

Closing the Circuit: Educating Legislators About the Impact of Their Policies

covering kids and families
Wisconsin

*Adapted from a presentation by the
Wisconsin Council on Children and Families
(WCCF)*

Workshop Overview

- ▶ Introductions
- ▶ Advocacy
 - What it is
 - Why it matters
 - What's allowed
 - Closing the circuit (doing it well)
- ▶ Examples
- ▶ Discussion

2

Introductions

- ▶ Name
- ▶ Organization/Affiliation
- ▶ One word reaction to the word "advocacy"

3

The Advocacy Spectrum

- ▶ Think about where your activity falls on the spectrum and whether it has **HIGH** or **low** impact on policy.
- ▶ Are these things you can do as part of your job?

4

Advocacy Defined

- ▶ Speaking Up!
- ▶ To plead a cause, make the case for something or someone
- ▶ Organized efforts and actions that seek to highlight critical issues, to influence public attitudes, and to enact and implement laws & public policies so that our vision of "what should be" becomes a reality

5

Why Policy Matters

- ▶ Tobacco taxes and smoking bans
- ▶ Pre-natal coverage for previously non-qualifying immigrant women
- ▶ BadgerCare premium increase and implementation of Employer Verification of Income
- ▶ BadgerCare Plus expansion to "childless adults"
- ▶ SCHIP reauthorization, COBRA assistance through ARRA, "express lane eligibility", state/national health care reform

Why Advocacy Matters

- ▶ Advocacy can help you achieve your public health goals.
 - Increased awareness about your issue
 - Increased support for your issue
 - Policymakers can use your organization as a resource
 - Improved policies affect health behaviors & health outcomes
 - Potential access to funding

Direct Lobbying Defined

- ▶ Direct lobbying is a communication
 - with a legislator or legislative staff member,
 - which refers to specific legislation, and
 - which reflects a view on that legislation.

Direct Lobbying – Exclusions & Inclusions

- ▶ Excludes
 - regulation of an administrative agency even though the regulations implement specific legislation
- ▶ Includes
 - communication with executive branch officials that refers to and takes a position on legislation with a primary purpose of influencing that legislation
 - time spent on the actual communication AND any time spent on researching and preparing for that communication

Direct Lobbying – Research Exemption

- ▶ An important exception to the definition of direct lobbying:
 - Making available materials that present a sufficiently full and fair exposition of public policy issues to allow the public to form its own conclusions does not constitute lobbying, even if the materials both refer to and take a position on a specific legislative proposal.

Can I express a view on pending legislation? Yes!

- ▶ Even if the issue you are interested in has already been introduced, you can:
 - Express your own opinion
 - Represent the views of an organization as an unpaid volunteer
 - Represent the views of an organization you work for to legislators that represent you where you live
 - Represent the view of an organization you work for to as many legislators as you want, up to 4 days within a six-month period (Jan-June & July-Dec)

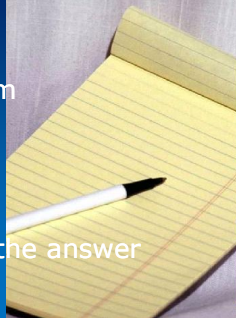
Advocating Essentials – Be Prepared

Do your research ahead of time

- ▶ Know your audience
 - What do they know about you?
 - What do they know about the issue?
 - Why does it matter to them
 - What's their position on the issue?
 - What's their position of influence?
- ▶ Know your issue
 - Have current information
 - Have data to support your claims

Advocating Essentials – Be Specific

- ▶ What's wrong
- ▶ Why it matters
- ▶ Why it matters to them
 - Philosophically
 - Personally
 - Their district
- ▶ What's the answer
- ▶ How they can deliver the answer



Advocating Essentials – Be Brief, Be Personal

- ▶ Give them a KISS
(keep it simple, Stupid)
- ▶ Keep materials to 1 page,
two at most
- ▶ Keep it to two points,
three at most
- ▶ Use personal stories & examples
- ▶ For data: a picture = 1000 words



14

Logistics: Scheduling the Meeting

- ▶ Identify key influencers on the issue
- ▶ Call & speak with scheduler
 - Be open to meeting with staff
- ▶ Fax or email written request including:
 - Organization name
 - Date/time/length of meeting
 - Topic of discussion
 - Names of persons attending & contact info
- ▶ Confirm appointment (follow-up call/email)

15

Logistics: Conducting the Meeting

- ▶ Be on time (they may not be)
- ▶ Expect meeting to last <30 minutes
- ▶ Keep introductions brief
- ▶ Thank policymaker for his/her support
- ▶ Be prepared for range of knowledge about the issue
- ▶ Make your "Ask" clear from the start
- ▶ Get contact info of staff to follow-up
- ▶ Leave written materials behind

16

Example of CKF experience

- ▶ EVF education
 - Many legislators lacked basic knowledge of program much less EVF
 - Some legislators non-responsive
 - Some legislators very supportive and appreciative of information
 - Unclear what they could to help
 - Some changes were eventually made through DHS itself (ultimately a better avenue for change)

Example of CKF experience

- ▶ Prenatal coverage for non-qualifying immigrant women
 - Began as Policy Primer
 - Carried forward by advocates and included in the budget
 - Was a side-bar to CKF main issue of BadgerCare in tight budget times
 - To the extent there was interest, it came in the form of opposition
 - And yet, now is law!

Summary: Elements of Effective Advocacy

- ▶ Have a clear and specific goal
- ▶ Share personal experiences & stories
- ▶ Ask for a specific commitment
- ▶ Leave something clear & concise behind
- ▶ Be creative
- ▶ Be strategic
- ▶ Prepare, prepare, prepare
- ▶ Follow-up, follow-up, follow-up
- ▶ Build relationships!

19

The Advocacy Spectrum

- ▶ Volunteer on a Campaign
- ▶ Talk with Colleagues, Friends, Neighbors About Issues
- ▶ Vote
- ▶ Invite Policymakers to Tour Your Program
- ▶ Write a Letter to the Editor
- ▶ Speak at Public Forum
- ▶ Register Others to Vote
- ▶ Get people to attend a forum/rally
- ▶ Host a House Party on an Issue or For a Candidate
- ▶ Talk with Colleagues, Friends, Neighbors & Make a Direct "Ask" for Action
- ▶ Serve in a Leadership Position on a Committee or Campaign
- ▶ Meet With Your Elected Reps About Issues
- ▶ Run for Elected Office
- ▶ Organize a Forum
- ▶ Plan & Implement Advocacy Campaign
- ▶ Meet with Editorial Board
- ▶ Help Impacted Individuals Advocate

How many of these activities do you engage in?

20

Planning Any Advocacy Campaign: Nine Questions

1. What do we want?
2. Who can give it to us?
3. What do they need to hear?
4. Who do they need to hear it from?
5. How can we get them to hear it?
6. What do we have?
7. What do we need to develop?
8. How do we start?
9. How do we tell if it's working?

21

Resources

- ▶ American Public Health Association "advocacy and policy" web page www.apha.org/advocacy
- ▶ Wisconsin Council on Children and Families "Health Care Coverage" e-newsletter (sign up via www.wccf.org)
- ▶ Wisconsin State Legislature home page www.legis.state.wi.us
- ▶ CKF Tools You Can Use web page www.ckfwi.org/toolsyoucanuse.htm

22

For More Information

- ▶ CKF Public Policy Primer Series:
 - www.ckfwi.org/policy.htm
- ▶ CKF Policy Committee
 - Meets from 3-4pm the third Thursday of each month via conference call
 - Join the list serve by e-mailing info@ckfwi.org
- ▶ Contact us at:
 - 1300 Linden Drive, Rm. 342, Madison, WI 53706
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