **Find out if there are people in your area already working on this issue.** If so, join in! If not, call together a few people to form a local group to work on the issue. Some potential partners include church congregations, mosques or synagogues, youth organizations, and justice or peace action groups. As schools are often reluctant to allow church groups into the school, a broad coalition will have more success -- and will also help spread around the work. *You are not alone, even if it feels that way!* For more ideas on finding partners, contact On Earth Peace.
3. **Look to the youth who are close to home.** Build relationships with the youth in your church or community. Become involved with them in meaningful ways, and support the growth of their spiritual lives. Mentor them in Jesus' teachings and Christian peacemaking. Spiritual formation for loving God and loving enemies is a lifelong process, supported by meaningful interaction. Get to know your congregation's youth personally. Pray together and study the Bible – and also just hang out. Accompany them closely in their search for lives of value and meaning. For those who may be attracted to the military, or who might be more attractive to military recruiters, make even more of a commitment to build relationship and to help them find a future with meaning and money to live on.
4. **Opt out.** Find out what your school system's policy is on the “opt-out form.” This form, which must be turned in near the beginning of a student's sophomore year, prohibits your school from providing your child's personal information to military recruiters (required in the No Child Left Behind Act). Lobby your high school administrators or school board to add the “opt-out” form to the health form, registration packet, or other visible paperwork that all parents and students need to sign. Having an interested parent make an appointment with their child's guidance counselor to find out what's happening is a good place to start. Visit www.leavemychildalone.org to find an easy guide for walking through this process.



5. **Talk with children about peacemaking.** Eliminate the need for counter-recruiting at the high school level! You can find On Earth Peace's poster, "Passing on Your Faith and Peace Witness to Children" on the On Earth peace website, www.onearthpeace.org.
6. **Join with and support high school youth and college students who want to educate their peers.** Youth have the most access in their own high schools and are most likely to be listened to by their peers. One successful path has been supporting middle or high school youth to start peace or social justice clubs at their school. College students who are involved with high school tutoring or support groups can help get the lay of the land or make connections with students and supportive teachers.
7. **Organize a community workshop at your church** to help people learn about conscientious objection or counter-recruitment, using the many resource groups available (On Earth Peace, Center on Conscience and War, Brethren Witness/ Washington Office and many others). You will find links to many of these organizations on our website.
8. **Research alternative sources of educational funding in your area,** and begin to develop an education list for your region. Many groups are already starting similar project. One outstanding example is, "What's Next? A Guide for North Carolina Teens Wondering, 'What's After High School.'" You can find it online at www.whatsnext.afsc.org. One of the important roles of counter-recruitment advocates is to serve as "**alternate guidance counselors,**" helping youth find ways to achieve their goals without resorting to military service. Prepare yourself to navigate through scholarship, apprenticeship, and job training opportunities in your area. Offer free career counseling at Boys' & Girls' Clubs, youth centers, or other locations.
9. Get a copy of the American Friends Service Committee **training manual, Before You Enlist and After You Say No.** This 200+ page curriculum manual includes eight sessions you can use to educate others about issues of recruitment, to reflect strategically together, and to plan next steps. You can order a copy of the manual and the companion DVD at afsc.org/youthmil/resources/TrainingManual.htm
10. Review the Church of the Brethren Witness/Washington Office guide to starting a counter-recruitment program promoting alternative service, "**Teaching an Alternative to War,**" which is available online at <http://www.brethren.org/genbd/witness/ConscientiousObjection>.