

## **Tool #30: Identifying Community Leaders**

Every community has its leaders — official and unofficial. Community leaders can be obstacles or assets. Some leaders can prevent things from happening. They can block, harass, and cause trouble. Rarely do they initiate positive action. There are also leaders who make a community function, and may ally themselves with your efforts to improve the community.

Every community has its "gatekeepers, caretakers, flak-catchers, and brokers." Identify who fills this role in your community of ministry:

- The **gatekeeper** is the person who decides whether or not someone "gets through the gates" of the community. He or she is the official permission-giver.

- The **caretaker** is usually the "Mama," or the "shepherd." Everyone always seems to gather at this home, especially the young.

- The **flak-catcher** gathers the gossip in the community, using it either constructively or destructively. This person can usually tell you the "inside scoop" on what is happening in the neighborhood.

- The **broker** is the person with access to influence. The broker can be identified by hypothesizing, "Suppose there is a broken street light on the block, and it has been broken for months, and the city just has not come out and gotten it fixed. Which person is most likely to make sure it gets fixed?"

- Your church should seek to befriend these persons. They may never become members of the congregation, but they can open (or block) the doors for opportunities to minister to the disadvantaged.