



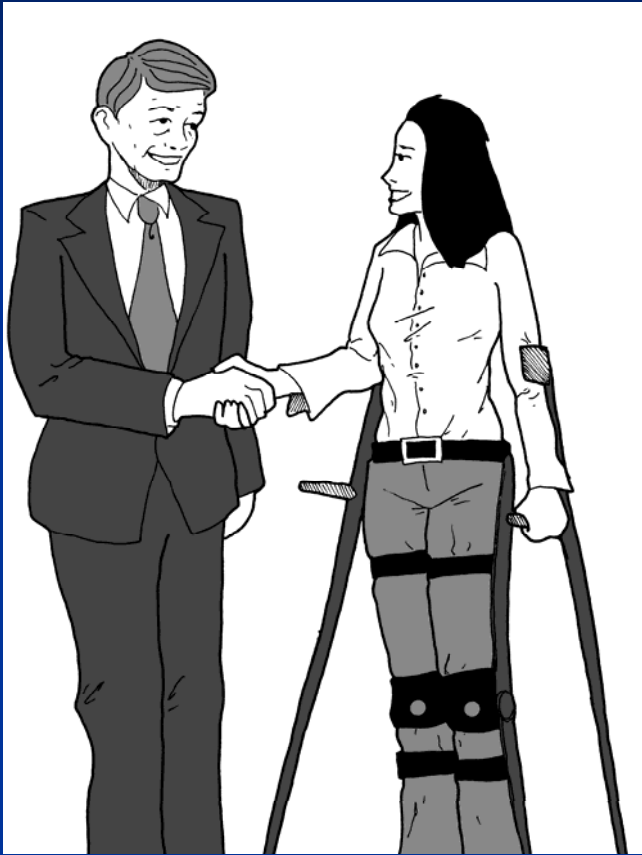
Legislative Advocacy

Driving Policy About Youth,
by Youth

The National Consortium on Leadership and Disability/Youth

- 2nd iteration of a National YITRC
- Continuing to help organize a movement around the country to help get disability history and awareness integrated into K-12 public education
- Wrote *Nothing About Youth Without Youth: A guide to legislative advocacy for youth with disabilities*

What is “legislative advocacy”?



- Legislative Advocacy is communicating about the importance of a policy issue or law to people who are in a position to change it
 - Examples
 - Talking to a school board member about the importance of funding for the school band or sports teams
 - Talking to your Congressman about the importance of the ADA Restoration Act

What does it mean to be a legislative advocate?

- Having accurate information
- Knowing both sides of an issue
- Building relationships with people who are in a position to impact the issue

What does it mean to be a legislative advocate with a disability?

- Facing attitudinal AND physical barriers
 - Dealing with people's stereotypes
- Connecting to a rich history of legislative advocacy going all the way back to the Declaration of Independence and Stephen Hopkins



What is a good issue?



Does it...

- Win real victories that improve people's lives?
- Change the relationships of power?
- Have clear targets and time frames?
- Build leadership? Unite people?
- Serve our BIG goals?
- Something that we can realistically do something about?



Now that you know your
issue...it's time to
strategize!



Welcome to the strategy chart

- Created by the Midwest Academy for Social Change
- Adapted for language and accessibility
- If all else fails, or you can't see how something fits in with your agenda, check the chart
- *EVERYTHING GOES IN THE CHART!*

The Midwest Academy Strategy Chart

Goals	Organizational Considerations	Constituents, Allies, Opponents	Targets	Tactics	Research Needs/Ideas	Message

Inside the chart.....

Column 3: Constituents, Allies, and Opponents

1. Who cares about this issue enough to join in or help the organization?
 - Whose problem is it?
 - What do they gain if they win?
 - What risks are they taking?
 - What power do they have over your target?
 - How are they organized?
2. Who are your opponents?
 - What will your victory cost them?
 - What will they do to oppose you?
 - How strong are they?
 - How are they organized?



**What type of campaign
are you running?**

Letter Writing Campaigns



Letter Campaigns

- Letter writing campaigns are a great way to make your issues a priority for legislators
- To a legislator, one letter from a well-informed person in their district can represent the opinion of a number of voters



A sample letter is included in the guide!

Who needs to be involved?

- **Key Stakeholders** – People who are directly impacted by the situation
- **Personal Networks** – Your friends and family!
 - (Don't forget the power of the internet!)
- **Professional Networks** – Ask to attend membership or board meetings of local organizations or agencies
- **Media** – Contact local newspaper and television stations by using press releases and letters to the editor

Things to remember about letter writing campaigns!

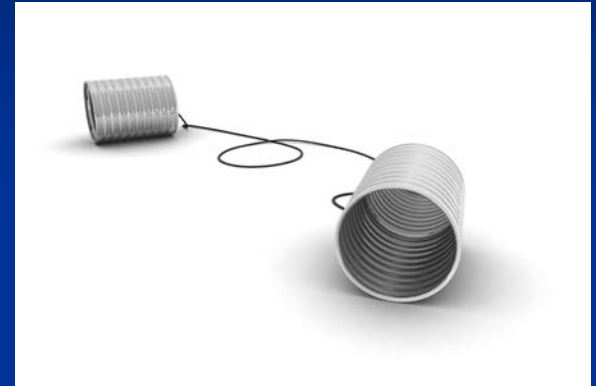


1. Set up a timeline
2. Mix up form letters AND personalized ones
3. Make sure that your message is the same no matter who the letter comes from! Go Back to the Strategy Chart
4. Make it fun! Organize group mailings.

Phone Campaigns

“Reach out and touch someone...”

- Make sure you have enough people
 - to “work the phone”
- Come up a with a script to help you
 - stay on message
 - Go Back to the Strategy Chart
- Develop fact-sheets about the issues that your callers can keep handy
- Create a call list or phone tree
- Don’t forget to use TTY machines, text messaging, and instant messaging to get your messages to folks who don’t use phones for primary communication!

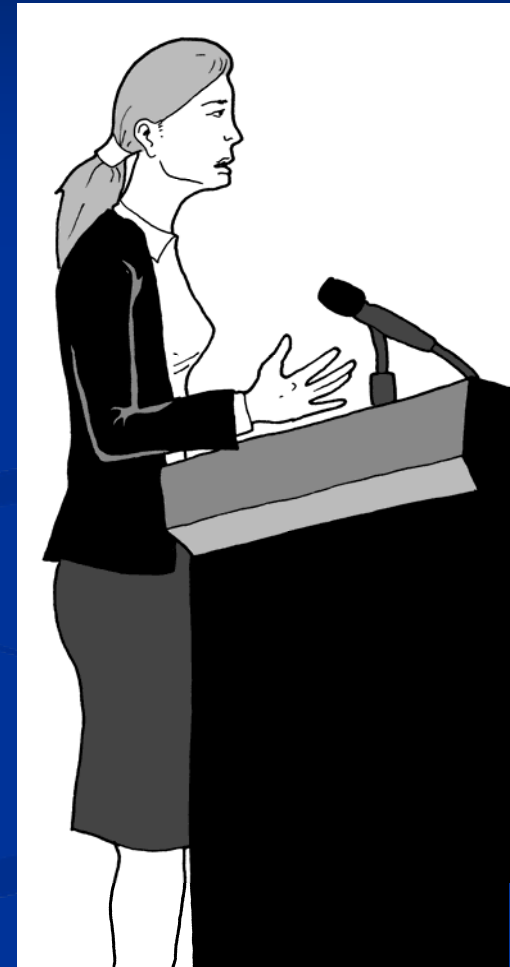


Working with the Media



Working with the Media

- What are the advantages?
 - Getting the word out about your issue
 - Giving a face to your issue
- What are the challenges?
 - Getting them to the table!
 - Making sure the message getting out there is one you want!
- Go Back to the Strategy Chart!



Types of strategies

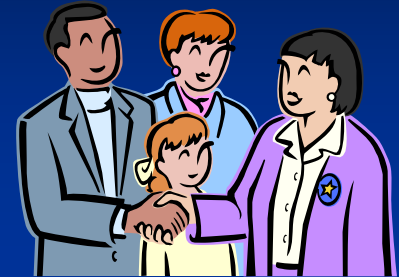
- Press Releases
- Public Speaking Opportunities
- Media Advisories/Photo Opportunities
- Public Service Announcements (PSA)
 - Use youtube!

A sample press release, media advisory, and MORE are included in the guide!

Face to Face Visits

“Drawing your sword and taking the hill!”

- How do you prepare?
 - Go Back to the Strategy Chart!
 - Do your research?
 - Make an outline
 - Top 3 issues you want to address
 - Why are they important?
 - Why are you/your group the best person or people to talk about this issue?
 - Who is impacted by this issue?
 - What do you want the “target” (going back to the strategy chart) to do about it?



Things to remember

1. If you need accommodations for your visit, remember to ask for them when scheduling your meeting!
2. You may not meet with the **Big Kahuna** right away, you may meet with a staff person! Treat them with the same level of respect!
3. Assign roles at the meeting:
 - a) Facilitator – Keeps the meeting on track!
 - b) Recorder – TAKING NOTES IS IMPORTANT!
 - c) Supplier – Handles the materials
 - d) Testifier – Will share their personal story
4. Follow up promptly after the meeting!

Final thoughts on legislative advocacy

- Debrief with your team regularly and after
 - If it doesn't work out, discuss what you could do differently next time!
 - Talk about what you learned!
- Follow up with all of your people (constituents, allies, opponents, policymakers, etc.)
- Try again!