

**What is Advocacy?:**

Advocacy represents the strategies devised, actions taken, and solutions proposed to influence decision-making at the local, state, and federal level to create positive change for people and their environment. Everyone needs to be involved, and a single voice is a powerful tool.

**Different types of advocacy:**

**Individual Advocacy:** Individual advocacy focuses on changing the situation of one person to protect his or her rights or to improve individual services.

*(Brain Injury Research Center Website)*

**Systems Advocacy:** Systems advocacy is an effort to change policies, rules or laws which determine how services are provided. Systems advocacy works to change the situations of a whole group of persons who share a similar problem, or to change a service system.

*(Brain Injury Research Center Website)*

**Legislative Advocacy:** The practice of attempting to persuade legislators to adopt a particular stance on an issue

**How to Achieve the Highest Impact**

Being a successful advocate requires more than the occasional phone call or letter. Remember that your legislators and policy makers are real people, so work to create a lasting relationship with them. Remember to send thank-you cards after visiting with you or after positive action is taken, or acknowledge their good work in some sort of public forum.

***Never underestimate the power of a relationship or a personal story to influence!***

**ADVOCACY: The responsibility of the Aging Network**

**The Wisconsin Elders Act on advocacy:**

Wisconsin Statutes 46.82 on **Aging Units**

(3) an aging unit:

(a) Duties. **Shall** do all of the following:

12. **Assist in representing needs, views and concerns of older individuals in local decision making and** assist older individuals in expressing their views to elected officials and providers of services.

18. **Advocate on behalf of older individuals** to assist in enabling them to meet their basic needs.

**The Wisconsin ADRC 2017 Contract on advocacy:**

III. SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED BY THE AGING AND DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER

P. Customer and Systems Advocacy....

1. Informing People of Their Rights and Responsibilities
2. Helping People Resolve Disputes and Referring Them to Advocates
3. Cooperation with Client Advocates
4. ADRC Advocacy –

Aging and Disability Resource Centers shall advocate on behalf of the individuals and groups who comprise their target populations when needed services are not being adequately provided within the service delivery system.

**The Older Americans Act on advocacy:**

Sec 306

(6) provide that **the area agency on aging will**

(B) **serve as the advocate** and focal point **for older individuals within the community by** (in cooperation with agencies, organizations, and individuals participating in activities under the plan) monitoring, evaluating, and **commenting upon all policies, programs, hearings, levies, and community actions which will affect older individuals;**

***What we can do!***

- Teach people how to be advocates – teach them the legislative process and encourage them to express their thoughts and feeling with legislators and policy makers.
- Meet with your legislators to discuss an issue that is important to you as an individual, and is important to your consumer, the older adult. Get in the habit of calling or emailing them, or sending them letters.
- Provide legislators and policy makers with educational materials about a specific piece of legislation and provide them with routine informational mailings about your programs and services.
- Respond to a request from a legislative committee for information about a specific piece of legislation.
- Track activities of legislators, including votes, positions taken, contributions accepted, etc.
- Talk to the media.
- Advocate for better enforcement of existing laws.
- Conduct public education campaigns.
- Produce and disseminate research reports or studies that provide nonpartisan analysis on policy issues, including specific legislative issues.
- A newsletter to your own members providing info about a specific piece of legislation (e.g., a request to call or write to legislators).

### **Avenues for Advocacy**

- Contact an elected official (face to face visit, phone call, email, letter).
- Hold a press conference.
- Host a rally.
- Provide testimony at public hearings.
- Hold an “awareness” event.

### **Contacting elected officials**

- Visit face-to-face
- Call
- Email
- Write
- Invite them to do a site visit at your organization/program (officials currently in office)
- Engage on social media

### **Defining your message**

- Key questions:
  - What is the problem?
  - What specifically do you want to have happen/change?
  - Who decides?
  - How will you persuade them?

### **Refining your message**

- Who is your target audience?
- What do you know about them?
- What do they know about you?
- What do they know about your issue?

### **Making your case**

- Know the facts: Use current data to discuss your issue.
- ***Tell stories: Stories are powerful and persuasive!***
- Use positive language: Give people something to be FOR, not against.
- Be mindful of timing: Pay attention to current news events, lawmakers’ schedules, etc.

### **Use Research to Support Your Issue**

- Site the source. Example: <sup>1</sup> *Council of Scientific Affairs, American Medical Association. Confidential health services for adolescents. JAMA. 1993;269:1420-1424.*

### **Activity Strategy**

- Take your piece of legislation that relates to one that is near and dear to your heart.
- Create an advocacy strategy to address your issue.
- Share with the larger group.

### **Grassroots Organizing Key Components**

- Involving community members—e.g., professionals, participants, caregivers or those affected by the issue.
- Getting the message to those who can affect change—policy makers, media,
- Motivating others to have a self-interest in the issue,

### **Getting Started**

- What issue or topic would benefit from a coordinated effort of support and advocacy?
- What is currently going on in your state, county, city, and/or community around this issue?
- What other organizations, groups or individuals support your position on this issue?
- What organizations, groups or individuals oppose your position on this issue?

### **Is there an existing coalition that supports this issue? Have you or another organization tried to form a coalition around this issue?**

- What are the challenges or barriers to forming a coalition?
- What is your organizations' capacity (staff, resources, funding etc.) to coordinate a coalition?
- What national organizations can provide technical assistance and resources?

### **LOBBYING VS. ADVOCACY**

Although most people use the words interchangeably, there is a distinction between advocacy and lobbying that is helpful to understand. Advocacy is the act of mobilizing individuals to spark changes in programs and policies at the local, state, and national levels. Lobbying refers specifically to advocacy efforts that attempt to influence legislation. *(PTA Website)*

### **Wisconsin's REGULATION OF LOBBYING**

Subchapter III, Chapter 13, Wisconsin Statutes\*

(6) INDIVIDUAL RIGHT TO LOBBY. Nothing in ss. 13.61 to 13.695 may be applied to or interfere with the right of any individual to engage in lobbying:

(a) Solely on his or her own behalf; **OR**

(b) By communicating solely with a legislator who represents the senate or assembly district in which the individual resides, whether or not such communication is made on behalf of the individual or on behalf of another person

### **From the Wisconsin Ethics Commission:**

You have an obligation to obtain a lobbying license from the Wisconsin Ethics Commission, and the organization that pays you is required to authorize you as its lobbyist, if you attempt to influence state legislation or an administrative rule on behalf of a business or organization that employs you or from which you receive a payment (other than reimbursement of expenses) and you communicate with a state official or legislative employee about such matters on 5 or more days within a six month reporting period.

- If you are not acting on behalf of anyone other than yourself, you need not be licensed or authorized.
- If you represent the views of a business or organization but do so as an unpaid volunteer, you need not be licensed or authorized.
- **If you represent the views of a business or organization that pays you, but convey those views only to legislators elected from the Senate and Assembly districts in which you reside, you need not be licensed or authorized.**
- If you represent the views of a business or organization that pays you and you convey those views to all or many legislators or officials but do so only occasionally, up to 4 days within a 6-month period, you need not be licensed or authorized.

Otherwise, you should be licensed as a lobbyist, your employer should be registered as a lobbying organization with the Wisconsin Ethics Commission, and your employer should authorize you as its lobbyist and file that authorization with the Ethics Commission. Forms are available from the Ethics Commission.

<https://ethics.wi.gov/Resources/1511-LicenseToLobby.pdf>