

ADVOCACY 101

THE BASICS OF SYSTEMS ADVOCACY

PRESENTED BY:



What Is Advocacy?

Advocacy is taking action in support or opposition of a cause or issue.

Individual vs. Systems Advocacy

- Individual advocacy focuses on changing the situation of **one** person.
- Systems advocacy focuses on changing laws and policies that affect **large groups** of people.

Why Should I Advocate?

- **To make a difference**
- **There is strength in numbers**
- **Policymakers need your perspective and expertise**

Common Concerns About Advocacy

- **“I’m afraid. These are important people. I can’t do this!”**
 - ✓ LaCAN supports its members in speaking to legislators.
 - ✓ LaCAN members advocate together.
 - ✓ Policymakers are people, too.
- **“I may make someone mad.”**
 - ✓ Your legislators want and need to hear how the system is or is not working.
- **“I don’t know enough to advocate.”**
 - ✓ Knowing your personal story is enough.
 - ✓ LaCAN provides its members with information to help them understand and relate their situation to current policy or proposed policy changes.

Common Concerns About Advocacy

- **“I don’t have time to advocate.”**
 - ✓ Small steps can make a big difference. Can you write a letter? Make a phone call?
 - ✓ Members of LaCAN are as active as they choose to be.
- **“They won’t listen.”**
 - ✓ Your legislators are elected/chosen to represent you! It is their responsibility to listen. Most are eager to hear from their constituents.
- **“Nothing will change... What’s the point?”**
 - ✓ Waiver services in Louisiana came about largely through the advocacy efforts of people just like you. We have already seen drastic changes in the types of services and options available to people with developmental disabilities.

Who Are Your Legislators?

Go to

<http://www.legis.la.gov/legis/FindMyLegislators.aspx>

Your LaCAN Leader can also help you.

Connect With Your Legislators

- ✓ **Call or visit their office**
- ✓ **Attend public functions and events**
- ✓ **Attend a LaCAN regional roundtable**
- ✓ **Attend and/or testify at key committee meetings at the Capitol**

Connect With Your Legislators

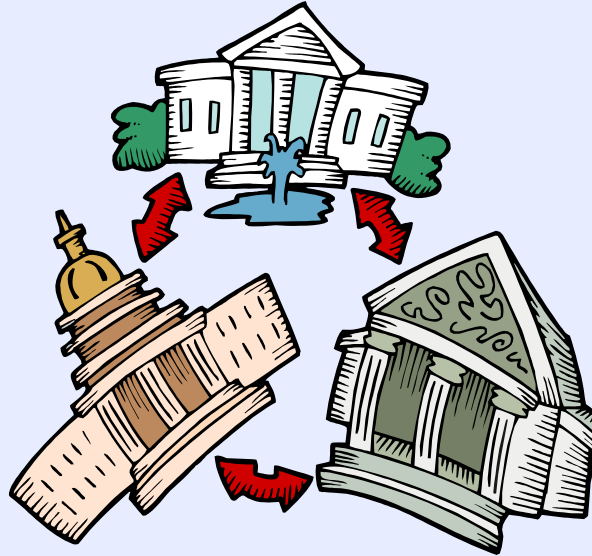
- ✓ Write letters and/or emails
- ✓ Join email lists, Facebook, Twitter, etc.
- ✓ Follow the media
- ✓ Congratulate them on their successes

Three Branches of Government

Judicial

*Interprets the law
and Constitution*

Supreme/U.S.
District Courts
State Court



Executive

*Implements and
enforces the law*

President
Governor

Legislative

*Makes the laws and
allocates funding*

Congress
State Legislature

How a Bill Becomes a Law

- STEP 1** Bill introduced (in House or Senate)
- STEP 2** Committee discusses and votes
- STEP 3** Whole House or Senate debates and votes
- STEP 4-6** Bill sent to other side (House or Senate) to repeat Steps 1-3

How a Bill Becomes a Law

A Conference Committee may try to settle disagreements between the House & Senate

STEP 7 If the House and Senate agree the bill is sent to the Governor.

STEP 8 Governor signs (or after 60 days) -- Bill becomes law.

NOTE: Without enough votes a bill will *die* (not move forward) at any point in this process.

Relationship Building Tips

- ✓ Know as much as you can about your legislators.
- ✓ Meet people where they are.
- ✓ Be polite, friendly, positive and helpful.
- ✓ Understand that sometimes the answer is “No.”

Communication Pointers

- ✓ **Be brief. Get it down to an “elevator speech.”**
- ✓ **Practice what you want to say.**
- ✓ **Know your facts and story.**
- ✓ **State clearly how your legislator can help.**

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- **NEVER give false information.**
- **Policymakers don't have to adopt your beliefs.**
- **Don't take anything personally.**

General Tips to Remember

- ✓ **Show your passion.**
- ✓ **Be patient and flexible.**
- ✓ **Always follow through.**
- ✓ **Thank everyone who listens.**

QUESTIONS or
COMMENTS?

**“A wish is worthless unless action follows.”
- Anonymous**

REFERENCES

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CHECK OUT THE WEBSITE FOR
MORE USEFUL ADVOCACY
TIPS & TOOLS

www.cthealthpolicy.org