Engaging in Advocacy
For
Policy & Environmental Change

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Outline

- What is Policy & Environmental Change?
- Advocacy Basics
- Advocacy Planning
- Making the Case for P&E Change
What is Policy & Environmental Change?

P&E Change Defined
Catalysts for P&E Change
Advocacy for P&E Change
The Spectrum of Prevention

- Influencing Policy & Legislation
- Changing Organizational Practices
- Fostering Coalitions & Networks
- Educating Providers
- Promoting Community Education
- Strengthening Individual Knowledge & Skills
Policy & Environmental Change Defined

Policy & environmental changes are sustainable interventions that impact the entire population of a community or region.

- Reduce health disparities by addressing barriers to healthy choices and behaviors
- Help make healthy choices easy, safe and affordable in the community
- Potential to achieve the broadest change across a population
- Because it works!
Policy Change

- A *written* course of action intended to influence and/or determine decisions or other matters that promote healthy living

- Can be enacted by local, state, federal governments, schools, public agencies, businesses, organizations and individuals

- Ex:
  - Local Complete Streets Policy
  - Ordinance prohibiting smoking in parks and playgrounds
  - Town Recreation or Bike & Pedestrian Plan
  - School food procurement policy
Policy Primer

- **Resolutions** – used to show support, not enforceable

- **Policies** – usually flexible, leads to procedural changes

- **Ordinances/Local Laws** – permanent & enforceable, directs specific action

- **Plans** – blueprint for the community/region

- **Budgets** – designates government spending
Environmental Change

A change, enhancement or addition to the built environment that permits, influences, or encourages healthy living

Often occur in the places where we live, learn, work and play (i.e., the physical structures and facilities that comprise our community infrastructure).

Ex:
- multi-use paths and trails
- community and school gardens
- sidewalks and bike lanes
- fresh food displays in convenience stores
Catalysts for P&E Change

- Existence of compelling data and reports to support change
- Community interest/will for change
- Seed money/funding available to support initiative
- An organization, coalition and/or committed individual on a mission to affect a change they believe strongly in
Advocacy for P&E Change

Communities are always changing…advocates can find opportunities to improve physical activity and healthy eating through P&E change.

Advocates must be change agents…help identify and implement P&E strategies.

Achieving P&E change requires advocacy and civic participation.
Advocacy Basics

What is Advocacy?
Cornerstones of Effective Advocacy
Advocacy vs. Lobbying
What is Advocacy?

Advocacy: the act or process of advocating for a cause or proposal

Civic Participation: individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern
Community Health Advocacy

Refers to the organized strategies, skills and tools used to advocate for policy and environmental changes that address community health priorities
So what is Advocacy really?

**Educate**
- Educating decision makers about an issue and your role in addressing it through P&E change

**Engage**
- Engaging members of the public to build awareness and support for your issue and the change you want to see

**Persuade**
- Building a persuasive case for a particular policy or environmental change
Cornerstones of Effective Advocacy

Effective Advocacy is:

✔ Strategic
✔ Informed
✔ Organized
✔ Flexible
Effective Advocacy is Strategic

Being Strategic means taking into account the social, economic and political climate you are working in

Strategic Planning for advocacy...more about that later
Effective Advocacy is Strategic

**Political Climate** – Do your legislators have the political will to pass your policy? Can you build political will? Or are you building awareness for a day in which the climate is more favorable?

**Economic Climate** – Does your advocacy issue involve an expenditure of money by government? If so, is the economic climate right for additional expenditures?

**Social Climate** – Do you have public will and support? Have you raised awareness of your issue with support from an array of potential stakeholders?
Effective Advocacy is Informed

Being *Informed* means that you are armed with information supporting your goals, knowledgeable about your community, and credible among decision makers and the public.
Effective Advocacy is Organized

Being *Organized* means building a coalition of groups and individuals to achieve advocacy objectives

More about **Coalition Building** later...
Effective Advocacy is Flexible

Being *Flexible* means that you can adjust plans, tools, partners, and strategies as needed

“The show doesn’t start when it’s ready. It starts at 11:30” - Lorne Michaels, SNL
What makes an effective advocate?

- Respectful of others’ points of view
- Politically aware
- Realistic
- Enthusiastic
- Timely
- Focused
- Funny? (can’t hurt)
Advocacy vs. Lobbying

LOBBYISTS
Because it's hard for politicians to decide stuff on their own.
Direct Lobbying

Any attempt to influence any legislation though communication with:

🌟 A member or employee of a legislative body
🌟 Any government official or employee who may participate in the formulation of the legislation
Direct Lobbying

A communication with a legislator or governmental official is considered lobbying if and only if:

- It refers to specific legislation and;
- Reflects a view of such legislation or asks the legislator to support the legislation
Grassroots Lobbying

Examples of grassroots lobbying:

🌟 An action alert that directs constituents to contact their legislator and ask them to support specific legislation

🌟 A letter to the editor which recommends that constituents contact their legislator and ask them to support specific legislation.
What Lobbying is...

Example of lobbying:

“Please vote in favor of the soda tax legislation that was recently introduced by Legislator Stevens.”

Publicly funded agencies and employees are prohibited from using public resources to lobby elected officials.
What lobbying is…

Asking your grassroots volunteers to take specific action on a particular bill/issue:

“Contact your state senator today and urge them to support the soda tax”

Again, public dollars may **not** be used to convey this type of message.
What lobbying is NOT…

🌟 Educating the public and decision makers about public health issues and strategies

Example: “Research shows that consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages contributes to childhood obesity. Taxes on soda can help encourage parents to reduce the amount of soda they purchase for their children”
What lobbying is NOT…

- Participation in a government sponsored hearing where participation is part of public record
- Disseminating survey results on community knowledge & attitudes about a specific issue and/or support for P&E change
- Educating elected officials on the specific issue and your organization’s role in addressing it
Illustrating the Difference

State-funded advocate

“Complete Streets policies encourage physical activity by ensuring that streets and sidewalks are designed to meet the needs of all users.”

Advocate who can lobby

“Our coalition believes that the NYS Complete Streets bill (S1332) is great and we’d like you to vote ‘yes’ for the legislation.”
Five Conversations
Your Legislators Want to Have

Real-life stories that personalize the issue
*Not lobbying*

Local and state health statistics
*Not lobbying*

How state & federal money is being spent in the district
*Not lobbying*

Your coalition’s vision and goals for the region
*Not lobbying*

What specific legislative action would make you happy
*Lobbying!!*
What about activism?

**Activism** - practice of vigorous action or involvement as a means of achieving political or other goals, sometimes by demonstrations, protests, etc.
Policy & Advocacy Models

- Advising
- Advocacy
- Cooperation /inside track
- Confrontation /outside track
- Lobbying
- Activism
- Interest/ Values-based
- Evidence/ science-based
Advocacy Planning

Why Plan for Advocacy?
Strategic Planning Tools
Coalition Building
Why Plan for Advocacy?

- Gives your coalition a road map to show where you are going and how you will get there.

- Focus and resources are properly allocated toward activities that have the most impact.

- Involve your whole team in the strategic planning process right from the start.
Strategic Planning Tools

- Advocacy Progress Planner (online tool)
- Midwest Academy Strategy Chart
- Logic Models
- Leadership Strategies webinars and training
Coalition Building

A coalition is a union of people and organizations working to influence outcomes on a specific issue.

Coalition building is key to advocating for policy and environmental change.

The only reason to spend the time and energy building a coalition is to amass the power necessary to do something you cannot do through a single organization or person.
Making the Case for P&E Change

Identifying your audience
Developing your message
Delivering your message
Identifying Key Audiences

**Primary Audiences**
- Those people with the power to implement the P&E change you want to see
- Most of your focus is here

**Secondary Audiences**
- Those stakeholders who can help you advocate with primary audiences
- Ask them to join your coalition

**General Public**
- Build support and awareness for your P&E change
- Engage through media, community meetings, events
Learn About Your Audiences

- What is their role in making the change you want to see?

- Have they supported action on this issue in the past?

- How do they make decisions?

- Are they potential champions for your issue?

- Who are your potential allies and opponents?

- What is the best way to communicate with them?
Gather Information

- Find data/facts to build support for the change you want to see
  - Studies
  - Surveys/Polls
  - Assessments

- Find sample policies or write a sample policy

- Identify examples of environmental changes

- How much is it going to cost?
Developing Your Message

- Factual and well-documented
- Clear and concise
- Be able to explain to diverse audiences
- Address opponents concerns without attacks
- Frame your message to appeal to your chosen audience
- Highlight diverse benefits of your proposed change
- Allow audience to reach their own conclusion
Delivering Your Message

Effectively communicate your message through:

- Letters or phone calls to decision makers
- Face-to-Face meetings
- Media outreach
- Informational presentations
- Petitions and surveys
- Focus groups
- Advisory committees
Things to Remember

- EDUCATE + ENGAGE + PERSUADE = ADVOCACY

- Policy change is incremental; be prepared for the long haul

- Achieving a short term goal like getting a policy introduced is just as important as reaching the ultimate goal

- Don’t underestimate the power of volunteers

- Celebrate your successes – no matter how small – and HAVE FUN
Advocacy Works!

"Politicians who don't listen to the people are not politicians for long...But you need to act, and you need to speak."

- Gov. Andrew Cuomo

The next step is up to YOU!