

HOW CAN I ADVOCATE WELL?

Making Your Voice Count
As an Advocate for Policy Change

KENTUCKY RURAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

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A Democracy requires that the
VOICE of the PEOPLE be heard.



Why Is Advocacy Important?

- Legislators are elected by YOU.
- Therefore, legislators have a duty to serve YOU.
- The Governor is elected by YOU.
- Therefore, the Governor and all of the Executive Branch have a duty to serve YOU.
- A Democracy requires that the PEOPLE speak.
- Policy-makers cannot serve YOU unless they hear from YOU.
- YOU cannot hold a policy-maker accountable unless YOU have expressed your issue or concern to them.

Advocacy is Education with Passion

- An Advocate **Listens** and looks for gaps that need to be addressed
- An Advocate **Connects** with policy-makers and the community being served
- An Advocate **Speaks** with and for people
- An Advocate **Acts** to move policy forward
- An Advocate Has **Passion** about an Issue or about People!

If YOU don't speak out... Who will speak?

- Who understands the issues and need for policy change better than YOU do?
- Whose voice will be heard if not yours?



Your Voice as a Rural Health Advocate

YOU...Are a passionate educator! YOU...

- Understand it's about policy, not politics.
- See problems / unmet needs & want to fix them.
- Are willing to get involved in advocacy.
- Are knowledgeable about the issues.
- Provide accurate information.
- Can access "free" media & rally ground support.
- Can gather allies to work in coalitions.

Policies will be made

- Whether YOU are there or not...
- Public policies affect YOU, your family, community and the people you serve!
- YOU can stay on the sidelines or YOU can choose to influence the system.



What Do You Need to be Effective?

- *Understand the process, context and timeframe for action on policy change
- *Identify the policy-makers
- *Specify your goals – short and long-term
- *Know the time frame for action
- *Engage others in the fight
- *Prepare for defense, as well as offense
- *Remember...it's all about relationships!

Target Your Ask

- Your ask can be targeted to the individual, community, state or national level
- What is the policy that needs to be changed or instituted...and why?
- Who has the power to change it?
- Who do those policy-makers listen to?
- How can you be one of those people?

What Are Your Decision-Points?

- *Are you certain that state action – law or reg – is the avenue for policy change around your issue?
- *Does the issue have a history of policy action?
- *Have you identified your champion(s)?
- *Is your goal to introduce an idea for later action or to try to pass something in the next session?

Legislators ask: Who else is engaged with you in this fight? Who is opposed and how strong is the opposition likely to be? Is it going to cost money?

How Will YOUR Voice Be Heard?

- Identify YOUR Senator and Representative and their districts by going to www.legislature.ky.gov & putting in your **home** address at “Find Your Legislator”
<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/findyourlegislator/findyourlegislator.html>
- Contact legislators in Frankfort by Message Line, email, letter, social media, call to their office in Frankfort (502-564-8100) or with a personal visit
- **CALL THE MESSAGE LINE OFTEN! 1-800-372-7181**
- Contact your legislators at home & identify yourself as a **constituent** with a concern or policy issue
- Follow the action at www.legislature.ky.gov and through KRHA, KVH and other advocacy organizations

Making Connections

- Most powerful statements you can make:
“I am your constituent...and I vote!”
- Also powerful: “I work with your constituents in my role as....”
- How do you identify your policy-makers?
- How do you make connections...and then stay in touch with them?
- This is a PROCESS...not a one-time deal

Connecting to Your Legislators

- Dear Representative / Senator _____
(If emailing, put in Subject Line: *I am Your Constituent!* (only if you are))
- I am a constituent, living in your legislative district (or I work in your legislative district / or I am a member of _____ organization) and I am writing/ emailing/ calling you because I am very concerned about _____ (be as specific as possible in describing the issue).
- This is a problem because _____ (make it personal!)
- ASK: I would like to meet with you to further discuss this important issue.
- OR ASK: Please vote for HB (House Bill) or SB (Senate Bill) _____ (number of the bill) so that _____
- (briefly describe what will happen if the bill becomes law or the funding is put in the budget or the problem is solved).
- Please let me know when I may meet with you.
- OR Please let me know if I can count on your support of HB/SB _____.
- Thank you for your attention and for caring about this issue important to me and to your constituents.
- _____ Your name (be legible or print your name as well)
- _____ Your address and phone number
- _____ Your email address

How Are You Making Connections?

- What legislators know you, your agency, your issue?
- How many of those legislators are in key positions to help?
- How can you increase your outreach?
- Have you already run your idea “up the flagpole” with some key policy-makers?
- What is your history of connections... personal, organizational and on this issue?

YOUR voice is magnified in coalitions and working partnerships...

When all are aiming for the same target!



Building Support

- Engage in Coalition-Building:
Formal/Informal/One-Issue/Multiple Issues
- Educate and Include Unlikely Allies
- Focus on the ultimate decision-makers and on those who can connect with and influence them
- Build a “buzz” of events, media and general public support

Issue Education

How do you make your case to policy-makers?

- Talking Points – use bullets, lots of white space, illustrations, make it easily readable and understandable
- Scripts – help keep the message consistent across multiple speakers
- Fact Sheets – good as “leave-behinds”, make sure they have your contact information on them

Issue Education

What data do you have to make your case?

- Who is the target of your policy change – how will they be affected?
- Could you put together a single sheet of “Talking Points” to make your case?
- What is the consistent message you want legislators to hear about the issue?
- Who can you list as supporting the issue?

Lifting Up Voices

- Goal: Putting a Face on the Problem
- Personal Stories tell it best
- Data – putting the numbers behind the people
- Videos – can grab attention; put them on your cell phone!
- Most powerful voices – those of local constituents and influencers

Lifting Up Voices

- Besides the Data – the numbers – to support your issue – who are the people?
- Your Goal: Put a Face on the Problem
- What kinds of personal stories can you gather and put in front of legislators? Are some of those constituents & influencers?
- How will you make and keep connections? How will you grab their attention?

Engaging the Community

- Build Coalitions – make the structure work for what you need and include unlikely allies
- Rallies / Press Conferences in community & in Frankfort
- Calls to Action / Action Alerts – keep others informed
- Social Media – lots of Twitter!
- Phone-Calling and/or Personal Visits with Legislators
- Well-planned testimony in Frankfort
- An identifying color or slogan is helpful for recognition
- Utilize the media to keep your story alive

Shifting the Narrative – Making the Case for Change

- It is helpful to lay out a description of what is happening now...why it needs to change ...and what the desired outcome would look like.
- “How” the change is made may need to be left to policy-makers.
- Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor – be sure to target smaller, weekly community papers and include personal stories. They can help build support for the issue and for policy change.

"Non-Partisan" Education, Information, Research, and Analysis
E.g., Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States.

Advocacy
E.g., Local health departments are key players in preventing and reducing tobacco use through clinical and prevention services.

Lobbying
E.g., We are asking you to vote in favor of the XX bill that increases funding for tobacco cessation programs in local health departments.

Five Advocacy Tips
At the basic level advocacy is building relationships. The goal is to become a valuable resource for policymakers. No matter who the audience is, you should keep in mind the following:

1. Be confident.
2. Frame your message to answer the question, "So what?"
3. Plan and practice your message.
4. Present a clear and compelling message; less is more.
5. Offer yourself as an expert resource and provide examples from your community; stories are more compelling than statistics.

National Association of County & City Health Officials: NACCHO.ORG

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Words to the Wise...

- ❖ Legislating public policy is not always a logical and rational process
- ❖ Those who love sausage and the law should watch neither being made!
- ❖ Remember to say “Thank You!” even if you only got a toe inside the door
- ❖ Be polite but always be persistent... be the Energizer Bunny on your issue!

All politics are local, even if the focus is at the state level



Inside Politics

- Our issues are neither partisan nor political, but the process is!
- The party who holds the majority holds the power
- Those in leadership have great influence, as do committee chairs...but every legislator has a vote and a voice



Context: 2024 Legislative Session

- The KY General Assembly will meet for a long (60-day) session, beginning on January 2, 2024. The legislators will be sworn in and the action will begin!
- There will be two NEW legislators – Sen. Greg Elkins elected to replace Sen. Alvarado (SD 28) and Rep. Arielle Camuel elected to fill the Rep. Swann seat (HD 93).
- This is a BUDGET session – and funding priorities mark the importance that our policy-makers put on Kentucky's PEOPLE – health, education, services, protection, etc.
- You can follow all the action through KET or the LRC YouTube and can access all bills and other materials at www.legislature.ky.gov
- 2024 is an ELECTION YEAR for 100 KY House seats, 19 KY Senate seats and 6 Congressional Representatives

YOU are an **ADVOCATE** because **YOU**
VOTE and **SPEAK OUT**...



and because
YOU can influence
others to vote and
to speak out!

Words to remember -

“
Never forget that a small
group of thoughtful people
can change the world.
Indeed, that’s all that ever
has.”

”
-Margaret Mead

Questions??

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