



Getting Your Message Heard

A Toolkit for Advocacy

Definitions:

Advocacy: Education on or demonstration of public support or for a specific cause.

Lobbying: Encouraging an elected body to vote a certain way on a specific issue.

- If there is no current legislation on the topic, then information communications are considered education.
- Individuals have a right to contact their legislators and share their points of view. Use of personal equipment (phone, computers, tablets) to contact legislators on personal time is an individual's right.

Tips for Success:

- **Make it local.** When you talk about your issue, paint a picture of your community—your neighborhood, your corner store, your schools. Be sure to consider culture, political views, and relevant community events.
- **Organize people.** You may have a coalition, collaborative, alliance or partnership. Find out your core advocates who care about the issue—educate, train, and ask them to become ambassadors on the topic.
- **Be clear on what you want.** Don't ask for general support of prevention, educate, and advocate for specifics.
- **Stay on message.** Make sure your message is consistent. Teach the principle of polite ignorance "I don't know the answer to that question, but I will look into it and get back to you" is sometimes the best option available.
- **Use the media.** Use your knowledge and retool it for your own local uses. Reporters are looking for stories. Be-friend them and form advocates for the cause.
- **Use the editorial page.** Elected officials peruse the editorials to learn about their constituents. Use the Letter to the editor and editorial functions of your paper to educate on the best practice policy change.
- **Use mail/email in targeted fashion.** Use mail to issue calls to action and mobilize your core grassroots supporters.
- **Use social media.** Organize a group on Facebook, and use twitter as an access point to traditional media sources. It's free. BUT-if you don't have the time or the capacity to keep up with it, then leave it alone.
- **Know your local leaders.** This doesn't just include public officials, but there are others who hold significant influence such as pastors, community leaders, business owners, youth leaders etc. Educate the people who have the ability to make a difference on your issue.
- **Build local champions.** Utilize breakfast/lunch meetings, social meetings, networks, coalitions, town halls, health fairs, and speaking engagements as opportunities to turn your leaders into champions.
- **Follow up.** Maintain regular contact with your champions.

Contact Your Local North Carolina Legislators

- To find legislators that represent you, visit NCLEG.net.

Learn more at PreventionIsTheAnswer.org.

