

PARTICIPATING IN THE ADVOCACY PROCESS

Taken from Basic Legislative and Systems Change Advocacy

A Project of the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities

**(please refer to http://www.txddc.state.tx.us/public_policy/basiccourse_eng.pdf
for full training information)**

Skills and qualities needed to advocate are:

- Knowledge of the legislative process
- Knowledge of the issues
- Personal commitment to those issues

Steps to Change:

- Identify the problem
- Turn the problem into an issue
- Develop strategy
- Face the decision maker
- Evaluate reaction of decision maker
- Win, regroup, go on to next issue

Tactics:

- Meet with decision maker at community forum
- Write letters with individual stories about the issue to the decision maker
- Hold a press conference in the decision maker's district to ask for action on the issue

Why form coalitions:

- Win what couldn't be won alone

- Build an ongoing power base
- Increase the impact of an individual organization's efforts
- Develop new leaders
- Increase resources and relationships
- Broaden the scope of impact on issues of importance

Tips for communicating with legislators include:

- Show you understand their time constraints by providing summaries of materials
- Use attention grabbers
- Show an interest in other issues on which your legislator is working
- Tell both sides of an issue so your legislator can anticipate the opposition
- Compliment the legislator if he/she has done an effective job on anything
- Get to know the legislator's aides-they are the key to getting information or access to the legislator
- Provide positive media opportunities for your legislator –anything to get them noticed
- Honor your legislator at annual meetings, special events; give unusual awards that will be noticed
- Remember their birthdays and other events
- Use information that is accurate

What not to do:

- Do not confront or challenge legislator by saying “you promised me...”
- Respect their time
- Do not lecture them
- Do not threaten them

E-mail:

- Staffers say that if you are not a constituent, and if you do not provide contact information, including an address and phone number, then your e-mail won't be answered
- Identify the subject of your message in the "Subject" line of the e-mail
- Print and keep copies of e-mails to use as documentation of communication
- Do not overwhelm legislator's inbox, or all will be ignored
- It is actually much more effective to communicate by phone, written letter, or in person whenever possible