

ADVOCACY

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*Speak out to change things
for the better!*



FACT SHEET ON ... Advocacy

Advocating for Yourself & Others

Advocating for change usually starts with getting excited, being annoyed, or feeling worried about something like accessible public transportation to get to work.

Advocates work in favor of a cause and have to stick with it long enough to see success.

Good advocates know they must think very hard about any barriers that may exist. Several ingredients will make your advocacy more effective including:

- The impact on you and others.
- The importance to your quality of life.
- Your perception and information about the issue, the challenges, and the solutions.



Understand the Issue

It's important to have a clear understanding of all points about the issue by gathering information such as:

- How does this impact you and others?
- What are the pros and cons of the issue?
- What caused the issue you are addressing?
- Why should a decision maker care other than "It's the right thing to do?"
- What other points might be influencing why the issue is like it is now?
- Who agrees with you and who disagrees with you?
- What will it take for decision makers to support your goals?



Define the Issue

Keep it simple and specific. An important part of being effective is being very clear about the issue and what you feel should be done about it.

The decision makers may not be aware of all points about an issue. They may not see your issues as a priority. Your issue is just one of many messages to which decision makers hear every day. Explain the issue with one or two short sentences, then give specific examples of how it impacts you and others.



Develop Solutions

When advocating, be prepared to offer a potential solution. One way to come up with solutions is to develop them through a collaborative process. By working with other stakeholders to create solutions, you can present a stronger voice. Describe important points you want to be included in the changes you desire.

Developing solutions should follow a simple process that ensures credibility and stakeholder ownership and encourages acceptance by everyone. It will also increase the chances that the solution you create will actually work, because it draws on the knowledge and experience of yourself and other people.



Important Steps

- Put together a planning team that includes other people who share your concerns.
- Work together to gather important facts.
- Develop specific solutions.
- Create a very simple outline that includes the issue, a real story, important facts, and the proposed solutions.
- Use plain, easy to understand language.
- Have a list of questions/important points prepared to keep you focused at meetings



Presenting the Issue

Present the issue and advocate at an early stage. The timing of when and how you present your solution is very important. Follow up and present your solutions often until things change for the better.

Who to tell: Although you may be requesting changes by more than one person, a group of people, an agency or organization, it's usually better to focus on one individual who has a lot of power. For example, you might plan to change the thinking of an agency director.

Learn the grievance procedures, so that you know who will handle problems that might arise or who you can acknowledge if everything goes smoothly.

Spokesperson: The presentation can be made by you or a small group of people who are familiar with the issue and solutions. The presentation can also be made by another person or small group of people who have credibility with the decision makers.

Follow-up: After the issues and solutions have been shared with the decision makers, it is important that you and as many people as possible follow-up in a variety of ways to get the word out. Use various methods: personal emails, letters, personal visits, and phone calls. Expect to have to continue working to get the message accepted over the long term and don't ever give up!



Be Passionate and Persistent!

It's important to have the passion and persistence to get a positive outcome.

Passion is important because it helps you focus on your goals and can help sway undecided people to your viewpoint.

Persistence helps you follow through on commitments and keeps those who agree with you working to support your issues!



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For more information

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