

ADVOCACY TOOL KIT



“Effectively Communicating with Lawmakers”

Louisiana Rural Health Association

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Lafayette Hilton

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OUR LADY OF THE LAKE
REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

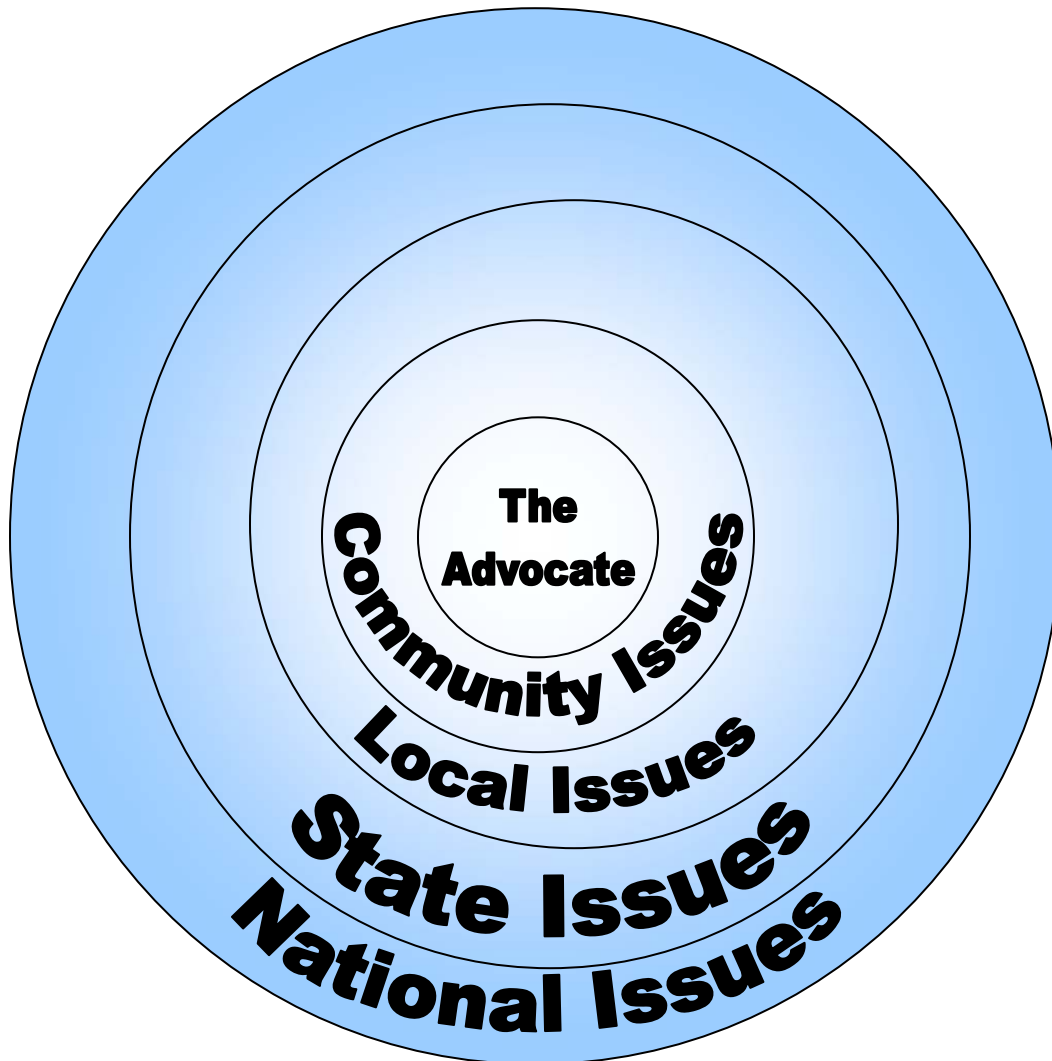
Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System

(Adapted from the American Heart Association Advocacy Tool Kit)

Advocacy in Action

The Community Advocate: Center of Our Success

Whether our issues are on our neighborhood block or in Congress, the individual advocate is the most critical factor in the eventual success of our issues. Without advocates taking action in their communities, our issues will never meet with success, regardless of what arena they are in.



Advocacy Overview

What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is the act or process of advancing or defeating a cause, policy or proposal. Advocacy issues include more than legislation and regulation. They can include company policies, community issues and neighborhood projects.

What is Policy?

A policy is a general principle or plan that guides the actions taken by a person or group. Policies can take the form of laws, regulations, company policies, administration decisions, etc. In other words, policies don't have to be laws, but they certainly can be.

The Advocacy Arena

The advocacy arena is where various types of policies are made.

- U.S. Congress
- State Legislatures
- City Councils
- School Boards
- Corporations
- Universities
- Neighborhoods

Why Advocacy?

Advocacy is a powerful tool for producing social change. Advocacy victories can affect the quality of life for entire communities for many years.

The Advocacy Mix

The advocacy mix is the combination of activities used to work toward the success of our initiatives.

- Coalitions and partnerships
- Grassroots networks
- Lobbying and influencing decision-makers
- Media and communications

Advocacy in Action

What motivates advocacy volunteers?

- Achievement
- Affiliation
- Empowerment

Lead and Coach for Success

- Explain the vision of the organization.
- Define roles and responsibilities.
- Define parameters.
- Determine manageable goals and checkpoints.
- Follow-up and coach in a clear and direct manner.
- Listen and provide feedback.

What do advocacy volunteers need?

- Clear objectives, adequate training and support to meet those objectives.
- To know that what they're doing is important and is making a difference.
- To know that they are appreciated.

Volunteers can fill a wide range of duties from very basic activities to more sophisticated and involved activities. All of these activities are critical to the success of your advocacy issues.

Basic Activities

- Join grassroots networks.
- Call or write decision-makers when asked.

Intermediate Activities

- Decision-maker visits
- Coalition meetings
- Network recruitment
- Letters to the editor
- Petitions

Advanced Activities

- Issue Development
- Media Spokesperson
- Personal Testimony

How do you recruit advocacy volunteers?

Ask them! Very few volunteer their services unsolicited. People want to help, but they usually wait to be asked. And if they can't help you, chances are they will have a long list of people for you to ask. Keep asking, and the right people will turn up.

Where do you find advocacy volunteers?

- Members of local boards, committees and divisions
- Special events
- Community groups like Rotary, Kiwanis, Optimists, Lions, YWCA, etc.
- Chamber of Commerce
- Politically active groups like NAACP, League of Women Voters, political parties

Tips on Recruiting Advocacy Volunteers

- **Recruit by interest.**
Some people may not be interested in all of your organizations' issues, but may be very interested in one issue area. Using volunteers in their areas of interest can help raise their level of involvement and effectiveness, making their volunteer experience more meaningful and your advocacy program more successful.

- **Recruit by professional expertise.**

Recruit individuals who work in the various fields that involve your issues. These people can serve as specialists and are the ones you'll draw upon to serve as media spokespersons and technical advisors.

- **Recruit from the advocacy field.**
Try to identify volunteers who are currently or have been in the public policy or advocacy field. This might be someone who served as an elected official, as staff person in government or a former lobbyist. These volunteers can be very helpful when trying to understand the complex advocacy arena.
- **Strive for diversity.**
Seek out individuals who look like your community and reflect your community's diversity (gender, race, age, occupational background, etc.).

Characteristics of an Advocate

Being an Advocate...

- Begins with caring – about the quality of life in our communities, in our schools, place of work, and in society as a whole.
- Is being willing to speak up, speak out and challenge the status quo.
- Is taking action and being a voice for positive social change.
- Is imagining possibilities and being willing to work towards objectives you may never see come to fruition in your lifetime.
- Is persevering in the face of adversity and seemingly insurmountable odds.

Advocacy Quotes

- You must be the change you wish to see in the world. (Gandhi)
- There is no chance, no destiny, and no fate that can circumvent or hinder or control the firm resolve of a determined soul. (Ella Wheeler Wilcox)
- In the confrontation between the stream and the rock, the stream always wins...not through strength but through persistence. (Anonymous)
- When spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion. (Ethiopian Proverb)
- Even an ant may harm an elephant. (Zulu Proverb)
- Part of the frustration in fighting city hall is that city hall is a building. (An Advocate)
- In a democracy, the individual enjoys not only the ultimate power but carries the ultimate responsibility. (Norman Cousins)
- I am only one, but still I am one.
I cannot do everything, but still I can do something.
And because I cannot do everything,
I will not refuse to do something that I can do. (Edward Everett)
- The mode by which the inevitable comes to pass is effort. (Oliver Wendell Holmes)
- Let us not be content to wait and see what happens, but give us the determination to make the right thing happen. (Peter Marshall)
- Thought is the blossom, language the bud, action the fruit behind it. (Ralph Waldo Emerson)
- The probability that we may fail in the struggle ought not to deter us from the support of a cause we believe to be just. (Abraham Lincoln)
- No man that does not see visions will ever realize any high hopes or undertake any high enterprise. (Woodrow Wilson)

Advocacy in Action

Integrating Advocacy Into Your Organization

- Make sure that **staff** at all levels receives an orientation to your organization's advocacy issues.
- Make sure that **volunteers** at all levels receive an orientation to your organization's advocacy issues.
- Make sure that your public advocacy objectives are incorporated into your organizations strategic and operation plans.
- Implement a public advocacy committee or work group in your organization
- Make sure your board adopts a set of public advocacy priorities every year.
- Conduct public advocacy presentations, training sessions, and roundtable discussions at annual meetings.
- Make sure to mention public advocacy items in newsletters and your annual report.
- Make sure that public advocacy updates are given at your board of directors meetings.
- Present public advocacy awards to volunteers.
- Make sure public advocacy updates, and training presentations, are given at staff meetings.

Coalitions and Partnerships

What is a Coalition or Partnership?

A coalition/partnership is two or more persons or organizations that are banded together and committed to a shared vision or objective. A coalition is a team.

Together Everyone Achieves More

Why Form Coalitions?

- Divides responsibilities and workload.
- Unifies message; allows many voices to be represented by one spokesperson.
- Pools resources, ideas and expertise; avoids duplication of activities.
- Increases clout and credibility; coalitions can exert far more power than one organization working alone.

Types of Coalitions

- Unstructured informal – an informal group of like-minded individuals who meet on occasion to advance issues common to their organizations. They may or may not have a name for their group.
- Structured informal – usually named, meets on a regular basis, and may have elected leadership.
- Structured formal – named; has regular meetings, elected positions and by-laws; may have funding and paid staff support; and may charge membership fee.

Keys to Successful Coalition Building

- Define the coalition's purpose and goals.
- Meet on a regular basis.
- Define leadership and other's roles.
- Rotate leadership responsibilities among coalition members.
- Practice inclusiveness.
- Involve everyone and utilize each person's unique strengths and talents.
- Use a consensus model for decision-making.
- Strive for consensus, but don't allow one person to obstruct the process. Modify proposals, and decisions, until no more than, one person is not satisfied.
- Continually recruit new members to add a fresh perspective and new enthusiasm.
- Celebrate your achievements as a team.

Collaboration

Collaboration is a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals. The relationship includes a commitment to mutual relationships, a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility, mutual authority and accountability for success, and sharing of resources and rewards.

Collaboratives achieve goals that individual organizations cannot achieve alone by

- Combining the full force of their members' organizations to change local laws, policies and norms.
- Integrating and coordinating service to improve quality and responsiveness.
- Minimizing duplication of services.
- Fostering diverse ideas and talent.
- Mobilizing resources.

Collaboratives inspire communities to try new approaches by

- Encouraging the participation of organizations that have never worked on specific issues.
- Creating unique collaborations among diverse partnership organizations.
- Bringing new talents together.

Collaboratives make it easier for organizations to work together by

- Helping communities acknowledge and take responsibility for their problems.
- Motivating organizations that are on the outside to work within the system.
- Improving communication and trust among groups that might ordinarily compete with each other.

Framing the Issue

Framing is a way of crafting your message in order to gain support on an issue from a particular audience. Successful framing is an important part of generating interest and support for your advocacy issues. It allows you to control the course of the discussion and debate on your issues.

Reframing or counter-framing is a technique used to counter the opposition's position on an issue and successfully restate your position.

Know Your Audience

Understanding your audience and its values and beliefs is key to properly framing your issue. Frame the issue to reflect those values and beliefs. Your audience may be anyone, including a single decision-maker, a group, a community, the general public, or the media.

We must be able to not only express the facts of an issue clearly and build a strong case for support, but also frame the issue to cross ideological boundaries and appeal to multiple audiences.

Key Words and Phrases for Framing Issues

Evoke emotions and feelings with key words and phrases, ***but remember the facts.***

- Unconstitutional
- Home rule
- Discrimination
- Equality
- Protect our rights
- Free speech
- Censorship
- Justice
- Taxes
- Jobs
- Fiscal responsibility
- Balanced budget
- Deficit
- Debt
- Working class families
- Regulation
- Mandates
- Big government
- Hand-out
- Protects/harms environment
- Good/bad for business
- Personal responsibility
- Enforce the law
- Family values
- Our children's future
- Protect our children
- Community standards
- Fair
- Reasonable

Media Advocacy

Media Advocacy is the strategic and proactive use of mass media to leverage support for and create awareness of advocacy issues and initiatives.

Why is media advocacy so important?

- It changes the way the community looks at issues and public health problems.
- It motivates community members and decision-makers to get involved.
- It creates a reliable, consistent stream of publicity for your issues and activities.
- It informs people about who and what contribute to certain community problems.
- It pressures key decision-makers to change policies.

Why is local media important?

Most people get their news from their local newspaper or television stations. The advantage you have with the local media is proximity – that anchors and reporters are part of the community.

What are sound bites?

Sound bites are 10-15 second quotes that quickly convey the message and grab the audience's attention. Good sound bites will inform as well as evoke strong emotion from a viewer, listener or reader.

Media advocacy tools

- Press releases
- Press conferences
- Editorial board visits
- Editorials
- Letters to the editor
- Advertisements
- Public Service Announcements
- Media Events

Alternative communications tools for Community Advocacy

- Flyers/hand bills
- Company bulletin boards
- Posters/yard signs
- Bumper stickers
- Marquees at banks, insurance companies, restaurants, etc.

Sources of Daily News for U.S. Adults

- Television 44%
- Newspapers 17%
- Internet 12%
- Magazines 5%
- Radio 3%
- Talking with others 1%
- Other source 1%
- Don't follow 28%
- Don't know/Refused 1%

Source: Roper Center Public Opinion Archives

Tips for Using the Media

- **Cultivate Relationships with Media**
Develop a reputation for providing reporters with solid, timely information.
- **Develop a Media (Press) List**
You should be able to generate mailing labels at a moment's notice. Code your lists by category. Make sure you have included personal contacts, news reporters, specialty editors or "city desks" for television, radio, daily and weekly newspapers, and ethnic, student, religious and union publications.
- **Think Pictures**
Good "photo opportunities" increase the likelihood of media coverage. Develop visuals and symbols that support your message.
- **Mail, Fax or e-mail Media Releases**
Press releases to the wire services, daily papers, television and radio stations should be received two to four days before an event. Weekly newspapers usually have deadlines of three or four days before publication.
- **Follow up Press Releases with Telephone Calls**
No matter how good your press release is, you will have a better chance of getting covered if you follow up the release with a phone call.
- **Recognize Who Controls the Media**
Your opposition may be owners or allies of the media. You cannot guarantee coverage, regardless of how exciting your event or issue is.

Media Advocacy Keys to Success

- Know your media representatives.
- Be proactive...don't wait for them to call you.
- Frame your issues to make them interesting and compelling.
- Think pictures, and make your story newsworthy.
- Build trust by providing timely and accurate information.
- Use clear and simple language.
- Use sound bites to get your message across quickly and effectively.

Plotting Your News Story

Is your story newsworthy?

- Is the information timely? Has this event already been reported? No journalist wants to report on yesterday's news.
- Does the story touch your community: Can you bring the story home? Stories from far off places are fine, but you have a better chance of coverage if you show a local impact.
- Is there a conflict? Are two forces opposing one another? A good fight always draws a crowd.
- Is the story special or unique?
- Does it present a breakthrough or milestone?
- Are there good pictures?
- Is it an anniversary?
- Are celebrities involved?

Steps in Plotting a News Story

- Headline
- Lead paragraph
- Substantiating facts/memorable quotes
- Conclusion
- Video tape/photos/graphics

Lobbying and Influencing Decision-makers

Lobbying is communicating with the decision-makers to get their support for our advocacy issues. This communication can be in any form, including face-to-face meetings, letters, phone calls, faxes, e-mails and personal testimony.

What is a lobbyist?

A lobbyist is anyone who communicates with a decision-maker to try to get his or her support for or against a particular issue. However, when people refer to lobbyists they usually mean someone who is employed full time to work with public officials on a daily basis to advance an organization's issues. Lobbyists are employed at the federal, state and local levels.

Typical Duties of a Lobbyist

- Monitoring legislative and regulatory issues
- Informing the organization of threats and opportunities
- Working with public officials and their staff to craft policies
- Persuading public officials to support or oppose certain issues

What is a Decision-maker?

A decision-maker is someone who has authority over key policy decisions. A decision-maker can be a member of Congress, state legislator, school board member, CEO of a corporation, etc.

Decision-makers

- are confronted with a wide assortment of issues.
- rarely have time to devote to your issue.
- are faced with conflicting pressures from any special interest groups.
- are overworked and understaffed.
- must consider the political consequences of their actions.

Tips on Lobbying Decision-makers

- Be prepared.
- Be honest.
- Be friendly.
- Be persistent.
- Be brief.
- Say “Thank you”.

Most Effective Types of Communication with Decision-makers

- Personal visits by peer decision-makers
- Personal visits by constituents
- Personal letters from constituents
- Telephone calls from constituents
- Articles in major daily newspapers
- Editorials in major daily newspapers

Tips on Writing a Decision-maker

- Be clear and concise. State specifically what you would like the decision-maker to do.
- Identify yourself as a constituent and provide a short description of your organization.
- Refer to your issue by bill name and number in the first and last paragraphs.
- Stat your position in the first and last paragraphs.
- Indicate the bill’s status if you know it.
- If possible, describe a personal experience with the issue.

How to Address Correspondence to Decision-makers

To the President:

President (first and last name)

Dear President (last name):

To a Cabinet Secretary:

The Honorable (first and last name)

Dear Secretary (last name):

To a Senator:

The Honorable (first and last name)

Dear Senator (last name):

To a Representative:

The Honorable (first and last name)

Dear Representative (last name):

To a State Legislator:

The Honorable (first and last name)

Dear Representative /Senator /Assemblyman
/Assemblywoman (last name):

To a City Council Member:

The Honorable (first and last name)

Dear Councilman/Councilwoman (last
name):

Keys to Effective Testimony

- If you've never given testimony before, attend a few committee meetings or public hearings to see how it's done. Observe what works and what doesn't.
- Study the issue and understand it as best as you possibly can.
- Try to determine the attitudes and positions of some of the decision-makers prior to the meeting, and address those areas in your testimony.
- Anticipate arguments and address them in your testimony.
- Coordinate your testimony with your allies and coalition partners. Decide beforehand who's going to say what.
- Keep your testimony concise, factual and easy to understand. Often there will be a time limit on personal testimony.
- Rehearse your testimony and practice responses to questions you may be asked.
- Conclude your testimony by summarizing your main points and thanking the decision-makers for the opportunity to testify.

Checklist for Written Testimony

- Date of hearing
- Your name and the organization you are representing
- Group or governing body you are addressing
- Subject matter or bill

Grassroots Networks

Grassroots is a system of recruiting, training and motivating individuals to make contact with decision-makers in order to advance our advocacy issues.

The Importance of Grassroots Networks

- Use every opportunity
- Public inquiries
- Special events and conferences

Key Contacts

A key contact is someone who has direct access to and influence over a decision-maker. A key contact is usually someone who has a personal relationship with a decision-maker, such as a relative, former classmate, business partner, neighbor, etc. Key contacts are critical to gaining support of certain decision-makers on key votes and issues. Key contacts are also referred to as “silver bullets”.

When to Mobilize Key Contacts

- You need to swing crucial votes to your side from undecided decision-makers.
- You’re seeking a sponsor or co-sponsor for an issue.
- Very specific action is desired of a particular decision-maker.