

Public Policy Advocacy: Meeting with Elected Officials



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Empowered Parents:
Educated, Engaged,
Effective!

Public Policy Advocacy for Social Change

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed [people] can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead



What is Advocacy?



- Speaking, writing, or acting in support of a cause
- Using a variety of organized tactics to achieve a public policy goal
- Demanding a change to benefit the lives of many

How Change Happens

“Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never has and it never will.”

-Frederick Douglas



Why do people get involved?

- They believe the issue is important to them and their family
- They believe they have something to contribute
- They believe that they will be listened to and their contributions respected
- They believe that their participation will make a difference



Opportunities to Participate in Legislative Advocacy

- Tell story verbally to an advocate & give permission to share
- Tell story verbally within a small group (focus group)
- Tell story verbally to policymakers (at public hearing, meeting with legislator, etc.)



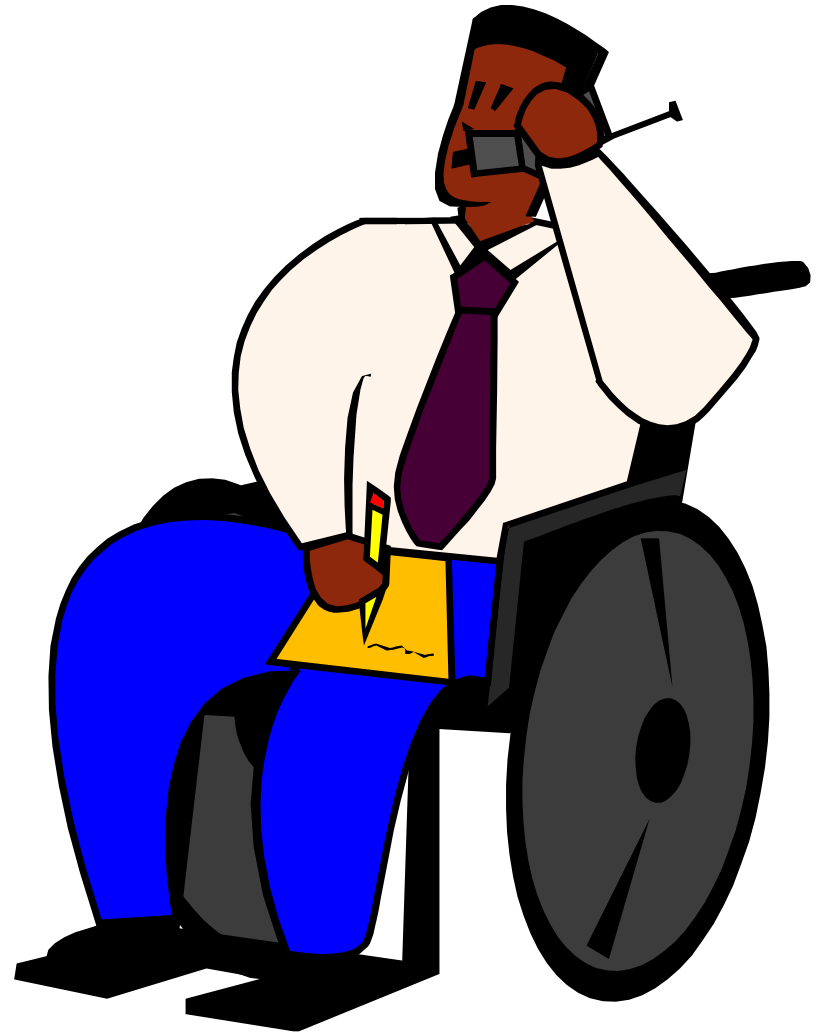
Remember:



- *Empowering families to participate in advocacy for their children, their community, the larger society, is its own victory, regardless of the specific outcome of any particular effort.*
- *Democracy is not a spectator sport!*

Reaching Policymakers

- Call * Write * Visit
 - Brief and to the point
 - Stick to one subject
 - Identify yourself
 - How will you and others be affected?
 - Be clear about what you want
 - Be accurate & specific
 - Be polite & positive
 - Offer your help
 - Follow up!



Calling a Legislative office

- Jot down speaking points in advance; if asking for a meeting, know who will be coming with you
- Ask to speak to the legislator or relevant aide
- Note your legislative district
- Give bill # & name or topic



Calling a Legislative office

- Explain why the issue is important to you & the families you serve
- Ask for a meeting
- If not possible, ask for the legislator's support
- Write notes on your conversation
- Follow up! (In writing!)



Preparing for Legislative Visits



- Decide who you will visit. Read up on them.
- Establish agenda & goals; prepare content & delivery tailored to the legislator.
- Collect stories from those who can't attend.
- Contact the legislative office nearest you for an appointment.

Scheduling a Meeting

- During Recess call the District office of the Member. You can find information at www.House.gov or www.Senate.gov
- Ask to schedule a meeting with the member



Scheduling a Meeting

- Be sure to inform the scheduler who will be attending the meeting. Members love to meet with kids!
- If the Member is booked, ask to speak with the health legislative assistant/aide



Scheduling a Meeting

- Remember, you can also schedule meetings with the Member and his/her staff even when they are in session.
- You can schedule a meeting with the Member on weekends or with their DC staff via conference call.

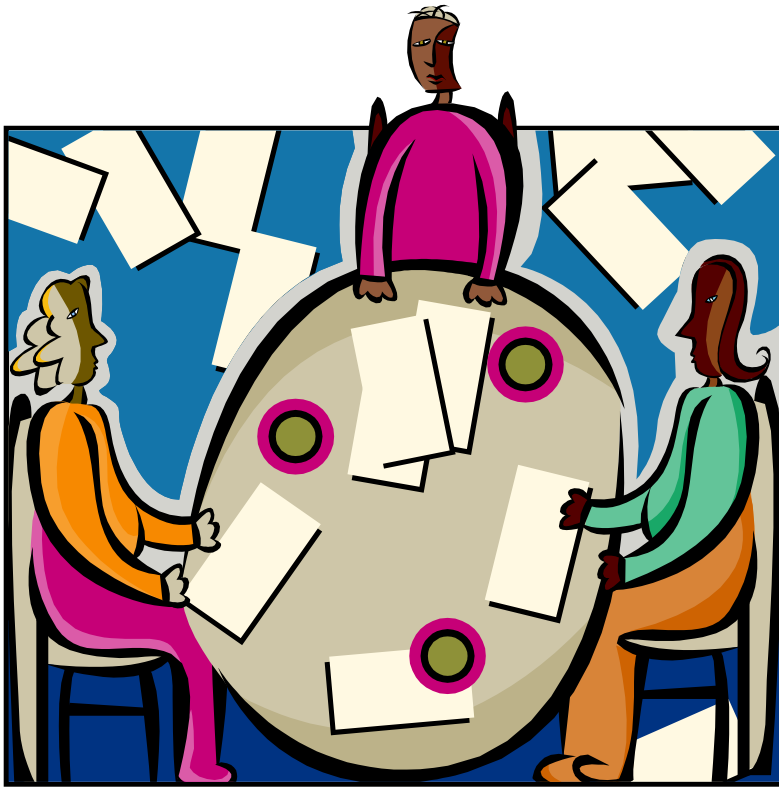


Preparing for Legislative Visits



- Plan your visit.
- Determine group composition. Pull together your small team of key allies. Bring kids if possible.
- If possible, include someone who has visited a legislator before.
- Practice helps: if you have time, role play beforehand.

Preparing for Legislative Visits



- Be prepared, but don't feel that everyone has to be an expert! You are there to tell your story and the story of other families; those experiences are powerful!

Meeting with Elected Officials

- Speak up
- Emphasize key points
- Establish eye contact
- Use visual aids
- Be brief
- Don't be afraid
- Don't lie if you don't know. Offer to find out.
- Be yourself



During the Legislative Visit



- Don't get intimidated or frustrated.
- Be on time, and don't stay too long.
- Build a relationship.
- Follow up!

The Bottom Line

- Remember, it's all about relationships!
- So, win or lose, keep in touch with those elected officials, administrators, and other policy-makers. Let them know you are still around!

