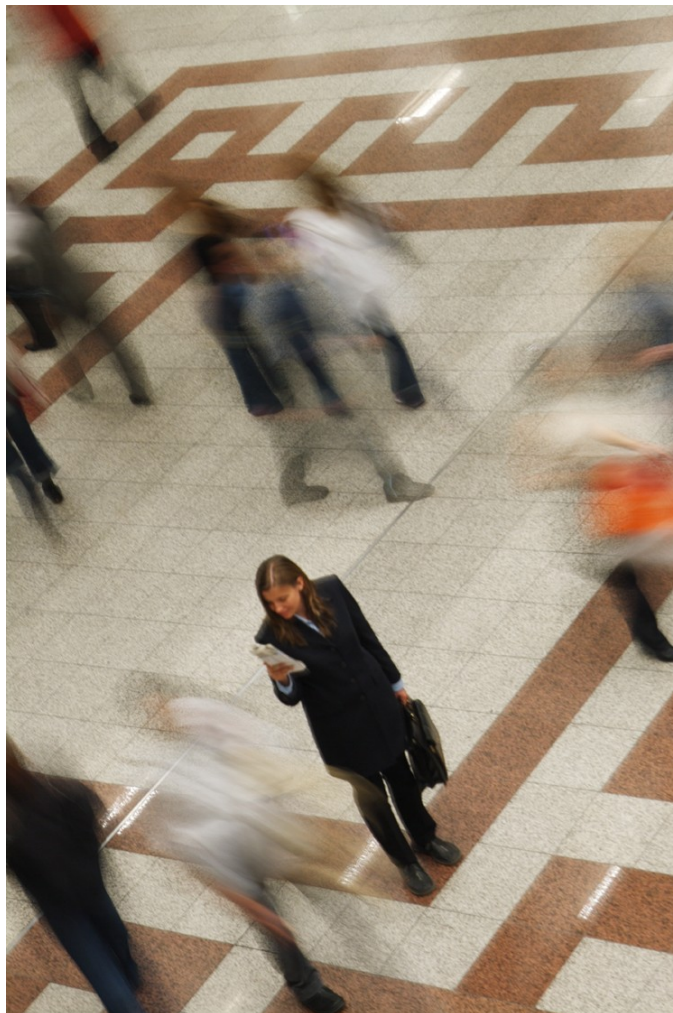


“Public health is what we, as a society, do collectively to assure the conditions in which people can be healthy.”

- The Institute of Medicine

# Indiana Local Boards of Health **Advocacy Guide**



Indiana Association of Local Boards of Health

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## Indiana Association of Local Boards of Health

March 2011

Dear Board of Health Member,

As a member of your local board of health you have a unique opportunity to advocate for good public health policy in your community. Public health is "the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organized efforts and informed choices of society, organizations, public and private, communities and individuals" (1920, C.E.A. Winslow). One of the core functions of public health is **assuring that public health needs are met** and you can do this by advocating for policies that address the particular public health challenges your county faces.

In order to be effective in your role as a board of health member, it is important to understand what your responsibilities are, what advocacy is, and what methods you can use to advocate for change. **The Indiana Local Board of Health Advocacy Guide** will provide you with just that! The Guide is divided into four sections; all geared towards giving you the information you need to make a difference in your community.

- **First section** — Gives background information on public health and the principles that guide the profession as well as a brief overview of your role as a board of health member.
- **Second section** — Defines and expands on the definition of advocacy and clarifies the confusion about the difference between advocating and lobbying. Here you will also find information about the importance of working with partners in order to increase resources and make a greater impact in the community. If your board is ready to work with other organizations, this section will give you an idea of what types of groups to reach out to.
- **Third section** — Defines and explains six methods to advocate. When communicating with policymakers, it is important to be clear, concise and powerful in your words and actions. This section will give you several tips to be successful no matter which methods you choose.
- **Fourth section** — Lists public health organizations and their websites. Here you can find additional information on a topic so that you are knowledgeable and able to confidently speak about an issue.

We hope that the Guide will inspire you to advocate for change and give you the tools to do so in an effective manner. **Your community is depending on you.** Good luck!!

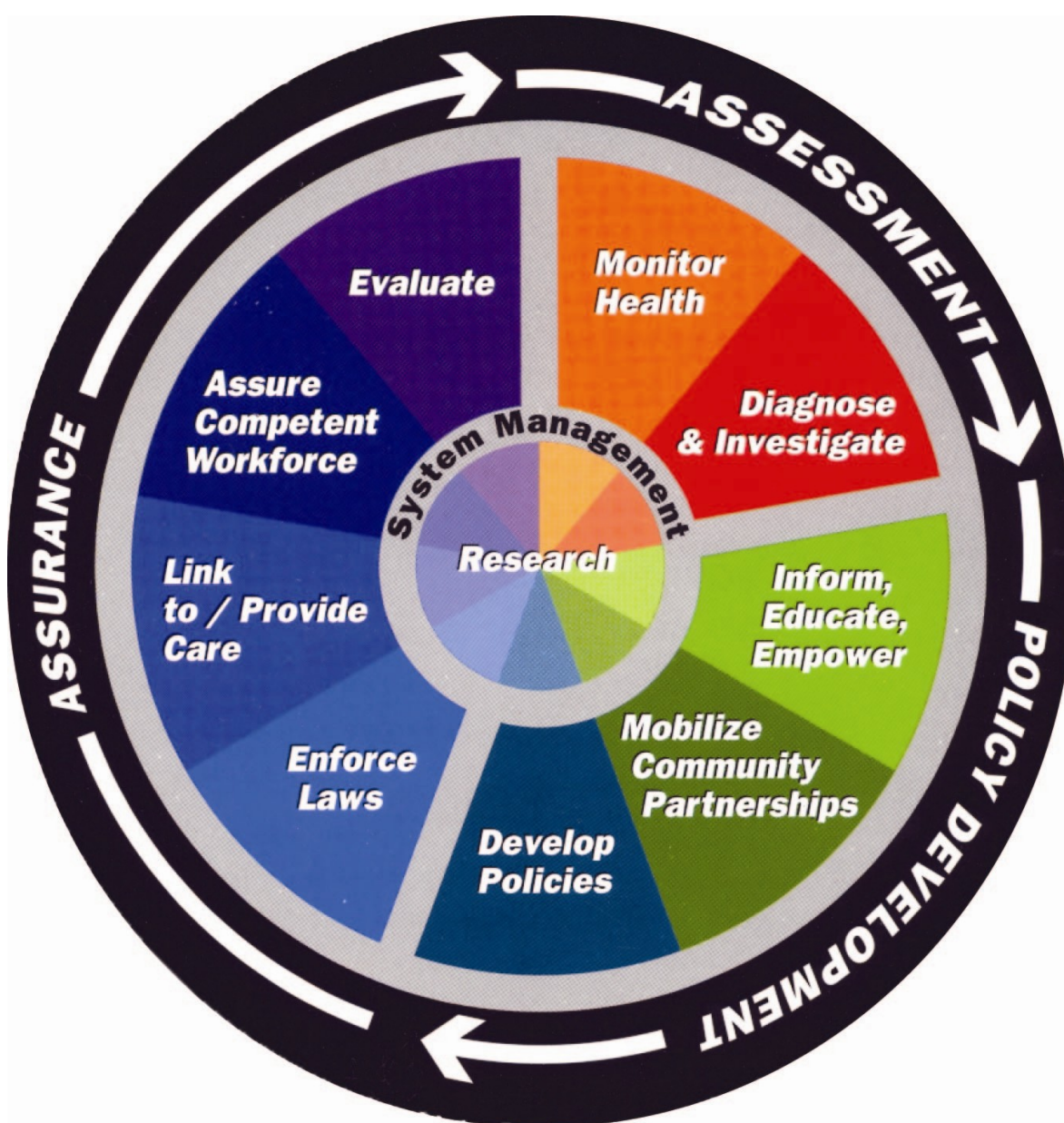
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# Guiding Principles of Public Health

The **THREE CORE FUNCTIONS** guide the work of local public health agencies

1. **Assessing** the status of public health in the community
2. **Developing policies** to address public health needs
3. **Assuring** that public health needs are met



# Guiding Principles of Public Health

Board of Health members must embrace public health if they are to serve the people and be strong positive public health advocates.

The **TEN ESSENTIAL SERVICES** define the actions of public health agencies, including local boards of health

1. **Monitor** health status to identify community health problems
2. **Diagnose and investigate** health problems and health hazards in the community
3. **Inform, educate and empower** people about health issues
4. **Mobilize** community partnerships to identify and solve health problems
5. **Develop** policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts
6. **Enforce** laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety
7. **Link** people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of healthcare when otherwise unavailable
8. **Assure** a competent public health and personal healthcare workforce
9. **Evaluate** the effectiveness, accessibility and quality of personal and population-based health services
10. **Research** new insights and innovative solutions to health problems

# Your Role as a Board of Health Member

As a board of health member you are a vital part of the nation's public health system. Your role is important, because you provide guidance, oversight and leadership to the local health department (LHD) and to your community.

Your primary responsibility is to study and to learn about the obligations of the board, the local health department's activities, the community's health problems and the need for planning solutions that address these concerns.

## Board members fulfill these expectations by:

- **Being prepared** for meetings by reading all pertinent material prior to the meeting, being informed about issues in order to discuss them responsibly and researching additional information as needed.
- **Attending and actively participating** in all board of health meetings.
- **Becoming familiar with and understanding** the meeting process and following the rules of order.
- **Ensuring** that time at board of health meetings is set aside for updates on public health problems and what the LHD is doing, or needs to do, in response to existing challenges.
- **Involving** others in LHD functions, special events and activities to promote and support programs and services.
- **Advocating** for public health by communicating regularly with community leaders and elected officials about perceived needs and possible resources.
- **Serving** as a liaison between the community and the LHD and between the health agency and the community.
- **Working** cooperatively with the health officer or health commissioner.
- **Learning** about every aspect of the LHD and the local public health system, including identifying possible partners.
- **Being** patient. Changing health status, enforcing procedures and solving public health problems takes time.
- **Identifying** priorities to ensure that the appropriate resources are available to meet the LHD's long-term goals and objectives.
- **Making** decisions that must be made, even in the midst of adverse public reactions and/or opinions of the governmental body responsible for the appointment or election of board members.
- **Knowing** the difference between private problems and those that actually impact the public's health.
- **Taking** responsibility when asked and following through on commitments.
- **Being a** visionary by planning where the board and the LHD should be in two to three years and actively participating in identifying and training new board members who support this vision.

# What is Advocacy?

- Advocacy is the deliberate process of influencing those who make policy decisions.
- Advocacy is about creation or reform of policies but also about effective implementation, enforcement and evaluation of policies. A policy is a plan, course of action or set of regulations adopted by government, business or an institution designed to influence and determine decisions or procedures.
- Advocacy is a means to an end, another way to address the problems that we aim to solve through other programming strategies.

FIRST, advocacy is about *influencing* those who make policy decisions. Many people start with a preconception that advocacy is about “being confrontational” and “shouting at the government.” One of the most important messages is that advocacy does not have to be confrontational. There is a wide range of advocacy approaches to choose from, e.g. a public vs. a private approach, engagement vs. confrontation and working alone or on a coalition with others.

SECOND, advocacy is a *deliberate* process, involving intentional actions. Therefore, before implementing advocacy strategies it must be clear who you are trying to influence and what policy you wish to change.

THIRD, *policymakers* can encompass many types of decision makers. Advocacy is not restricted to those policymakers who work for the government. There are policymakers who work for the private sector and who wield enormous influence in their communities. It is important to keep in mind that *policymakers are always human beings* not institutions. Advocacy is used to influence the choices and actions of those who make laws and regulations, and those who distribute resources and make other decisions that affect the well-being of many people.

## Helpful Hints for Advocating

1. Learn the state legislative and local policymaking processes and understand them well.
2. Get to know your policymakers — their districts and constituents, voting records, personal schedules, opinions, expertise and interests. Understand his or her concerns, priorities and perspectives.
3. Acquaint yourself with the staff members for the policymakers, committees and resource officials with whom you will be working. These people are essential sources of information and have significant influence.
4. Identify fellow advocates and partners in the public health community to work with.
5. Reach out to groups and other policymakers with whom you may need to negotiate for changes in legislation.
6. Foster and strengthen relationships with allies and work with policymakers who are flexible and tend to keep an open mind.

# Clarifying the Confusion: Advocacy vs. Lobbying

**Advocacy** is the general promotion of an idea or cause through education, outreach and/or grassroots organizing. It is an effective way to create awareness about how a community is impacted, either positively or negatively, by public policy and to generate interest in and support among legislators and the public for a particular issue. In general, advocacy activities are not prohibited for nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations and are a great way to engage policymakers in discussions of issues facing their constituents.

**Lobbying**, a form of advocacy, involves asking a legislator to take a specific position or support or oppose a particular piece of legislation. Legislation means a bill that has been introduced or a draft bill that may be introduced in any legislative body such as a city council, state legislature or Congress. Lobbying is allowed for nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations as long as they do not engage in excessive lobbying or spend more than a certain percentage of their budget on lobbying efforts. Nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations may not, however, engage in promoting or opposing political candidates or parties in any way.

**Direct lobbying** involves communication with a legislator, legislative staff or body or any covered executive branch or other government employee who may participate in the formulation of legislation. The communication refers to a specific piece of legislation and expresses a view on that legislation. **Grassroots lobbying** is defined as an attempt to influence specific legislation by encouraging the public to contact legislators about that legislation. A communication constitutes grassroots lobbying if it refers to specific legislation, reflects the view on that specific legislation and encourages the recipient of the communication to take lobbying action. This is known as a “call to action.”

The following activities are considered advocacy but **not** lobbying:

- Providing technical assistance or advice to a legislative body or committee in response to a request
- Making available non-partisan analysis, study or research
- Providing examinations and discussions of broad, social, economic and similar problems
- Communicating with a legislative body regarding matters which might affect the existence of an organization, its powers and duties, its tax-exemption status or the deduction of contributions to an organization
- Updating members of your own organization on the status of legislation, without a call to action.

**ADVOCACY =**  
getting the right  
information, to the  
right people at the  
right time, to get the  
public health  
message across.

**Being an effective advocate includes five basic concepts:**

1. Be factual, honest and knowledgeable about your subject
2. Be clear, concise and concrete with your message
3. You, rather than someone else, must frame the issue
4. Cheerful persistence - promoting public health is a long process
5. Don't forget to follow up and say “thank you”

# Working with Others

There are many groups available and willing to partner with your board of health to improve the health of the community. Each group brings something different and beneficial to the partnership. Ensuring your partnership has widespread representation will help promote and improve the health and wellness of your community.

Working with other organizations is a cost-effective way to enhance the credibility and reach of a board of health's messages. Many public health institutions seek out partner organizations to reach specific audiences.

## **Benefits to forming a partnership include:**

- \* Gaining support from an entire group.
- \* Bringing credibility to a message, because the partner is a trusted source of information.
- \* Expanding the partnership's resources, new ideas and contracts.

## **Things to consider when involving partners:**

- \* Choose credible organizations that have a voice in the community, who bring needed resources and are focused on similar efforts.
- \* Consider the roles for each organization.
- \* Involve representatives early in the process.
- \* Develop a method for communication and feedback.
- \* Provide moral support and show appreciation.
- \* Report accomplishments to maintain momentum.

## **Keeping in touch with partners:**

- \* Periodically call to find out how each partner's work is progressing. Offer to help when appropriate and congratulate them on accomplishments.
- \* Involve partners whenever possible.
- \* Give partners updates on board of health progress and partnerships.
- \* Give partners credit within board of health communication.
- \* Share materials and information.
- \* Explore future collaboration opportunities.
- \* Institute a newsletter featuring updates and showcasing groups that have special events.

# Potential Partners

**Working together,  
ordinary people can perform extraordinary feats.**

Examples of groups with whom a board of health may want to partner:

Asthma support groups

Business organizations

Community groups

Early childhood intervention agencies

Hospitals and clinics

Labor unions

Law enforcement

Local health departments

Local schools (public and private)

Medical auxiliaries

Nonprofit organizations

Parent/Teacher groups

Religious organizations

Smokefree coalitions

Substance abuse coalitions

Voluntary organizations

Youth groups

Youth tobacco prevention groups

Working with others fits into the TEN Essential Public Health Services

**#3.** Inform, educate and empower people about health issues

**#4.** Mobilize community partnerships to identify and solve health problems

**#5.** Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts.

# Writing Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor are short articles in a newspaper's Editorial Section and generally respond to a previous article in the paper. Letters to the Editor can be very useful tools for advocates to get their message out. Most policymakers read Letters to the Editor regularly as it is an important way for elected officials to track issues important to their constituents.

## Gather background information:

- Plan your message. Choose just one. Don't try to pack too much in. If you have a different take or a unique perspective on an issue, it is more likely to be published.
- Choose your target. If you are trying to move public opinion, look for the paper with the largest circulation. If you want to reach a particular legislator, choose his or her hometown paper or one you know that he or she reads.
- Read the paper(s). Find out what kind of issues and writing styles are likely to be published.

## Contact the paper and find out their policies:

- How to submit — Email, FAX or regular mail.
- Timing — When you can submit and how long it will likely take to be published?
- Length limitations.
- Do they only take exclusive submissions? Some papers will not accept your article if you are also sending it to other papers.
- Any other rules — For example, do they allow you to use pseudonyms for people in the story or do they allow more than one person to sign?

## How to Frame your Message—Use EPIC

**E**ngage—use a powerful, emotional statement; draw the reader in

**P**roblem—get right to it quickly; tell them what is wrong

**I**nform—tell them about the solution; what can be done

**C**all to action—make a request; state as a “yes” or “no” question

If you do not know the Letter to the Editor word limit, keep it under 150 words. The most common reason letters are not published is because they are too long. Make your main point early to avoid having key messages edited due to length.

# Writing Letters to the Editor

## Start writing:

- Comment on a previous article or link it to another topic in the paper.
- Keep it short and do not go over the length requirement.
- Be clear. Big words and lots of statistics do not score more points. They often lose the reader.
- Be direct. Don't use sarcasm or hypothetical questions. Don't make them guess what your point is.
- Real life stories engage readers and can often make a point in far fewer words than a page of statistics.
- Choose words carefully. Do not offend. No personal attacks.
- Use humor, as long as it is appropriate.
- Explain your stake in the issue up front. If you are a health care provider arguing for higher rates or a person with disabilities arguing against cuts in services, say so.
- It can be effective if you bring up your opponent's case and prove it wrong. If you can't prove it wrong, don't include it.
- If possible, offer action steps for the readers.
- Include your name, address, a phone number where you can be reached, any organizational affiliation and a one-sentence description of that organization. However, you do not have to be writing on behalf of an organization to get published.

## Send it to the paper(s) in the way they prefer to receive it and follow up:

- Check to be sure that they received it and that the right person got it.
- Call back in a few days if you haven't heard anything. They should call you to confirm that you really wrote the piece before they publish it. You may have to call back a few times before you get an answer. Be persistent.
- They may want you to make some changes or they may make the changes and sometimes they send it to you for approval. Don't take it personally - that's what editors do.
- Do not get discouraged if they don't print your article. Find out as much as you can about why it wasn't printed. Consider sending it to another paper.
- If you do get published, save the clipping. Send it to policymakers in case they didn't see it.

**Advocacy is a muscle that must be exercised regularly.**

### **Writing Letters to the Editor is an easy way to advocate for better public health policy.**

- It is a cheap (free) way to address public opinion.
- The letter is your words, your message. No misquoting, no chance that the reporter will miss your point. And your opponents have to write their own article to get a response in.
- It is an excellent way to explain a complex issue.
- You can make connections in policy that are more difficult to make in hallway conversations.
- If your issue is not getting press or is now "old news," a Letter to the Editor can revive it.

# Writing an Op-Ed

An op-ed often carries more weight than a Letter to the Editor. It presents a point of view with much greater detail and persuasion than a short letter allows.

## What is an op-ed?

- ◇ Another way of contacting the media
- ◇ An opinion piece run on a newspaper's opinion-editorial page
- ◇ A written piece by members of the community rather than by journalists
- ◇ The focus is typically local and the topic is usually a current issue

## Careful planning is key.

**OBTAIN GUIDELINES** — Call and ask the editorial page editor or op-ed editor for the newspaper's op-ed policies for submission such as length (usually 700 or 800 words).

**TALK TO THE EDITOR** — Try to arrange an appointment with the editorial staff to discuss your unique qualifications for writing an op-ed and the issue's urgency. Use the meeting to sell your issue, your organization and yourself. Some newspapers will not take time to meet with you and will make the decision solely based on your article. At the very least, the editor might have useful suggestions on how to write your article and improve its chances of being published.

**LOCALIZE IT** — Adopt a local angle in your op-ed, even on a national issue. Since you're probably competing for space with nationally syndicated columnists, a local angle can make your article more appealing.

### Exclusivity

Most papers require exclusivity; you may only submit your op-ed to their publication. If they decline to print it, you are free to submit the piece to another publication.

### Follow Up

Be sure to follow up within a week after submitting an article to ensure that it was received and to answer questions the editor might have.

# Attending Town Hall Meetings

A **town hall meeting** is an informal public meeting. Everybody in a community is invited to attend, voice their opinions and hear the responses from policymakers. Below are tips to make your visit a success!

- **Be Prepared.** Most people don't present their policymakers with a well-researched, well-rehearsed pitch. They just say what they think — which has value. But those who come to town hall meetings with thoughtful arguments, good data and persuasive stories always get remembered.
- **Tell a Personal Story.** This is why policymakers hold town hall meetings — to get first-hand accounts of the impact of policies on constituents. Think in advance of how a policy might affect you, your family, your business or your community. Whether the policymaker supports you or not, they want to hear your story.
- **Use Numbers if You Have Them.** Policymakers live for one thing: 50% plus 1. This keeps them re-elected and in a job. Nearly every person to come before a policymaker represents more constituents either by a class or as a spokesperson. Use these numbers. “I have 50 employees,” “I represent 100 people in my coalition,” “There are 500 people in my community that think just like me.” The policymaker is trying to do the political math the minute you stand up — make it easy for him or her.
- **Be Respectful.** You'd be surprised how many people start a conversation with “I pay your salary so you better listen to me.” It doesn't matter if you're talking to your grocer or a public official — starting any conversation with another person in a rude manner is no way to persuade them. Policymakers want to hear your views, you don't need to badger them to get your message through.
- **Go in Groups.** Nothing says “listen to me” to a policymaker like large group. A chorus is better than a solo performance.

# Attending Town Hall Meetings

- **Talk to the Staff.** Every policymaker brings staff to town hall meetings. They may seem to blend into the woodwork, but a sharp citizen seeks them out. Talk to them before the meeting, get their business cards and tell them your story.
- **Leave Paper.** Town hall meetings are usually staffed by district-office staff who do not deal with legislative issues on a daily basis. If you leave background memos or talking points, they'll likely be faxed to Washington to the legislative assistant who covers your issue.
- **Follow Up Politely.** Politely persistent people persuade policymakers. Policymaker's offices are often harried, so they often respond to the squeaky wheel — the person who follows up with a phone call after attending a town hall meeting.
- **Get People to Multiple Meetings.** This is a sure bet to get noticed. When policymakers get the same questions at different meetings, they say, "We'd better look into that." Hearing the same thing in different places signals to a policymaker there may be a deeper problem afoot.
- **Demonstrate You're Not Going Away.** If you continue to show your presence at town hall meetings, the policymaker must deal with you. . .if only to avoid an uncomfortable encounter at a future town hall meeting.

## Raising a Question at the Town Hall Meeting

Do not underestimate the power of raising a question at a town hall meeting and getting a public official on the record. If a policymaker says to a constituent in a public setting, "I'll look into it," the issue is guaranteed to immediately go to the top of some staffer's to-do list. Politicians are terrified of being accused of not following through on a promise. And a policymaker making a pledge to a constituent at a town hall meeting is one of the biggest promises they can make.

# Writing Policymakers

Policymakers welcome your opinions and expertise on issues affecting you, your community and your state.

## Why Write your Policymakers?

- To voice support or opposition for a specific proposed policy or piece of legislation
- To inform them of a problem in your community
- To share with them your knowledge
- To thank them for their vote on a certain measure
- To offer your expertise for future legislation and regulatory efforts

## Keep the following tips in mind as you write to your policymakers:

- ✓ **Accuracy and attention to detail.** Be sure to use the proper form of address and correct spelling of the policymaker's name.
- ✓ **Identify yourself as a constituent.** Whenever possible, give your official title and any professional degrees following your signature.
- ✓ **Short letters are best.** Try to keep your letter to one page. Be sure not to use jargon or confusing technical terms.
- ✓ **Concentrate on a single issue and state your purpose for writing at the outset.** Letters should cover only one topic and be timed to arrive while the issue is current.
- ✓ **Correctly identify the issue.** If you are writing about a specific policy issue, remember to describe it by its official title and number (if applicable) as well as by its popular name.
- ✓ **Tell your policymaker how the issue would affect you and the rest of his or her constituents.** Your own personal experience and district-specific information are the best supporting evidence as well as data and research supporting your position.
- ✓ **Be sure your facts and assertions are accurate.** Often policymakers use constituent mail to make points during speeches to debates and to convince fellow policymakers of their position.
- ✓ **Ask your policymaker for his or her position on the issue.** Indicate that you look forward to hearing from him or her on the issue.
- ✓ **Praise, praise, praise.** If your policymaker pleases you by supporting an issue, let him or her know.

Be sure to send a note of appreciation if your position is supported.

# Calling Policymakers

Calling your policymaker is one of the **EASIEST** and most **EFFECTIVE** ways to speak with policymakers on issues of interest and priority.

When calling your policymakers, **do so on your own time with your own phone**, as your employer might not share your views on the topic.

Be sure to **keep a record** of the date and time of your call(s) and the person with whom you spoke or for whom you left a message. Sometimes the phone logs are lost, and you may need to follow up with the office to ensure a response.

## How to make a successful call to your policy maker:

- ◇ Once connected to your policymaker's office, **identify yourself as a constituent** to the receptionist. Clearly state your first and last name, your hometown and why you are calling. If you know the health legislative assistant (HLA), be sure to ask for that staffer by name. If not, ask for the staffer's name and request to be transferred. Sometimes, the receptionist will indicate that you will need to leave your comments with him or her. If that is the case, you still should ask for the name of the HLA, so that you have that information. Record it for future reference.
- ◇ If transferred to the HLA personally or if you are put into the staffer's voicemail, reintroduce yourself and **immediately identify the topic you are calling to discuss**. If you are instructed to leave a message with the receptionist, repeat your name and continue with your message that you wish to deliver.
- ◇ **Make a few brief points** as to why the issue is of concern to you, your community and the nation, and why the policymaker should take action. You may want to use written notes to help you stay on topic and remain clear while articulating your case.
- ◇ **Be clear as to what you are asking the policymaker to do** (e.g., cosponsor a particular bill, vote for or against a specific measure, sign a "Dear Colleague" letter).
- ◇ **Be polite in your tone and language**. The staffer on the other end of the phone is overworked, overwhelmed, underpaid and receives dozens – if not hundreds – of calls a day. In fact, in some offices, you may be speaking with a junior staffer or a college intern, so be sure to be patient and forgiving. Also, be sure not to use any "lingo" or "slang". You should not assume the person on the other end of the phone is familiar with the issue you are discussing, so be as clear and concise as possible.

# Calling Policymakers

## How to make a successful call to your policy maker:

- ◇ **Keep it brief.** Limit your call to no more than five minutes, unless the staffer or policymaker asks you questions and seems engaged in the discussion. Offer to send additional or follow-up information and request the preferred mode of communication (e.g. email, fax, mail).
- ◇ **Specifically request a written response** from the office on the policymaker's position or action on the issue you addressed.
- ◇ **Provide your full name**, mailing address, email address and telephone number.
- ◇ **Thank the staffer** for his or her time and indicate that you appreciate his or her willingness to listen and record your comments. Be sure to record the name of the staffer and the day and time you spoke, so you can have it for future use and in case you need to follow up.
- ◇ **If you do not receive a response within a reasonable timeframe** (approximately a month), either call or write to follow up and request a response. Reference your phone call and mention with whom you spoke and the topic to help facilitate a meaningful reply.

## Voicemail Tips:

- ⇒ Leave a brief, clear message for the staffer (write his or her name down for future reference)
- ⇒ Provide your full name, contact information and the nature of your call and specific request
- ⇒ Be clear that you would like a return call and/or a letter from the policymaker on the topic about which you are calling

## Developing a Relationships with Your Policymakers

Be sure to keep in touch with the offices of your policymaker to establish a relationship and make yourself available as a local resource. There are times when you and an elected official will have to “agree to disagree,” but over time, you also may find that the policymaker may be supportive and helpful on other matters.

If you take the time to foster friendly relationships with policymakers, you will see the investment come back to you in the form of support for expanding or defending funding streams, assistance in facilitating alliance and partnerships to strengthen your work and public support for your efforts.

# Visiting Policymakers

One of the most effective ways to **influence the policymaking process** and **make a lasting connection** is to visit with your policymaker in person.

## How to Arrange a Meeting with Your Policymaker:

- ♦ **Send a letter, a fax or call to request an appointment.** If you want to meet with your policymaker in the district, send the request to the district office. If you will be visiting the capitol, send the letter to that office.
- ♦ **Be sure to identify yourself as a constituent** and address the letter to the policymaker and to the attention of the appointment scheduler. Include information about who you are, the nature of your visit (identify what you want to discuss), when you would like to meet and the names of any friends or colleagues who may accompany you.
- ♦ **Call the policymaker's office after a few days to follow up on the letter.** Ask to speak with the appointment scheduler or the administrative assistant who handles appointments. Explain who you are and why you are calling and refer to the letter you sent to the office. If the legislator is unavailable at the time or will not be in the area on the date you would like to meet, the appointment scheduler may offer you another date and time or provide you the opportunity to meet with the policymaker's staff who handles the issue you want to discuss.

## Got an appointment with the staff instead?

Don't be discouraged if you get a meeting with the policymaker's staff (also called a legislative aide). While policymakers make every effort to meet with their constituents, their schedules can be very unpredictable. Contrary to belief, staff play an intricate role in research and information collecting for policymakers on issues. Legislative aides are usually assigned issues in which they become "experts" for the office. The legislative aide helps to shape the policymaker's positions on issue. Building a relationship with a staff member can be just as effective as meeting with a policymaker.

## Before you go — Get to know

**Learn all you can about your policymaker**

- ♦ Check out his or her website
- ♦ Talk with colleagues and fellow community members to get a feel for what he or she cares about
- ♦ Discover his or her interests and key issues
- ♦ Develop messages and select a story that links his or her priorities to your request

# Visiting Policymakers

## Conducting a Meeting with you Policymaker or Staff

**Arrive on time.** If meeting with a staff member, be sure you have the correct contact name. Do not underestimate the power of the staff person in helping to shape the policymaker's opinion and positions on issues or a particular piece of legislation.

**Bring two or three colleagues with you.** Prior to the meeting, you should agree on what points will be made and which one each of you will discuss.

**Try to deliver your message in three minutes.** Be sure to introduce yourself and your colleagues and explain why you are concerned about the issue and why you have expertise regarding the issue. Be concise, polite, and professional. One of the most important issues to elected officials is how your work directly impacts the people who put them in office—the people who live and work in the communities they represent. Provide examples and let them know, clearly and specifically, how the policy will affect them.

**Be prepared to answer questions.** Clearly explain your interests and issues.

**Be a resource for the policymaker and his or her staff.** Offer your time and assistance if he or she wants to talk about your areas of interest and expertise in the future.

**Provide material to support your position.** Leave behind a business card and a one-page fact sheet summarizing your position.

**Follow up with a “thank you” letter.** Be sure to include any additional information you may have promised or that may be relevant to the issue.

The most compelling and memorable way to educate a policymaker on an issue is to tell a brief story that demonstrates the unique impact that the policy has on an individual, program or community. Keep the story simple, positive, and on point. Whenever possible, tie the story to the policymaker's interests. If you don't personally know of a specific story, doing brief research on the policymaker's interests will allow you to ask colleagues who work more directly on the issue to provide you with specifics.

# Websites: Where to Find What You Need

Advocacy Institute	<a href="http://www.advocacyinstitute.org">www.advocacyinstitute.org</a>
American Cancer Society	<a href="http://www.cancer.org">www.cancer.org</a>
American Heart Association	<a href="http://www.americanheart.org">www.americanheart.org</a>
American Lung Association	<a href="http://www.lungusa.org">www.lungusa.org</a>
American Medical Association	<a href="http://www.ama-assn.org">www.ama-assn.org</a>
American Public Health Association	<a href="http://www.apha.org">www.apha.org</a>
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials	<a href="http://www.astho.org">www.astho.org</a>
Indiana Association of Local Boards of Health	<a href="http://www.inpha.org">www.inpha.org</a>
Indiana State Department of Health	<a href="http://www.in.gov/isdh">www.in.gov/isdh</a>
Indiana Public Health Association	<a href="http://www.inpha.org">www.inpha.org</a>
Legacy	<a href="http://www.legacyforhealth.org">www.legacyforhealth.org</a>
National Association of County & City Health Officials	<a href="http://www.naccho.org">www.naccho.org</a>
National Association of Local Boards of Health	<a href="http://www.nalboh.org">www.nalboh.org</a>
National Center of Health Statistics	<a href="http://www.cdc.gov/nchs">www.cdc.gov/nchs</a>
National Conference of State Legislatures	<a href="http://www.ncsl.org">www.ncsl.org</a>
National Institutes of Health	<a href="http://www.nih.gov">www.nih.gov</a>
Public Health Foundation	<a href="http://www.phf.org">www.phf.org</a>
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation	<a href="http://www.rwjf.org">www.rwjf.org</a>
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	<a href="http://www.dhhs.gov">www.dhhs.gov</a>
World Health Organization	<a href="http://www.who.int">www.who.int</a>

