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Advocating for
the future of
community care

Advocacy tips to get started

Getting involved in the advocacy movement doesn't have to be complicated. You can follow these six steps to get started and ensure their collective voice is heard, understood, and acted upon.

01 Create a culture of advocacy

Your site's collective voice is important. Consider establishing a committee or infrastructure dedicated to organizing your site's advocacy initiatives.

02 Set achievable goals

Every bit of action matters. Establish clear, realistic goals and create a plan that includes the who, what, when, where, why, and how around those goals.

03 Identify your legislators

Finding your U.S. Senator, U.S. House of Representative, State Senator, and State Representatives will inform you of which officials are enabled to affect change in your community.

04 Build relationships with your legislators

Strong, personal relationships with your elected officials are the most effective way to influence legislative decision-making.

05 Connect with your community

Make lasting connections with other community providers, leaders, residents, and others who are dedicated to pushing advocacy forward.

06 Amplify your voice

Social media is quickly becoming a crucial component of effective advocacy. Sharing your experiences and initiatives via social media will contribute to your voice being heard by your legislators and just as importantly, members of your community.

Building effective relationships with your elected officials

Legislators are elected to represent you, your interests, and your districts; and a large part of their job is connecting with their constituents. Advocacy that leads to enacting valuable change is more achievable when you have strong, personal relationships with your elected officials. You should consider using the following methods when building effective relationships with your elected officials.

Introductory letter or email

Consider sending a brief introductory letter or email to your elected officials introducing yourself and how you serve your patients. Let them know that you are invested in the future of healthcare and express appreciation for them making you aware of any developments that would affect your practice.

Face-to-face meetings

In person meetings are a valuable opportunity to not only meet your legislators, but to leave a memorable impression. You can try to meet with legislators in their capitol office or district office (if they have one), invite them to meet at a mutual space, or even introduce yourself at a public event that the legislator is attending.

Tour of your practice site

Consider inviting your legislator to tour your location. Visits like this are great opportunities to introduce yourself to the legislator and educate them on how a location of your type works, who your customers are, and the issues you are facing.

State and national associations

If you are a member of a broader association or organization committed to advocacy work, they can be helpful with things like setting up meetings with legislators and (for discussion purposes with your legislators) providing you with a list of key issues or bills that they are working on in your state.

Visit the Capitol

Throughout the year, associations will host legislative events that present an opportunity for advocates to participate in a visit to Capitol Hill. These events are great opportunities for you to build relationships with elected officials, discuss issues/bills affecting healthcare, and reinforce your collective voice and presence as a voting block that legislators need to pay attention to.

Position yourself as a resource

Given the sheer number of issues that legislators work on, it is next to impossible for them to be experts on everything. You can help by positioning yourself as a resource on specific topics. Nobody knows the issues that you face better than you. This puts you in a unique position to offer insight, explanations, and technical information on many healthcare issues.

Preparing for an effective advocacy conversation

Time is valuable. Consider these tips when meeting with an elected official or their staff members.

What you should do

- Establish your credibility on the subjects you want to discuss by opening the meeting with telling your legislator about your professional education/training, practice, and areas of expertise.
- Take time to be informed about the issue(s) that you want to discuss. For example, outside of knowing what a bill does, you should know who supports/opposes the bill, if your legislator has a personal connection to the topic, if similar bills have been introduced or passed in other states, and whether the bill has a fiscal impact to the state or affected parties.
- Spend time explaining how a bill or issue would personally impact you, your practice, and your customers. Personal connections like this are impactful, important, and illustrate the human side of an issue.
- Leave your legislator with a handout on what you discussed. This could be materials you developed, something from an interested party, news articles on the issue, etc.
- Be specific when stating the action that you are asking your legislator to do. If possible, try get a commitment from them before the meeting ends.
- Thank the legislator and/or staff members for their time. You should also position yourself as a resource for them by letting them know that you are available if they have any follow-up questions or want more information.
- Try to meet with legislators who are positioned to influence issues that you are interested in.

What you should not do

- Don't get too technical or detailed on the issues you want to discuss.
- Don't discuss too many topics at once to avoid confusing your audience or having your position misconstrued. It is best to discuss no more than one or two priority issues during your meeting.
- Don't leave behind too many handouts, lengthy documents, or materials that are too technical. To increase the chances of your piece being read, your position and talking points need to be succinct, concise, and on topic.
- Don't exaggerate to make a point or answer a question. This is especially true if you are not sure of the facts.
- Don't turn down a meeting or express disappointment if you must meet with a staff person instead of a legislator.
- Don't shy away from meeting with legislators who are on the opposite side of your issue. Not only do you get an opportunity to try to persuade them to support your position, but you might also get information on the arguments that your opponents are using.

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We are united in our responsibility
to create healthier futures.