



The Art of Advocacy

How to Influence Your Elected Officials

Session Objectives

- Understand the difference between lobbying and advocacy
- Learn basic strategies for developing an advocacy plan, connecting with elected leaders and effectively communicating your needs
- Learn about best practices and dos and don'ts in advocacy
- Learn about the resources available and how to use them

Lobbying or Advocacy

- What is lobbying?
- Who lobbies?
- What is advocacy?
- Who can advocate?
- When should we advocate?



Lobbying

- Lobbying is the act of attempting to influence decisions made by officials in the government.
- A lobbyist is an “individual who is paid to communicate with federal public office holders in an attempt to influence government decisions.” (Lobbyists Registration Act)

Advocacy

- Advocacy is the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal.
- An advocate is someone who speaks on behalf of a cause or proposal. The advocate may be an individual or an organization.



Advocacy

- Advocates use every opportunity to support their cause or issue. Advocacy is a process, not an event. It's a marathon, not a sprint.



Road Blocks to Advocacy

- Lack of comfort with the advocacy process
- Don't know where to start
- Don't know where to get help
- Don't feel you are “expert” enough to advocate



Build Your Advocacy Strategy

- Identify the issue - what is your need, concern, or problem to be addressed?
 - Is it a local, state or federal issue?
 - Is it a legislative issue or an administrative one?
 - Who can address the issue for you in the correct venue?

Build Your Advocacy Strategy

- Develop your request – make it clear and succinct, provide a clear rationale and support your request with evidence, statistics, and reports.
- Set goals – what is your desired outcome? What outcomes or alternatives would be acceptable?



Craft Your Message

- Clearly and specifically state your request – what do you want them to do (e.g. vote for a bill or change a regulation)?
- Provide a sound rationale – why do you want them to do it (e.g. what good or bad result will occur)?
- Explain the implications for constituents – who will be helped (e.g. patient care will be improved in the official's district because X, Y or Z).
- If the request will cost money, explain the costs and how you expect your request to be funded.

Polish Your Message

Remember, make it:

- Clear
- Concise
- Compelling
- Personal



Connect with Leaders

- Know who your government leaders are
 - **At the local, state and federal levels**
- Make them know who you are
 - **Get to know them on an ongoing basis**
- Let them know how you can help them
 - **Show them that you are a resource of information**
- Explain how they can help you
 - **Elected officials want to be responsive to their constituents**

Options for Communicating Request

- Written communications - Emails, Letters
- Oral communications - Calls, Meetings:
 - In their local/district office
 - In their State or Federal offices
- A combination of written and oral communications is most effective

Communicating Your Request

- Determine the individuals or groups to whom you will make your request.
- Coordinate your request. Determine who else will you notify who may be able to influence the outcome (e.g. staff).
- Determine when and how you will follow up – respectful persistence often carries the day.
- Develop timelines and assignment of responsibilities.

Build Coalitions

- Garner support from within your agency and other agencies in your vicinity. If your request is to state leaders, enlist the support of your state EMS association.
- Keep your team informed of your progress along the way.
- Look to develop relationships with organizations of common interest. Share information or join in more formal coalitions.

Benefits of Coalitions

- Access to more resources – information, labor, perspective, expertise, etc.
- Avoid “reinventing the wheel”
- People with same interests are more likely to be effective by collaborating



Advocacy Tips

- Be confident. Tell your story and share your experiences with your elected leaders.
- Be knowledgeable of the issues.
- Be honest and use plain language; be polite.
- Speak from the heart, but don't over-tell your story.
- Stay on message.
- Ensure that your group reflects the diversity of your EMS community and agencies.

Advocacy Tips

What doesn't work?

- Contacts that look purely bought and paid for, i.e. professional rather than grassroots;
- A confrontational style that harasses or insults politicians;
- Members who are under-informed or are speaking to issues without conviction;
- Providing members with tools that make them look like wound-up robots.

Advocacy Tools

Make the most of technology to:

- research a particular position;
- monitor government positions;
- organize, mobilize, and communicate with members;
- promote a viewpoint, attract supporters and organize campaigns.

Online Legislative Service

- Online and accessible
- EMS-specific federal legislation
- Elected official background and contact information
- Election and candidate background and contact information
- Specific grassroots campaign alerts
- Media contacts

Online Legislative Service



The Art of Advocacy – Best Practices

- Muscle Theory of Advocacy
 - Exercise your advocacy muscle so you have good and strong relationships
 - But don't overtax the muscle because too much communicating can be counterproductive
- Credibility is Key
 - Always be truthful even if it seems it will diminish your position
 - If there is opposition, acknowledge so, and respectfully explain why you are right and they are wrong

Grassroots Advocacy

- Effective advocacy relies on local participation.
- Grassroots communication of concerns has the greatest impact on local politicians.
- Broad-based communication will be more effective if it supports a central message.
- Personalized approaches to political leaders works best - real people explaining real concerns.



Thank you!

For more information, please contact NAEMT.

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