

# Public Policy Advocacy: Meeting with Elected Officials



# 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 parents get involved?

- We believe
  - The issue is important to us and our family
  - We have something to contribute
  - We will be listened to and our contributions respected
  - Our participation will make a difference



# Opportunities to Participate in Policy 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 our children, our 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 & 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 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. For US Senators & Representatives, you can find information at [www.House.gov](http://www.House.gov) or [www.Senate.gov](http://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



- Learn as much as you can about the member.
- Establish agenda & goals; prepare content & delivery tailored to the legislator.
- Collect stories from those who can't attend.
- Bring business cards and information to leave behind.

# Preparing for Legislative Visits



- 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!

