

Using Law Enforcement

This is a Criminal Justice approach that will require police officers, prosecutors, and a judge. Neighbors contact their local law enforcement agency, who then collects enough evidence for a judge to issue a search warrant to enter the house.

PROS: Neighbors can remain anonymous and do not have to face the suspects. Suspects may be arrested, and if convicted, serve time in jail or prison.

CONS: There must be enough hard evidence to convince a judge to issue a search warrant. The suspect may be back in his/her house within days.

TIMELINE: Slowest of the three methods, requires time for law enforcement to gather evidence for the search warrant, search the home, and make an arrest.

What can you do? Contact your local law enforcement agency and describe the activity that leads you to believe that illegal drugs are being used, sold, and/or manufactured at the home.

FOR ALL METHODS: Be prepared to provide specific information such as suspect(s) name (if you know it), vehicle license plate numbers of suspect and visitors to the home, time of day and length of time visitors are at the home, signs of a drug exchange for money, signs of drug use on or near the property, discarded paraphernalia or evidence of manufacturing or processing of drugs.



Using a "Drug House" Ordinance

This is usually a Civil or Administrative Approach that may require an attorney to appear in Superior Court. A group of citizens use their city or county Drug House Ordinance to shut down a "drug house."

PROS: With the proper evidence it can speed up the removal of a drug house. This method is effective with homeowners who are also the suspects and with tenants

CONS: An attorney is usually needed for filing paperwork and appearing in court. Drug House Ordinances are subject to abuse. You must be able to show that drug house activity is occurring.

TIMELINE: Takes less time than a criminal justice approach. Requires time to gather evidence for court action, time for an attorney to prepare and file paperwork, and may require court time.

What can you do? Call a Code Enforcement representative to determine the "Drug House" Ordinance in your community. Follow the procedures outlined in the ordinance.

Using Small Claims Court

This is a Civil Approach that probably won't require an attorney. A group of neighbors join together to sue the owner of the drug house for \$5,000 each, in small claims court.

PROS: Does not have the burden of proof that a criminal case requires. It puts financial pressure on the homeowner to evict the suspects.

CONS: May require taking the homeowner to court. Is not as effective when the suspect is the property owner or a family member of the property owner.

TIMELINE: It is the quickest way to take action. Requires time to document drug activity, prepare and file the paperwork, and attend court (if necessary).

What can you do? Contact Small Claims Court to request paperwork. Request a free copy of "Nuisance Abatement Using the Small Claims Court" from Humboldt County Counsel's office. Contact law enforcement to document drug activity.



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