

Advocacy, Community Engagement, and YOU!

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Learning Objectives: Advocacy & Engagement

Advocacy and the 5 W's + 1 H

- What is it?
- Why do it?
- Who can do it?
- Where can it be done?
- When should it be done?
- How is it done?

Community Engagement

- Identify the problem and potential allies/opponents
- Discuss different advocacy strategies
- Develop an Advocacy Plan

Advocacy and the 5 W's + 1 H

What is it?

“to speak or write in favor of; support or urge by argument; recommend publicly”

Why do it?

- *The only way to make changes in your community or your life*
- *The way that laws, regulations, and policies are made or changed at all levels (federal, state, city, school, etc.)*



Advocacy and the 5 W's + 1 H

Who can do it?

Anyone, there are no required credentials

- YOU are the expert about living with a brain injury
- No one can tell you that you are wrong—it's YOUR experience

Where can it be done?

Anywhere & Everywhere

- Legislature
- Town or city council meeting
- School
- Doctor's office

Examples Of Successful Advocacy

- *Stoplight*
- *Conference Center parking*

Advocacy and the 5 W's + 1 H

When should it be done?

There are no time limits or conditions; any time a change is needed

How is it done?

Act! Speak! Show up! Engage!

Decide what you feel comfortable doing

Examples of Engagement

Persuasive Writing

- Op-eds, blog, letters to editor, letters to senators/policymakers

Personal Testimony and/or Communication

- State legislature, City Council, etc.
- Phone call to policymakers

Meetings and organizations

- Get to know your advocacy organizations
- Show up to / participate in meetings and councils
- Meet with policymakers

Everyone Can Do This!

- You don't need to be a PhD, or have any special credentials in order to have something to say or a solution to your issue. You have the right to be heard!
- Senators want to hear personal stories and discussion of solutions from people "on the ground"!
 - You don't have to have all the answers! Solutions are designed over time and many discussions with multiple "players".

The Importance of Your Story (in pictures)

Data



Your Story



Community Engagement

Strategy starts with Identification

- What is the issue?
- Is this a state legislature issue, regulation matter, city problem, etc.
 - You have to match the issue and appropriate people to solve it
 - May require some research
- Who else is affected/has this issue?
- Are there others who would work with you on tackling this issue? If not, maybe you need to start something!
- Are there any organizations looking into, interested in, or working on this issue? If not, maybe they should?

Develop an Advocacy Strategy

How will you engage on this issue?

- **What do you want to happen?**

- ✓ *Starting off by listing out your goals*
- ✓ *Make sure goals are simple, achievable, and make sense*
- ✓ *Develop a clear “Ask” (what you want to happen)*

- **Who needs to know? Who can implement change?**

- **Who do you need to get on your side?**

- **How will you raise awareness of this issue and its effects? What tools will you use to get your point, your story out to the people who can make change?**

- Social Media, TV, Newspapers, Traditional Media, Hold Public Meetings or Events?

JUST DO IT!

Strategy, Plan, and Practice

Successful advocacy endeavors have at least one thing in common: ***They are strategic!***

- Use the “Advocacy Practice Activity” forms to help you start thinking about strategy
- Use the “Action Plan” forms to help you develop a plan to implement your strategy

ADVOCACY PRACTICE ACTIVITY (Part 1)

This activity will help you start thinking strategically about your advocacy

QUESTIONS FRAME THE STRATEGY

Begin with this basic series of questions to help guide you:

1. What is the issue/problem?

Describe it: What is it? Who does it affect, and how does it affect (you) (them)? What is the impact—so what? Why is a change needed?

2. Where is the problem and Who has control over the issue?

Understanding this will help you identify who you need to address the issue.

- Is it a state legislative issue? Federal?
- Is it a state regulation issue? Federal?
- Is it a city issue? Is it a neighborhood association issue?
- Who has authority? That is the person/agency/entity that you need to focus on and get a conversation going.

3. What evidence do I have? What research is out there?

- *YOUR STORY* is evidence! What is your story? What information do you have to back it up?
- Are there any recent studies, news stories, etc.? Remember, policymakers are not looking for a dissertation or a treatise, but be prepared and knowledgeable about your topic. You are not expected to be the topic expert, so don't set the bar too high. Remember, the most important knowledge is your story!

4. Who else is working on this issue?

- Are there any other organizations or advocacy groups (local, state, or national) working on issues like yours? What do they know? What do they know that you don't? What can you learn from and teach to them? How can you assist their effort, and how can they assist yours?
- What other individuals, families, etc. have stories to tell or experiences to share? Can you get them to advocate or at least use their story (within reason and with permission)? Willing to help you out with your effort?

5. What are potential solutions?

What do you want to do about this? What are you most comfortable with doing? Remember, there are a variety of techniques to raise awareness of a problem and solutions!

- Use your story and your experience
- Use your research
- “There is no easy solution” is not an excuse—sometimes you are not meant to present the ideal solution but the solution comes out of working together using communication, dialogue, and “story telling”

6. Who or what entities do you think you need to reach out to for action?

- Depends on solutions
- Depends on who has authority
- Depends on who is working on this issue, etc. (see #4)

7. When are your meetings?

- Organize your message, argument, people to meet with
- Set up meetings

ADVOCACY PRACTICE ACTIVITY (Part 2)

This activity will help you start thinking strategically about your advocacy

1. **What** is the issue/problem?

2. **Where** is the problem? (*Plumbing metaphor*)

(Who has control/authority over the issue?)

3. **What** evidence do I have or what research is out there?

(What research or evidence do I need?)

4. **Who** else is working on this issue?

5. **What** are potential solutions?

6. **What** entities do you need to reach out to for action, assistance, or alliance?

(Do you need to create the tools to create alliances and/or opportunities for collective action?)

Action Plan Preparation

Key players- *Who will be involved (internal/external)?*

Communication- *Who should know what and how will they find out?*

Evaluation- *How will you know you are successful?*

Celebration- *How will you acknowledge progress and success?*

Other notes

QUESTIONS?

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