Successful Advocacy: Working with Legislators

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Disclosure

• Financial-I am an ASHA employee
• Nonfinancial-I support ASHA’s public policy initiatives and serve as the ex-officio to ASHA’s School Finance Committee
Agenda

• Background -- Advocacy
  • Define Advocacy
  • Why it is important and what are the benefits?

• Game Plan
  • Establish a grassroots advocacy network
  • Working with lobbyists
  • Work with the legislature
  • Negotiation
  • Leverage the media
  • Utilize ASHA resources
What is Advocacy?

- **Advocacy** is a political process by an individual or a large group which normally aims to influence public policy.
- An **advocate is a person** who works effectively to bring about positive change.
- **Grassroots advocacy** is an organized way to achieve change that benefits a group (professionals, consumers).
- Grassroots advocacy involves:
  - Organizing groups of individuals with common interests.
  - Providing information to decision makers to help them make informed decisions.
Why is Advocacy Important?

- It empowers and accomplishes goals
- It provides the opportunity to participate in government and local decision making
- It is part of the ASHA Code of Ethics
- It is your right…
  You have the right to Advocate!
What are the Benefits of Being an Advocate?

• Advocates are in a unique position to:
• Educate legislators about issues of concern
• Share knowledge on an issue’s impact in the local area
• Help legislators, regulators, and other decision makers understand how audiology and speech-language pathology services improve the quality of life for their constituents
Game Plan
Develop a Plan of Action

• Identify issues and set priorities
  • Survey the group
  • Set advocacy goals

• Develop timeframes for achieving the goals
Develop a Plan of Action

• Identify the factors necessary for change
• Is your issue a priority for the leadership?
• Are there sufficient financial resources available to achieve the goal?
• Is there significant opposition to your plan?
Develop a Plan of Action

• Identify Key Decision Makers
  • Legislators on committees of jurisdiction
  • Regulators or insurers
  • Determine their level of support or opposition
  • Evaluate the political climate for change
  • Determine the activities/actions needed to garner support
Establish a Grassroots Advocacy Network
Establish a Grassroots Advocacy Network

• Recruit advocates: Like-minded members, key contacts in legislative districts
• Establish a database to keep track of your contacts
• Develop a system to communicate with network members
• Working with a lobbyist
WORKING WITH A LOBBYIST

• The Association Relationship
  • Establish method and frequency of communication
  • Lobbyist responsibility for monitoring legislation
  • Communication with Executive Board or Legislative Committee
  • Discuss pros/cons of legislation and arrive at the association’s position on a bill
  • Develop fact sheet/talking points
  • Lobbyist communicates the association’s position to legislators
  • Communicate concerns or support to bill sponsor
  • Lobby members of committee of jurisdiction and staff
  • Provide feedback through frequent contact with association
The Lobbyist – Association Relationship

- Meet with association to understand legislative objective
- Drafting legislation
- Preparation of fact sheet and supporting documents
- Identification of allies and opponents
- Coalition building
- Identification of bill sponsors/co-sponsors
- Influence committee assignment – lobby committee
- Lobby non-committee members of legislature
- Follow same procedure in second chamber
Work with the Legislature
Work with the Legislature

- Understand your audience
- Know the political views and policy interests
- Learn about the legislator’s constituent base
- Identify his/her committee assignments
- Read their biographies and identify personal interests
- Determine their political agenda
Work with the Legislature

• Learn the best way to “influence” decision makers
  • Face-to-face conversations are best
  • Letters need to be original
  • Telephone calls and e-mail also work

“What works best is personal thoughtful communication.”

Blackwell, 2001
Work with the Legislature

• Plan a Visit
  • Prepare a fact sheet and talking points that provide background information, data, and facts to support your position
  • Invite a consumer or plan to share a personal story during your visit
  • Create a handout or other “leave behind” with contact information to provide them
Make an appointment and be on time
  • Expect that the legislator may be late so prepare a long (5 minute) and short (1 minute) message that:
    • Defines the issue
    • Supports your position
    • Includes an “ask”
Deliver the Message

• When delivering your message, be sure to:
  • Be accurate and concise; don’t get off message
  • Use facts and data to support your position
  • Eliminate jargon
  • Ask for support and wait for a reply
  • Share a personal story
  • Be positive and courteous even if your positions differ
  • Promise to follow-up with answers to questions you don’t know
  • Don’t overstay your welcome
Work with the Legislature

• After the Meeting
• Write a personal thank you note
• Inform your group of the results
• Remember to get back to the legislator with answers to questions you didn’t know
When meeting with a legislator or decision maker you should:
• Develop your plan (What's your objective?)
• Identify the decision makers and timelines for decisions
• Develop your message and "leave behind"
• Deliver your message and be sure to tell a story
• Include an "Ask" and wait for an answer
• Be prepared to be patient but persistent - change doesn't happen quickly
• Report the results of your interaction to your team

Have fun!
Effective Negotiation:

THE ART OF WOO

Richard Shell & Mario Moussa
Negotiation

Grab your audience’s attention by making it VIVID
Negotiation

• Grabbing Your Audience Attention
• Tell A Story
• Personalize it
Negotiation
Grabbing your Audience’s Attention

Couldn’t afford even simple materials.

There, Nancy received a dairy cow from Heifer International which provided milk for her family to drink and enough surplus to sell for a steady income. With profits from the milk, Nancy was able to buy metal for a new roof for their house, and bricks and mortar to repair its walls.

With patience and perseverance — plus some help from Heifer International — families like Nancy’s all over the world are realizing their dreams for a brighter future.

Milk Menagerie

Gift of a Milk Menagerie: $1,000
Share of a Milk Menagerie: $100

The gift of a Milk Menagerie represents a quality-bred heifer, two goats and a water buffalo — four milk-producing animals for hardworking families hoping to provide a better life for their children. With training for recipient families, each animal in the Menagerie will produce gallon after gallon of wonderful, life-sustaining milk.
Negotiation

• Force your Audience to Think
  • Questioning the Obvious
  • Reversals
  • Let’s Pretend
  • Reconceptualize
Leverage the Media

• Locate a reporter that covers your issues, (e.g., health care, education)
• Determine what reporters want
• Become a valuable resource
• Develop a tip sheet
• Facilitate a long-term relationship
Leverage the Media

• Contact the media to gain or maintain visibility

• Develop a media plan
  • Develop a calendar of events
  • Create a list of potential sources and contacts

• Develop a “newsworthy” story
  • Key factors
  • The “angle”
  • Timing
  • Uniqueness
  • Broad audience appeal
Get Involved with MSHA

• Share your concerns
• Offer to serve on advocacy committees
• Contact MSHA:
  Michigan Speech-Language- Hearing Association
  790 E. Lansing Road, Suite 400
  East Lansing, MI 48823
  517-332-5691
  msha@att.net
  Greg Spray, President
Get involved with ASHA

- Contact your state liaison to learn how to get involved:
  - Janet Deppe
    - jdeppe@asha.org
    - 301-296-5668
Utilize ASHA Resources

• Use ASHA’s e-advocacy tool
• Develop advocacy messages and send an e-mail blast
• Get assistance from ASHA state liaisons to create legislative and regulatory messages to member advocates
• Apply for a grant: state grant applications are available to state associations in the first quarter of each year. For further information go to: https://www.asha.org/Advocacy/stateleaders/ASHA-State-Grants--Procedures-and-Guidelines/