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The Alliance for Children and Families and its member agencies have had a long and abiding interest in helping the nonprofit human services sector participate fully in promoting the rights and enhancing the advancement opportunities of children and families. Its Mission spells this commitment thus:

To strengthen the capacities of North America’s nonprofit child and family-serving agencies to serve and to advocate for children, families and communities

The Alliance was fortunate to be able to secure funding from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund to undergird its efforts to attract the clout and concern of the hundreds of committed board members and volunteers serving nonprofits and this effort coincides with the foundation’s priority area of enhancing civic participation in our society. Thus an alliance of interest and resolve resulted in what we have termed the “Building Community Voices” project, an effort to engage human service providers in advocacy that enhances and implements the mission of our agencies as well as our own.

The project seeks to promote the resurgence of nonprofit leadership in values-driven public policy, engage the valuable contributions of board members and volunteers and motivate the whole structure of human service agencies to utilize their potential in achieving better policies that enhance their organizational capacity to serve their clients more effectively.

The Toolkit, therefore, focuses on mission-based advocacy, the process by which organizations harness the political potential of all the individuals, board members, trustees, volunteers and staff committed to the organization’s mission to, in concert, take actions that can lead to more effectively achieve or advance the organization’s goals. This effort gives salience to the concept of civic participation, an essential value of our democratic society. So, the Toolkit, by providing valuable, tangible tools to educate you, your staff, volunteers and board members to organize and implement your advocacy agenda, helps you to participate tangibly in the democratic decision making process by voicing ideas and opinions that can result in the improvement of the lives of the vulnerable in our society and sound and just public policies.

The Toolkit posits that Advocacy is as easy as 1, 2, 3! It provides reminders to the readers about what makes the advocacy process glide by highlighting three principal sections or “legs of a stool” that support effective citizen action:

1. The Basics of Government: the first part of the Toolkit is designed to be a resource to the reader on the process of making laws, points out the difference between advocacy and lobbying, and delves into various aspects of advocacy.

2. Addressing Common Barriers: the second part of the Toolkit addresses ways to overcome six barriers that nonprofit agencies have indicated hold them back from advocacy and lobbying. It helps dispel some myths that exist about nonprofit advocacy.
Executive Summary

3. Helpful Advocacy Techniques and Framework: the third part of the Toolkit provides techniques, worksheets, and a framework to implement an advocacy agenda. You can utilize its “how to” sections to allay the fears of those who have never undertaken advocacy or to provide reminders of different methods that have proven to be successful for the more seasoned players.

The Toolkit has a conventional index and an annotated index that can help you find the area you are looking to freshen your skills on. It has an important section on resources available to you and an excellent bibliography for those that want to search for specific answers to questions that may be preventing them from fully engaging in civic participation. Finally, the Toolkit is enriched by three case studies on successful advocacy models.

The basic advocacy principles contained in this versatile Toolkit can be applied to all levels of government; it can be helpful when you are lobbying your local county board, your state legislator or visiting your United States Senator or Representative. It gives you ideas about what to cover when public officials visit your agency or when you are testifying before a public body on issues of interest to you.

The Alliance Public Policy Office and the Community Voices Advisory Committee have developed this advocacy Toolkit for nonprofit human service organizations with useful sections on what the charter of your public policy committee should be or how to define the advocacy duties of your board members to enhance your capacity building in the area of civic participation. We hope that you will find it is a great resource for you as you help raise community voices on behalf of sound public policies that will make your communities excellent settings for children and families to thrive.

If you have any questions on the Toolkit or public policy in general, please contact the Alliance Public Policy Office at policy@alliance1.org or call 202-429-0400.
Welcome to “mission-based advocacy.” This toolkit is designed to take the kind of information we all learn about our role as members of a democracy – from that first 7th grade social studies class to the most recent election – and reconsider it through our very special lens as people with a “mission,” not just a “job.”

It’s a truism, even if we don’t often stop to think about it, that having a mission is rather special. On one level it is a job like any other - a task, the way we support ourselves and our family, the work we do for pay. But even those who take a job in a non-profit to support themselves and their families, being part of a mission-driven organization has the added element of being part of something bigger: an effort with ideals, that carries out its work based on certain values. That affects the way we treat one another in the workplace, as well as how we treat those who come for help.

So while it is true that much of the basic information about policy advocacy is the same for everyone, it is also true that mission-based advocacy has special attributes. It rests on certain values – values that inform our work and inspire our efforts.

- Civic engagement: It seeks to enrich and celebrate American democracy by bringing the experience of Board members, volunteers, service providers and served alike to the attention of policy makers and elected officials.
- Empowerment: It seeks to involve those directly affected - offering advocacy with, and not merely for, those we serve.
- Community-building: It seeks to build bridges between those in need, those with energy and resources, and those in decision-making roles.
- Community education: It seeks to educate the broader community about societal problems – changing public attitudes, challenging stereotypes, reducing prejudice, promoting informed public policy.
- Public Interest: It seeks to serve the broader community, working for the common good as well as the good of individuals and families.
- Social Change: Because it seeks to meet immediate needs while also addressing root causes, it begins with individuals and families, includes agency capacity-building, and works at the same time for constructive social change.

The information that follows is intended to help your agency, members of your board of directors, and your volunteers think differently about their advocacy roles, so they can be more effective voices for and with those we serve. And to allay any fears that this is not an appropriate (or legal) activity, the appendix includes useful references to the rules that govern advocacy and lobbying.

This toolkit begins with a brief reminder of how government is organized and our laws are made (PART I), and then is organized in two additional PARTS. PART II offers thoughts for dealing with the barriers identified by Alliance focus group participants in the first part of the Building Community Voices project. PART III then offers some
practical, effective advocacy techniques that can be used by Alliance members as you continue to build those community voices. Appendix material includes handy resources, and sample materials (congressional testimony, press release, legislative tracking chart) to jumpstart your advocacy activities.

As you move ahead, remember that you are not alone in this undertaking; the Alliance policy staff and many experienced Alliance members stand ready to help.

Sometimes it helps to begin at the very beginning – and by focusing on advocacy, this Toolkit does precisely that. It takes us back to our beginnings as citizens of one of the world’s oldest democracies. Some days with all the noise about campaigns and talk of laws made by someone far away in a state or national capitol, it is easy to forget that our form of government – democracy - results from combining two simple but powerful concepts. The first is: “the people;” and the second is: “to be strong.” Ours is a government that takes its strength from the involvement of its people, a form of government in which power is held, and directly exercised, by us: the people. But we can’t all serve directly on the city council or the U.S. Congress, which is why we speak of exercising our power indirectly – through our elected representatives. If our democracy is to remain healthy, we citizens have to remain engaged. In particular, we have to tell our elected representatives how we wish to be represented. Which is precisely where “advocacy,” and this ToolKit, comes in.

The best short definition of advocacy is brief: Advocacy just means “speaking up.” That’s legal any time, by anyone. Lobbying is just one form of advocacy, with a very specific definition: communications with elected officials (or their staff) that urges a position on a pending piece of legislation. That too is legal, within certain limits.

Institutional self-advocacy is common throughout society. Institutions of every size – for-profit, not-for-profit, and public – can be found advocating for themselves. Whether that takes the form of a paid advertisement, an appeal to donors for funds, or a sticker announcing “your government at work,” every sector has its approach to self-advocacy. They advocate to promote their products, sustain their salaries, and maintain their functions. And when some or all of their budgets come from public sources (through contracts, grants, the provision of goods or services, or government appropriations), that self-advocacy quickly becomes policy advocacy. For some, being willing to engage in policy advocacy is a matter of institutional life or death.

Mission-based advocacy includes all the same efforts needed to keep the lights on and the salaries paid, but it goes much farther - thanks to a clear sense of vision and the values needed to bring that vision to life. For example, along with maintaining the “bricks and mortar,” the board, staff, and volunteers of the Alliance for Children and Families are working together with the families they serve toward the vision of a healthy society and strong communities for all children and families. That is the sort of goal that won’t be accomplished just by winning a grant or charging a fee.
Nor will it be accomplished by reducing the Alliance’s broad, community-enhancing mission (“To strengthen the capacities of North America's nonprofit child and family serving organizations to serve and to advocate for children, families, and communities.”) to only those outcomes that can be narrowly-defined and concretely measured.

If we are to achieve those “healthy families and strong communities,” we will need a focus and energy devoted to addressing root causes – as well as attention to meeting immediate needs. And if those being served in nonprofit child and family serving organizations are people who are less well-represented in public policy debates - the underprivileged, disadvantaged, or disenfranchised - then, as CEO Peter Goldberg points out, “…every nonprofit human services organization has not only a right, but a responsibility, to be active in the public policy arena” as “…a voice for our ideas and our ideals.”

It helps to keep in mind that growing an agency’s policy advocacy capacity is going to take time. No one expects overnight success. And the steps can be incremental: not so much adding mission-based advocacy at first, as adapting current efforts to serve both long-term social change and short-term survival. The continued enlargement of the “voices” is key to long-term success. Therefore, the engagement of the board of directors and other volunteers who have earned community respect is a vital purpose of this project.
Thanks to the following for their work on this toolkit:

Carmen Delgado Votaw, Senior Vice President, Public Policy

Andrea Smith, Intern
The basics we all learned in middle school remain the same: every level of government is organized into three branches: a Legislative branch, which enacts laws; an Executive branch which carries out laws; and a Judicial branch which interprets laws (and resolves any conflicts between the other two, or between citizens and their government).

Non-profit advocates work primarily with the first two: with legislators and their staffs to influence the language of the laws, and then with staff in the executive agencies to influence the language of the regulations needed to carry out the laws. The Courts also get attention, though less often. CASA Volunteers (Court Appointed Special Advocates for children) who work directly with the courts, and the many children’s agencies which have turned to the Courts to force reforms in state child welfare systems offer two good examples.

**Congress is the Federal Legislature:** with a 100-member Senate and a 435-member House of Representatives. It meets year-round and includes 2 U.S. Senators for every state, plus one Representative for every (roughly) 650,000 people. They set federal policy and determine the content of federal laws. The President and his Cabinet head the federal Executive branch; the federal agencies under them (e.g., the federal Department of Health & Human Services) carry out the federal laws. And the federal court system – including the U.S. Supreme Court - interprets and resolves matters related to federal laws.

**State Legislatures** also have a Senate and House (except Nebraska – the only “unicameral” state legislature), and everyone is represented by one state Senator and at least one state Representative. They set state policy and determine the content of state laws. The Governor and his/her Cabinet head the state Executive branch; the state agencies under them (e.g., a state Department of Social Services – or something with a similar name) carry out the state laws. And the state court system – including a State Supreme Court - interprets and resolves matters related to state laws.

**City and County Councils** are the most common form of local Legislature. They set local policy and determine the content of local laws (often called “ordinances”). The Mayor and County Executive head the Executive branch of local governments; the local agencies under them carry out the local laws. There is also a system of district and/or municipal courts which interprets and resolves matters related to local laws (e.g., divorce and custody disputes, traffic violations, disputes over property).

**In sum** - anyone living in the U.S. is represented by at least 7 legislators: two U.S. Senators and one U.S. Representative at the federal level (e.g., on issues of war and peace, federal block grants, national health policy); one senator and one or more representatives at the state level (e.g., on matters where states have some options – like eligibility for Medicaid in your state, or how child welfare services are organized); plus City and County Council members at the local level (e.g., issues involving police and
fire departments and city human services agencies). We get to vote for all of them, as well as for the President, Governor, County Executive, and Mayor; in some places citizens can also vote for Judges. Best of all, since ours is a “representative democracy,” we have the right to tell all of them how we wish to be represented on matters which affect us at every level of government. And for them to represent us, it is important that they understand our mission as well as our immediate needs.

**TIP:** This recital of the levels of government and what they are called may sound like the boring side of civics, but it has a practical application. To be effective, it helps to keep in mind the level of government associated with a given legislator. E.g., it isn’t fair to ask a U.S. Congressperson about neighborhood programs for troubled youth. That’s a question for a city official, not a federal Congressperson. By the same token, complaints about federal funding cuts for child welfare shouldn’t be addressed to a Mayor or state legislator; but that IS the proper subject for a U.S. Senator or Congressperson.

You don’t have to become an expert in the various funding streams and points of responsibility just to ask a question, but you might think about how you pose questions of people in political office – particularly at public events where they are likely to look bad if they can’t answer. That is, whenever you are unsure which level of government is responsible, you could start your question by acknowledging that: “Representative _____, I don’t know whether my question is a matter for the state legislature, but if it is, could you explain why….” The person being questioned will appreciate the courtesy, and you’ll get better answers. Similarly, anytime you hear someone else pose a question of the wrong level office-holder (and then mutter about evasive politicians when the answer is unsatisfactory), find an opportunity to gently explain.

**Capitol Math**

Before moving beyond this brief social studies refresher, here’s a quick way to determine just how many lawmakers you need on your side once you decide to get involved. At every level - U.S. Congress, state legislature, local council – just do the “Capitol Math” (a.k.a. what it takes to win).

Here’s how it works:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>in the U.S. Congress</th>
<th>fill in your State</th>
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<tr>
<td>218 (51% of the 435 House members)</td>
<td>___ (51% of the ___ House members)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ 51 (51% of the 100 Senate members)</td>
<td>+ ___ (51% of the ___ Senate members)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ 1 (the President - who can sign/veto)</td>
<td>+ 1 (the Governor - who can sign/veto)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ 1 (you &amp; me - because we can influence all of the above)</td>
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To work out the Capitol Math for your state or local legislature, just go to their website, look up the number of lawmakers, and multiply X 51%; look up the number of state
Senators and Representatives and multiply X 51%; look up the number of Council members and multiply X 51%. Then add the Governor (or Mayor). Finally, add in yourself: you are the critical "one" able to influence the choices made by all the others.

That plus the following political classic, explain why every voice and every vote counts.

Once upon a time, there was a fellow who was newly elected to the United States Senate. He was so pleased with himself after his election that the first time someone invited him to a fancy banquet... he showed up early.

In fact, he was so early he was practically the only one in the big hotel banquet hall. The only other person was the waitress, and she was doing her job: she was putting out the butter.

Nothing else was going on so he watched her as she went methodically about her work. Every time she saw a plate, she put a pat of butter. Around the room she went: one plate, one pat of butter... one plate, one pat of butter... one plate, one pat of butter.

Finally she got to him. Giving her his best, most winning smile he said, “I really like butter. Think I could have another pat of butter?”

“Sorry sir,” she said. “I treat everyone the same: one plate gets one pat of butter.”

She went on about her work.

He was not pleased. He sat there for a minute, thinking about this, but when he looked around the room there was still hardly anyone in the place. So he got up and he followed her – she was working on another table by now.

“Hhummph,” he said, clearing his throat and looking straight at her, “maybe you don’t know who I am – I’m a United States Senator!”

“Maybe you don’t know who I am,” she replied, “I’m the one that gives out the butter.”

The moral of this story is that votes are like butter – and we are the ones who give out the butter! As citizens, we have something every candidate and every elected official wants, from school board to President: they want our butter.

Every time we shake an elected official’s hand and say where we live (“Hi, I’m Nancy A. and I live in your District”) they hear a little voice saying: “butter.” If we mention that our agency employs 30 staff and serves 100 families in their Legislative District that little voice says: “butterbutter.” And if we can identify with a coalition of child and family-serving organizations representing hundreds (or thousands!) of voters, that little voice turns into a veritable roar: butterbutterbutterbutter!
Part I: The Basics of Government

Ask any elected official which is more important to them, money or votes, and the answer is always the same: votes. The reason is also the same: they can always go outside of their District (where their voters live) for money, but they can never go outside of their District for votes. To get and stay in office, they have to win over 51% of the people with the butter: you and me. And that is why each of us can be so powerful.

Once you're reminded of the power you (and everyone you know) can wield, you're going to want to use that power effectively, with some knowledge of the process and how it works. And these days much of the basic information about the process is pretty accessible. Thanks to the internet there are easy ways to get information about bills, issues, the legislators and staff involved in the process at every level. In many communities it is also possible to get the information in booklet form from the local League of Women Voters.

You may want to keep the following key web sites handy:

Federal Legislation: http://thomas.loc.gov
U.S. Senate: http://www.senate.gov/

Insert the website for your state legislature here:

____________________________________________________________________

Insert the website for your county/city council here:

____________________________________________________________________
How a Bill Becomes a Law

The process by which a bill becomes a law is also essentially the same everywhere. Details will differ from state to state and among localities, but everywhere the basics are the same.

At every level of government, the legislative process is set up to answer 3 questions about every idea offered in the form of a proposed bill:

1. Is it a good idea from a policy perspective? (that is answered in a relevant policy committee – e.g., the health committee, the education committee, the children & families committee)

2. Is it a good use for the taxpayers' money? (that is answered in a relevant fiscal committee – often called Appropriations, or, Ways & Means)

3. Can a majority of the citizens support it? (that is answered on the floor of the House & Senate with all the members present, a time when all of us are represented; or, at the local level, it occurs in the full City or County Council).

We can influence a bill at every stage in this legislative process.

• Ideas for bills often come to legislators from constituents, e.g., during conversations, from testimony offered at a legislative hearing, or in the course of a “Site Visit” to an agency or program. Ordinary citizens can – and often do - work with lawmakers to initiate or develop an idea as a bill.

• Legislators’ positions on bills – including whether to become one of the bill’s co-sponsors and whether to vote AYE or NAY - are frequently influenced by the calls, letters, and visits of constituents concerned about an issue.

• Modifications to bills (e.g., amendments to another legislator’s bill, where to set funding levels) often result from testimony, or the comments of constituents knowledgeable about an issue.

• Even a Mayor, Governor, or President’s decision to sign or veto a bill can be influenced by the voters.

With so much potential power at our command, it would be a shame not to use it. Here too, the issue isn’t whether you can become an expert in the process or the laws. *Alliance for Children and Families* policy staff, national organizations (like the Child Welfare League of America, the Children’s Defense Fund), and experienced lobbyists all play that role. You just need to follow the issues most important to you, and take action when you’re told your voice is needed. The rest of this TOOLKIT will make it easier for you to do that effectively – and in ways that can fit into busy lives.

Best of all, not only is it important to be involved – it’s allowed.
Part I: The Basics of Government

Whether you are hoping to influence a bill, a regulation, or a Governor’s decision to veto (or not), it helps to know that lobbying is allowed. You just have to obey some basic rules governing 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations. The section that follows is intended both to put your mind at ease and to reassure others.

Everyone knows that the FOR-Profit sector lobbies: for business tax breaks, for subsidies, for favorable zoning regulations, for policies at local, state and federal levels.

Plus, everyone knows that Americans prize certain basic rights: to petition our government, to seek redress of grievances, to vote; in short - to have a voice in our representative democracy. And we know that our country has a long rich tradition of “voluntary associations” playing leadership roles in their communities. Alexis de Tocqueville commented on it 150 years ago, and foreign observers have been commenting on it ever since.

Despite all that, many people, including many who work in the nonprofit sector, mistakenly believe that nonprofits cannot engage in lobbying and other forms of advocacy. That happens even though non-profit activities are so central to who and what we are as Americans. Ever since Lester Salamon “mapped” the size and nature of the nonprofit sector we’ve had evidence of what had previously only been suspected: in many communities there are more jobs and dollars generated by the nonprofit sector than by the for-profit sector, and doing vital work.

Our elected officials need to hear the views of everyone they represent, not just those who work for a profit, and lobbying is one way to do that. Plus, it can help ensure that our government works equally well for homeless families, and youth in the foster care system, as it does for the families of Fortune 500 executives – provided those most committed to healthy families in strong communities share their experience and knowledge with the men and women designing our public policies.

Once you know the basic rules, the rest is easy. This section offers a quick review of the basics. Additional material and helpful resources can be found in the appendix.

Definitions: Advocacy Vs. Lobbying

Advocacy, you will recall, is a catch-all term covering many forms of “speaking up.” Community education, giving testimony at a public hearing, talking about a program or issue you believe in, joining a lawsuit to force reforms of the child welfare system, helping an individual get a benefit s/he is entitled to are all forms of advocacy.

Lobbying is one kind of advocacy, and a very specific one: communication with elected officials or their staff that is intended to influence specific legislation. It refers to “specific legislation” AND reflects a view on that legislation.
For example, if you talk to your State Senator about substance abuse and the role it
plays in domestic violence, and mention a program you have that has been effective in
such cases, that is advocacy (probably education). If you say – “That is why we want
you to vote for HB 1234.” – the conversation has become lobbying. Just informing,
answering questions, or discussing an issue, is not lobbying.

Definitions: Grassroots Lobbying Vs. Direct Lobbying

Lobbying comes in two forms: DIRECT and GRASSROOTS.

DIRECT Lobbying can be either:

A. communicating your views on pending legislation to an elected official or a
   member of their staff; or,

B. if you are part of a membership organization, asking your group’s members to
   contact their legislators about a pending budget or bill.

   (Urging a position on ballot initiatives and referenda is also included here because
   in these cases the voters are the ones casting the vote for or against a specific
   piece of legislation so urging the voters to vote a particular way is the same as
   urging a position when speaking with an elected official.)

GRASSROOTS Lobbying is a little different. It covers attempts to influence specific
legislation by encouraging the general public to express a view to their legislators. It
counts as grassroots lobbying if it:

• refers to specific legislation;
• reflects a view on that legislation; and
• encourages readers/listeners to take lobbying action with respect to that
  legislation.

That last item, the “call to action,” would either:

• urge contact with an elected official
• give the elected officials’/staffs’ address, phone, ways to contact;
• include a postcard or petition, or
• identify legislator(s) as opposed or undecided, as being the reader’s legislator, or a
  member of a key committee dealing with the legislation.

(There are separate rules for paid advertisements.)
Part I: The Basics of Government

All of this stems from a section of the US Tax Code. The IRS Code is huge, but the relevant part for nonprofits comes under Title V, near the very beginning.

- Section 501 of the IRS Code spells out the possible exemptions from taxation.
- Part (c) of Section 501 spells out the rules that apply to nonprofit charitable organizations.
- Subpart (3) under (c) contains the definitions of a Tax Exempt organization.

As a nonprofit your agency would have applied to the IRS to learn whether your organization met the requirements for non-profit status. After filling out the forms (usually with the help of a lawyer) and waiting patiently (sometimes up to 6 months), your agency got official notice that you qualified as a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization, under the rules of Section 501, part (c), sub-part (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

That is good news for three reasons:

1. It means your organization does NOT have to pay taxes on the money you raise,
2. The people who give you money can deduct their contributions to you on their income tax, AND
3. You get to use nonprofit postal rates and get certain other benefits.

Occasionally someone in Congress proposes that groups that do not pay taxes should not be allowed to lobby. That question was settled when the tax law was re-written in 1986. At the time, after a lengthy public debate, Congress agreed that nonprofits CAN lobby - legally. They just need to follow the rules. They cannot spend ALL of their time and money on lobbying, and they need to have a “charitable purpose.” For tax code purposes, “charity” means to be related to a public purpose and not devoted to making a profit. That is why everything from museums and hospitals, to MADD chapters and Girl Scout troops can qualify as “charities” under the IRS code.

Nonprofits do face some restrictions. In particular, according to section 501(c)(3): “no substantial part of a charity’s activities...” can be “…carrying on propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation.” Saying that only an “insubstantial part” of a nonprofit’s budget can be used for lobbying is what caused so many headaches – especially since the phrase is vague, it has never been defined, and it is rarely tested. That language is what causes so many people, including some nonprofit board members to say, “don’t lobby… nonprofits aren’t allowed.”

But all that changed when the law and regulations were changed over a decade ago. Today, 501(c)(3) nonprofits CAN ELECT to also come under 501(h). If you trace down through Section 501 of the tax code, past parts (c), (d), (e)…, you will come to part (h).
Part (h) provides authority for what is known as “The Expenditure Test.”

Nonprofits can “elect,” or choose, to come under that part of the tax code by filling out IRS Form 5768: a simple, one-page form requiring just 2 signatures and a date. A copy of this form is located in the Appendix, on p. 86.

In 1990, the IRS published Regulations governing organizations that elect to come under part (h), so for over a decade those rules have been clearly spelled out. It is smart for virtually all non-profits to make this choice, for several reasons.

A. Under (h) the amounts you can spend on lobbying are clear:
   - 20% of an agency’s budget, up to the first $500,000 (with declining amounts up to $1 million) can be spent on DIRECT lobbying;
   - 25% of that amount (not of what you spend, but what you are allowed to spend) can be spent on INDIRECT or GRASSROOTS lobbying.

If your budget is $500,000 you can spend $100,000 of it on DIRECT Lobbying, $25,000 on GRASSROOTS lobbying. Given the very narrow definition of lobbying, it is hard to imagine a direct service organization spending more than one-fifth of its budget on “direct communications with elected officials or their staff, urging positions on pending legislation.” (Even full-time advocacy organizations spend most of their time discussing issues, providing information, offering ideas for hearings, or generally being helpful – but not lobbying.) You have to keep clear records, but you have to do that anyway.

B. The penalties for violating the provisions of (h) are manageable:
   - you get to calculate your amounts on a rolling 4-year average (so if you over-spend for lobbying one year, just be careful to under-spend the next year), and
   - if you exceed your allowable amounts over all 4 years, you just pay a fine on the excess amount – but you likely WON’T lose your non-profit status.

C. There are five major categories of exempt activity (freebies):
   - Non-partisan Research/Analysis is exempt, does not count as lobbying.
   - Membership communications (magazines, newsletters, conferences) are exempt unless it “directly encourages” members to lobby.
   - Examination of broad social problems doesn’t count – even if it requires legislation.
   - Testimony, technical assistance, and other responses to requests for information from a legislative body (e.g., a committee of Congress) don’t count.
   - “Self Defense” activity to help your organization survive – e.g., to fight attempts to end non-profit status or fight harmful tax policies - doesn’t count.
• At the federal level, most contacts with Executive Branch agencies, e.g., work to influence REGULATIONS doesn’t count.

For agencies that fill out Form 5768 and elect to come under (h), the remaining basic restrictions are pretty straightforward and easily summed up.

• Nonprofits cannot lobby using FEDERAL FUNDS.

If all of your funding is from federal sources, you cannot lobby.

BUT... if you raise ANY private money – gifts, grants, money from a walk/dance/run, donations, auctions, whatever – you CAN use that money to lobby.

• Nonprofits cannot spend all (100%) of their budget on lobbying.

• Nonprofits cannot lobby using RESTRICTED FUNDS.

If a foundation grant comes with a letter stating that none of the funds provided by the grant may be used for lobbying, then none of those funds can be used for lobbying. However, other funds may be. And private foundations can give unrestricted grants.

• Nonprofits cannot engage in partisan political activity.

A 501(c)(3) organization cannot give money to, or work for the election of, candidates for elective office. Nor can it urge its members to. But non-profits that regularly publish non-partisan voting records can do that – even in election years, and they can sponsor non-partisan candidate forums.

What has been said so far applies only to lobbying at the federal level. State laws often differ from federal law in some respects, and it is important to also check the laws that apply to agencies receiving state funds and/or lobbying at the state level. Sample IRS forms can be found in Appendix A, p. 107.
At some level we all know the essentials of what’s just been said (though just not understanding the process well enough to feel confident can be a deterrent). And it isn’t that we don’t care or don’t appreciate that public policy is important. But before anyone can be expected to add advocacy leadership to already busy lives, it is essential to address some of the barriers holding people back. The six items that follow represent concerns raised by Alliance for Children and Families members in Focus Group Sessions during 2004.

**BARRIER 1: Lack of Resources**

Focus group participants cited a lack of resources (money, time, staff) as a barrier to doing policy advocacy work – especially if “mission-based advocacy” means taking on new responsibilities.

Alliance members are affected by years of deficits and voter resistance anytime tax dollars are involved. Alliance members know it isn’t possible to “serve” their way out of their clients’ problems – that’s why it’s so essential to work for fundamental social change. At the same time they also know all too well the time and effort required just to maintain current services – which involves advocacy, but it is advocacy primarily to preserve government funding, not advocacy to reduce poverty or address other root causes of family stress.

This same dilemma faces many in the non-profit world, and consequently there are a few ideas around for ways that even small, financially-strapped organizations might respond.

Two practical steps can move an agency in the right direction – especially those new to policy advocacy.

**Easy:** Be sure your agency website has the Alliance Mission Statement prominently displayed on the homepage. Mission-based advocacy begins at home.

You could sponsor a contest among all the Alliance members in your state, to find the best short phrase summarizing your mission – one that could fit neatly under the Alliance logo. For example:

- Healthy Families - Strong Communities, or,
- Serving Families, Building Community, or,
- We Put Children & Families First.

That’s a no-cost step that could get Board, staff, volunteers, and families talking about the collective mission, and how to convey it to others. If you belong to a larger coalition of children’s organizations in your state, invite them to join the contest. Give them a way to say how they view you… and make them part of the “mission” conversation.
A bit more challenging: Identify advocacy staff. In many agencies it is just assumed that policy advocacy is part of the CEO’s role, along with everything else. That probably means it isn’t going to happen, except when there is a funding crisis. For an ED, advocacy almost always takes a backseat to keeping the lights on and the staff paid. Someone other than the CEO should be identified as the policy advocacy point person – as is likely already the case in large agencies and/or those where policy advocacy is long-established.

But this doesn’t mean creating a new position or even new burdens for existing staff. Look for someone with an active interest in advocacy – e.g., who attends every annual lobby day, or who sits on the “Legislative Action” or “Social Action” Committee of their faith community or professional association. These are people who already follow what’s happening in the legislature and Congress, and since this is a far-less-than-full time assignment (in most cases) it’s possible to just adapt what they already do. You might ask them to receive and post relevant Legislative Alerts for the staff; and set up an occasional Brown Bag Lunch at the agency – with current or former legislative or Congressional staff or members. In return, this can be the individual selected to attend extra advocacy training or represent the agency at local children’s coalition meetings. If the agency is large enough, and several people express interest, the various advocacy responsibilities could be shared.

Since most agencies already have some form of regular staff meetings – that individual could be given time (5 minutes or so) to report on relevant advocacy items at every agency staff meeting and relate them back to some aspect of the agency’s mission. Over time, everyone will become more familiar with the vocabulary of advocacy, be reminded of the ways it relates to the agency’s mission, and - with the help of some techniques described in PART II – able to make policy advocacy an integral part of the culture of the agency.

Involve Board and volunteers creatively. Some years ago Oklahoma youth-serving agencies had the highest per capita state funding of youth-serving agencies nationwide. The reason: they had made a decision to only invite onto their boards individuals willing to be advocates for their clients and their programs before the state legislature.

Because family-serving agencies know first-hand how a poorly-run state child welfare system puts children at risk, the attorneys serving on their boards often play a critical role in efforts to force child welfare system reforms through Court challenges. They help identify legal resources and other community partners, shape arguments, and draft amicus (“friend of the Court”) briefs – all with the aim of helping the agencies support healthy family preservation and child protection.

Policy Committees that include individuals from the board are not a new idea, but keeping them lively and effective can be a challenge. The successful ones all meet regularly, and take seriously their role in developing a legislative agenda. Two more steps can help advance mission-based advocacy.
**Easy:** Since regular Board meetings already occur, give the Policy Committee prominent “air time” at Board meetings – including time to gradually educate the full board about the issues and current policy scene. They can serve to keep the mission of the organization at the forefront of any advocacy efforts by prioritizing 1 or 2 mission-related public policies in every legislative agenda. For example, they could routinely select 1 or 2 items from each of three categories: bills relating to the agency’s mission/root causes; bills related to maintaining quality services to families (includes budget); and program-specific bills (includes changes in foster care or adoption laws).

To promote the value of “empowerment,” suggest that the Board Policy Committee include current or former agency clients.

**A bit more challenging:** Ask Board members and volunteers to be part of your “lobbying team.” That isn’t just practical, it’s powerful. Policymakers understand two things about the community leaders who volunteer or join non-profit boards: a) they aren’t being paid for their efforts, and b) they signed on because of the mission – not for the thrill of raising money for salaries or utility bills. When volunteers and board members talk “mission,” policymakers listen.

If your agency is developing some version of a “Legislative and Public Policy Committee” for the first time, ask other member agencies in your state if there is someone with long advocacy experience willing to serve as your mentor in this process. In other cases the task will be to re-energize an existing group.

One ongoing task: in consultation with any fundraising committee, a Policy Committee can help raise the unrestricted grant monies that can be used for lobbying and other mission-based advocacy work.

It’s reassuring to remember that some far-reaching policy changes were begun by small groups with a large vision. MADD – Mothers Against Drunk Driving – is a classic example. Begun by one grieving mother whose daughter was killed by a drunk driver, she gathered a small group of bereaved parents and together they sparked a movement that resulted in the creation of MADD and SADD (Students Against Drunk Driving) chapters everywhere. True to their mission, they work to change sentencing practices and laws toward those who drive while inebriated. Over the years, much of that effort has been sustained by volunteers and local chapter Board members.

**Design an “It’s No Coincidence Campaign.”** If your mission aspires to an emphasis on prevention but your state’s public policies focus on after-the-fact crises, design an education campaign to change that. Develop fact sheets showing how “It’s No Coincidence” that problems and costs continue to grow when families only get help after their problems are severe and the costs of responding are high … versus when there’s a focus on prevention. Ask friends and supporters to wear “It’s No Coincidence” buttons when meeting with decision-makers; stimulate letters-to-the-editor and radio show calls
on the topic; include the notion in Site Visits and other contacts with decision-makers; make education on the notion part of all goals – short and long-term.

**BARRIER 2: Changes in Funding Strategies**

Focus group participants cited *changes in funding strategies*, particularly from United Way, that reduce support for advocacy. In the past, unrestricted United Way funds could be used to support advocacy. Now, increasingly, they must be directed to priorities set by United Way and tracked by measurable outcomes – something hard for policy advocacy efforts to do.

There is no magic bullet for penetrating this barrier, but there may be some consolation in knowing that the United Way – a strong proponent - acknowledges the difficulty of applying “outcomes measurement” to advocacy (see Barrier 4). That said, there are a few practical steps you can take to help move your agency in a useful direction.

**Easy:** If you don’t already, include in every grant application a request that others “invest in your mission” by (insert your specific request).

Identify the specific components of your advocacy activities that are appealing to funders. For example, *community education* is a widely accepted form of advocacy, and an essential element of mission-based advocacy. It is how we help others to understand what agency clients are facing, how we confront stereotypes, and promote informed public policy. Similarly, helping individual children and families obtain the services they need is *case advocacy*, and central to the *Alliance* mission. Labeling these as the advocacy activities they are can help open a dialogue with funders about advocacy – and may offer opportunities to build in support for other forms of advocacy in your grant applications.

Tap higher education resources in your community. Ask faculty at a local university or community college (e.g., someone teaching a non-profit management course or business class) to have students calculate the “ROI” (Return On Investment) of resources committed to policy advocacy, and the “multiplier effect” of human services dollars that come into a community thanks to public policy advocacy. Use both in explaining the effectiveness of advocacy work to potential donors – including the United Way. Along the way, the students will become better informed about the role non-profits play in local economies, and you will have a credible document to use with legislators and donors alike.

Graduate students in professional schools (e.g., child development, nursing, public health, public affairs, social work) often do theses or major projects. With a little guidance, they might develop a plan for increasing the involvement of your board and volunteers in a long-term public policy objective – like expanding child health coverage or a community’s stock of affordable housing, or provide background papers for a mission-related strategy you’re embarking on. Since students in these fields tend to
welcome topics that include elements of idealism and practical application the match could be a good one.

**A bit more challenging:** Ask a group from your board and volunteers to approach your local United Way directly. They have staff and board members familiar with the child and family-serving agencies in their communities, and they are acutely aware of the role that public bodies play in funding human services. For the national United Way to consider a change in its policy, it helps if many local United Way’s hear from grantees about their experience with the current policy.

Approach a local donor’s forum for time on their agenda to educate them about advocacy work (some donors, for example, do not know that the law does not require them to write restrictions against lobbying into their grants). Make them aware of the value of mission-driven advocacy work.

**Longer-term:** It may be time for a deliberate strategy directed at the funding community more generally – United Way being just one of the players. Winning financial support for policy advocacy has always been tough. Between shrinking public budgets and changing philanthropic demands, it is getting even tougher. It may be time for Alliance members to work with other non-profits to ensure that this issue is taken up at the conferences of a variety of national non-profit groups – e.g., Voices for America’s Children, Child Welfare League of America, Independent Sector, the Council on Foundations, among others. This issue is not exclusive to child and family-serving agencies.

If your organization’s fund-development plan does not include a specific focus on raising unrestricted money – that should be added. Even small grants from faith communities, or small proceeds from a dinner, sale, or auction can make a large difference. Since those funds are “unrestricted” they can – and should - be used for lobbying and other policy advocacy activities.

The Alliance has developed an initiative known as “Resource Development Services” which conducts fund development workshops and the Alliance Severson Center has a collection of articles and training materials including a Participant and Self-Study Manual: Fund Development Training Series (December 2003) which consists of seven fund development modules on various topics.

**BARRIER 3: Fear of Reprisal**

A third barrier raised by *Alliance for Children and Families* members is the fear of reprisal that policy advocacy may inspire – chiefly from the IRS or government funding sources. Once again there is no magic bullet, but in this case there is history on our side.

In July, 2000, the Internal Revenue Service replied to a list of nine questions posed by attorneys specializing in non-profit tax law. On behalf of their non-profit clients across
Part II: Addressing Common Barriers

the U.S. they asked such questions as: is lobbying by section 501(c)(3) organizations permissible? (Answer: Yes.) How much lobbying may a section 501(c)(3) organization conduct? (Answer: If a nonprofit organization elects to also come under 501(h), the spending limits are clear and based on a sliding scale – e.g., 20% of the first $1,000,000 of an agency’s budget may be spent on direct lobbying, and one fourth of that may be spent on grass roots lobbying – as noted in Part I.)

One question was directly on this point: “Does making the (h) election expose the organization to an increased risk of an audit?” (Answer: No.) There has been more than a decade of experience to demonstrate that “electing” to come under 501(h) and spending up to 20% of an agency’s budget on direct lobbying does not result in being targeted for audits. (More recently, organizations which work on issues such as accurate sex education have been repeatedly audited – a chilling reality but one more related to their subject matter than to lobbying.)

As to reprisals from other government agencies – history is once again on democracy’s side. Government agencies have always had the power to bestow, or deny, grants. Scoring systems and outside reviewers help lessen the possibility of reprisal, but it has always been present – whether or not grantees engage in advocacy.

One study several years ago looked at a group of non-profits working to relieve, and end, hunger in the U.S. After a power-shift in Washington, some of the groups pulled back, reasoning that it was prudent to protect themselves and their programs by being less vocal, and doing less advocacy. Others in the cluster took the opposite approach – remaining vocal and stepping up their advocacy efforts. The study was an attempt to compare how the two sets of organizations fared a few years later. It found that the organizations that pulled back (i.e., were less visible, less vocal, and less inclined to lobby on behalf of their constituents) were more likely to have closed down or become substantially reduced. Those groups that did not pull back (i.e., remained visible, vocal, and actively lobbying on behalf of hungry people) tended to be alive, well, and living their mission.

The study’s results have a certain logic: being visible, vocal policy advocates, and clear about their mission both attracted private funds to the groups that continued on that path, and also made it more difficult for them to be the objects of reprisal from government agencies. Groups that fail to advocate for the values that drive them and the people they serve are more likely to appear self-serving. Funders, including government agencies, are likely to draw the same conclusions.

The parents who work to secure appropriate education for their children with disabilities, confront this issue almost daily. They understand the fear that if they are too aggressive, too “pushy” in advocating for their children, the professionals and government agencies involved may retaliate – and thus deny their children needed help. But experience has
taught them that silence gets them nowhere; they can be both persistent and polite; and it is possible to be simultaneously true to one’s mission, work for lofty goals, and still be effective in meeting day-to-day needs. Through mission-driven advocacy, disability advocates - parents, volunteers, professionals, consumers – have won and improved major policy shifts that have transformed all our lives (e.g., IDEA - the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the ADA - Americans with Disabilities Act, to name only two).

**BARRIER 4: Documenting Measurable “Outcomes”**

Yet another barrier facing agencies is the difficulty of documenting measurable “outcomes” for an activity like advocacy.

Good answers to this problem are still a “work in progress.” Even the United Way – an important funding source promoting outcome measurement – concedes that there still is a lot to learn about this relatively new tool. In their own words, “Some programs face special challenges in measuring outcomes. These include programs … involved in prevention, development, public education, advocacy and providing support to other agencies.”

The same document suggests the use of “…creative ideas for using existing records, third-party reports, trained observers, research-based milestones, secondary data and other data sources and collection strategies [and] …measurable-yet-meaningful approximations of their outcomes … while feasible measurement methods are developed.” To achieve this goal, United Way recommends establishing systems for sharing information about successful efforts to develop outcome measures in these areas.

Given the current ambiguity surrounding the applicability of “outcome measures” to advocacy, the best strategy may be to cite United Way’s own reservations and suggestions about how to apply outcome measurement in this case. That could accompany a reminder that United Way’s own website reflects an appreciation of the important role played by advocacy:

> “Measuring program outcomes has value as an end in itself. However, program outcomes also can contribute to, and should be aligned with, broader efforts to effect community-level change. Such change requires a spectrum of activities, including advocating with key players, establishing multi-partner collaborations, supporting volunteer initiatives, influencing public- and private-sector policies and leveraging funders' money....”
BARRIER 5: Limited Board Support for Advocacy

Focus Group participants cited “limited Board support for advocacy” as one of the barriers holding agencies back.

This problem is a common one for nonprofit organizations, but those agencies whose boards have embraced policy advocacy swear by it. Once again, there are some easy, practical steps that can move agencies in the right direction – especially those new to policy advocacy.

**Easy:** Make sure all Board members get copies of the *Alliance for Children and Families* Magazine articles which describe effective Board involvement in mission-driven policy advocacy. E.g., the Fall, 2004 issue highlights Lutheran Child and Family Services of Illinois – which believes pursuing their goals “…couldn’t be accomplished without impacting the political arena.” As their board – which comes from a range of political perspectives and backgrounds - put it so well, “…if we don’t stand up for children and families, who will?” Similarly the *Alliance’s e-news* highlights advocacy “best practices” on the *Alliance* website. Call attention to both at Board meetings.

Most people understand the concept of “tithing” – the practice of giving one-tenth of one’s income to a congregation. Suggest that Board members adopt a variant of that idea, by tithing their own lobbying time. Many board members have already-established relationships with elected officials and readily approach them on behalf of their own business or personal interests. Think what it would mean if all the board members of all of a state’s *Alliance* members used the last fraction (one-tenth or less) of every contact with elected officials, to put in a good word for the agency and the work that it does. It can be something as simple as saying, “Before I leave, I just want to remind you that I wear another hat. When I’m not (a lawyer, a doctor, a member of the Junior League) I sit on the Board of Family Services. I think they do terrific work, and I hope that when any of them comes to see you, you’ll hear them out.”

Invite someone from your state’s Non-profit Association to make a presentation to the Board on the legality and importance of policy advocacy by non-profits. Include a board member from a sister agency in another community, one that is actively engaged in policy advocacy.

Encourage a board discussion of the pro’s and con’s of greater involvement in policy advocacy.

**A bit more challenging:** Suggest that your Board develop an advocacy plan just for the Board – one with goals, timelines, and ample opportunities to revise the plan as circumstances change. Make review of the Board’s advocacy plan a standard part of every board meeting.
As one possible activity, ask board members if they would agree to make brief presentations about the agency to groups of their peers. They can select the number of such presentations and the time-frame (e.g., they might choose to do three each, over the next six months). A parent on the board might speak up at a PTA meeting; someone active with a faith community might talk about the agency there; an attorney on the board might talk about it at a Bar Association meeting. Just knowing that they will be talking about the agency to groups of their peers is likely to make anyone pay more attention and become a better-informed Board member. But this simple device also serves to position the agency better for fund-raising and helps advance the goal of community education about the agency’s mission. If you have a twenty-member Board and each makes three presentations to groups of their peers that quickly adds up to 60 presentations across the community in just half a year. Higher numbers mean greater exposure to the mission and its services.

In addition to inviting the Board to join any general lobby days for children and families, propose a “mini” lobby day just for the board – no rally on the Capitol steps, just pre-arranged legislative visits with key Committee members and legislative leaders.

And, over time, consider doing what those Oklahoma agencies did: adopt a policy that includes advocacy for the agency and its clientele as a condition of board service. Current members needn’t adopt the rule if they are uncomfortable with it, but as board members are replaced, the mission-advocacy focus will grow.

**BARRIER 6: Lack of Staff Understanding**

One final barrier cited was the lack of staff understanding of the policy implications of their work.

It will come as no consolation, but staff who fail to see the ways that public policy affects their work have plenty of company – across all sectors, and throughout the country.

The suggestions in this realm also fall into two types.

**Easy:** Invite one staff person each month to identify a public law (federal, state, or local) or public funding source that affects the agency and its clientele, and present something about it at the regular staff meeting. Always relate the law or budget item to some aspect of the agency’s mission.

Ask staff to imagine what the families served by your agency would do if there were no public human services laws. (E.g., no grants, no Medicaid reimbursement, no adoption supports or foster care stipends, no special education or disability-related services, no housing subsidies or food stamps, no social services block grants or mental health services, no money for kinship care or after-school programs, no substance abuse or child abuse prevention grants, no school meals or WIC program, no job training or Head Start, no Family Court or CASA volunteers...)

Part II: Addressing Common Barriers

An exercise like this serves as a useful reminder of the important role public policies play. Plus, every law, every budget item was begun, and is sustained, by advocacy. No advocacy = no publicly-funded programs or activities.

**A bit more challenging:** After the designated staff person posts relevant Legislative Alerts (e.g., from the *Alliance for Children and Families*, Childrens Defense Fund, and others) and discusses a critical item at a staff meeting, you can set up a “TAKE FIVE” table (See PART II, page XX) in the staff room or reception area. Use copies of the items just discussed, copied from the Legislative Alerts: that way no staff time is needed to write or research an issue.

Keep a skeleton crew in the agencies, but hold at least one “all staff” meeting each year close to the state Capitol while the legislature is in Session. That way staff can be paid for their time, can be given briefings about legislative issues and advocacy training, and then – on their lunch break – can go over to the Capitol for brief visits or to leave written messages for their legislators. If their time is funded with federal or other restricted grants, be careful to have them take an hour of leave time. (But, this way they can participate in a virtual lobby day without using an entire day’s leave time.)

**In sum:** all of this takes time and builds slowly, but selecting one or two easy actions can get the process moving. And all of it is designed to help put “mission” back in the forefront of our thinking (staff, volunteers, families) as well as in the messages we convey to elected officials and other community members.

For most of us, effective advocacy involves three steps. The *first step* is to become, and stay, informed about a problem or need (something Alliance members do all the time). The *second step* is to take action (provide a service, drive a family to a doctor’s appointment, mentor a child). The *third step* is to work with our elected officials and other decision-makers to change the conditions which cause so many people to need our help. That’s where mission-based advocacy to address root causes and win social change comes in. If we just take steps one and two – that’s good. But if we wish to achieve our goals of healthy families in strong communities, we all need to take that third step. PART III offers some concrete ways to do just that.
One Framework for Effective Advocacy

In a number of states advocates offer an annual “Advocacy Camp,” a place to train advocacy leaders from communities throughout a state – usually for work on behalf of children and families. They understand that to win better policies for children and families, legislators can’t just hear from a handful of people in the major cities and the big organizations. If we’re to win that critical 51% we need confident local advocates speaking up from every legislative and congressional district. Advocacy camps help build those confident local advocacy leaders. For the Camp in Washington state, advocates developed a framework that anyone can use. It is very simple:

Good Advocacy rests on a Three-legged Stool; to be effective, all three must be in place.

The Community, or Grassroots, Leg

This leg of the stool refers to everything that goes on in the community. This is where you set up your telephone trees and email lists for responding to the “alerts” coming out of the Capitol. It is where you set up “Take Five Tables” to generate cards and letters or to sign people up for your networks. It is the place where grassroots campaigns take root. It is where you do community education, and where you sponsor community forums and site visits to agencies by your elected officials. It is where you develop your networks and form coalitions with community partners.

The Capitol Leg

This leg of the stool refers to everything that goes on where the laws are made: city or county council, state legislature, U.S. Congress. That is where you have full or part-time (paid or volunteer) lobbyists, where you hold lobby days or go to testify, where someone sends out regular ALERTS, where citizens go to meet with their legislators during the Legislative Session, where you can meet with people who staff the Legislature’s Committees and the Governor’s office or executive agencies.

The Media Leg

This leg of the stool refers to everything we do to spread the word to more people, whether through establishment media - local radio, t.v., or newspapers - or through informal media like professional newsletters, congregation newsletters, apartment house bulletin boards, and email chat rooms. We need this leg of the stool for three reasons - first because elected officials pay attention to the media; second because we need to reach more people than those already informed about our issues, and third because we have to deliberately counter the bad, inaccurate or misleading items that show up all too often in the popular media.
A quick example will illustrate why all three legs are important. Imagine that you call for an appointment with your state Senator to talk about foster care, and you show up alone, for your 15 minutes. That day the Senator is likely to have checked with an aide to learn which issues are showing up in the mail, phone calls, and emails, and is likely to have talked to some key contacts back in the Legislative District to learn what issues are “hot” at community meetings and in the local media. If the Senator hears that there is nothing in the calls/letters/visits to the office, nothing in the local news, and nothing in the community, about your issue ... you’re likely to get a brief handshake-plus-conversation, and shown the door.

Now imagine that the day of your appointment, when the Senator checks with her aide, she learns that there have been calls, letters and emails (3 or 4 each day) about foster care issues. When she checks with a key contact in the Legislative District she’s told that among the people calling radio call-in shows, or showing up at PTA and other community meetings – invariably somebody mentions issues related to foster care for children in that community. Plus, there have been a few “letters to the Editor” in the local paper about children churned through too many homes and a Guest Editorial about the need for system reform. Now also imagine that when you arrive your group includes a couple of people representing well-known organizations in the Legislative District, a local business leader who sits on your Board, a family that was helped by your agency – and collectively you represent several hundred households.

This time you’re likely to get far more than your 15 minutes, and the Senator will be pumping YOU for information.

That is why good advocates need to be working on all three legs of the stool.

There are three helpful points to keep in mind.

1. Two of the three legs are firmly planted where you live. The work done in the Legislative or Congressional District is as important as the work being done in the Capitol.

2. The three legs of the stool offer opportunities to reflect all the key values underlying mission-based advocacy: civic engagement, empowerment, community-building, community education, public interest, and movement for social change.

3. You needn’t cover all three legs of the stool alone. You can work with other groups to see that all three are getting attention. E.g., on an issue like foster care (which affects people of all incomes, and children of all ages, children with disabilities and children in accelerated classes), it is easy to think of ways to share the workload:
Part III: Helpful Advocacy Techniques and Framework

- You could take the lead for the Community Leg, together with one or more of your community partners (e.g., the National Association of Social Workers, women’s groups, “Kids Count” leaders, professional students in graduate health, education, or social work programs, a supportive business or provider group);

- To cover the Capitol Leg; think of groups already lobbying in the Capitols: social work and mental health professionals, statewide child advocacy groups, the PTA, faith communities;

- To handle the Media Leg; think of approaching a local community college or university communications program, or a local Junior League group.
Tools for the Grassroots Leg of the Stool

One key to successful advocacy begins with how you think about it. If your first reaction is: “that’s a great idea but I can’t possibly take it on,” chances are nothing will happen. On the other hand, if you think, “That’s a great idea. I’ll get a couple of people to brainstorm with me, figure out how many people it might take, and think of who we can recruit to make sure the task gets done…” you’re half-way there.

In other words, good advocacy depends in part on good recruiting and mobilizing of others. So the ideas that follow are all designed to make it easy for you, and those around you, to take on two roles: first, as advocacy recruits - people willing and able to take action to affect public policy, and then, as advocacy leaders – people willing and able to get others to take action. For most, the commitment will only be five minutes a week (or less) while your state legislature is in session, and other times during the year when national groups say your voice is needed on the federal level. If everyone who cared about children and families sent just one message a week to some of their legislators about a policy important to children – that could transform our nation.

With that in mind, this section offers 8 tools. They spring from one simple fact that you already know: advocacy just means “speaking up.” They begin with actions that can be taken by individuals and small numbers, and conclude with some ways to approach broader efforts – building networks and effective coalitions. Each of these items can be copied (double-sided) and distributed. Feel free to use them in your efforts to involve others: in community education about your programs and the people you serve; by building a grassroots network or telephone tree, empowering others to contact their legislators.

1. **Bite-Sized Advocacy** – Five easy, low-to-no-cost actions you can suggest to busy people as ways for fitting advocacy into busy lives;

2. **“Take Five”** – an effective way to help others take action (write, email, call) on legislative issues or by joining a grassroots network;

3. **Lobbying By Telephone/Letter** – Tips for effectively using specific communications to contact public officials and ensure your message is received.

4. **Site Visits by elected officials** – these are not just tours of the facility, but rather opportunities that should be carefully planned, with a consistent message and deliberate choices about who and what to involve to convey that message.

5. **For Staff Paid from Government Grants** – this item delineates allowable advocacy activities by people whose jobs are paid entirely by public grants.

6. **Do You Know Who You Know:** – an exercise to help those you are trying to involve to appreciate just how many people you can reach. (That can be a “tough sell” in small communities or among people who don’t think of themselves as joiners.) The idea is not that you would persuade or get action from everyone you reach out to, but rather to demonstrate that we have many opportunities to get our
issues on other people’s radar screens. It is a good exercise to use when beginning to develop a Grassroots Network.

7. **Building a Grassroots Network** – offers a 4-step plan based on a model of proven effectiveness.

8. **Coalition Basics** – helpful tips for developing a politically-savvy coalition, one that can help build bi-partisan support for good policies.
Bite-sized Advocacy for Busy Lives

Step 1. **Sign up for good “Alerts.”** Get on a list for regular information about legislative actions likely to affect your issue/program. (E.g., a statewide child advocacy organization, a state nonprofit association, and/or a national group you trust). They will monitor the legislative process, keep you informed, provide a sample “message,” and help you know when your voice is needed most. Best of all: they’re free!

Step 2. **Use the TELEPHONE or WRITE**

Send a message to your state legislators.

Some states have a TOLL-FREE hotline to their State Capitol, others have a regular number. Operators will take your call, or take your message, or transfer you to your legislator's office. Whatever the method, it only takes about two minutes because you can use the message provided in the "alert" you signed up for in Step # 1.

Or you can use that alert to send a simple email message. Mention the bill number or issue in the subject line, state what you want the legislator to do, and be sure to put your home address so they know that you live in their Legislative District. Keep it short and to the point. (At times when you cannot lobby, just provide information about the issue – leaving off the request for a particular action.)

Finding telephone numbers and/or email addresses is easy: just go to the website for your state Capitol, and follow directions for finding your legislators, or contact the League of Women Voters.

Sending a message to the U.S. Congress

It’s easy to send a prepared message to your U.S. Senators and Representative: just use a service called CAPWIZ. You can personalize the message, or simply add your name and address and let CAPWIZ send the message automatically to your representatives in Congress. The Alliance frequently posts messages on CAPWIZ. You can view these by logging on to the Alliance’s Web site, www.alliance1.org, and selecting the public policy page for a link to all CAPWIZ messages.

Step 3. **Help others**

Make cardstock “cell phones” with the Capitol website, telephone number, and the dates when the Legislature is in Session. Add your own logo, website, or agency name. Make up a supply, and give them to everyone you encounter: board members, staff, consumers, friends, neighbors, and extended family. You and they should pledge to make one toll-free call or email every week the legislature is in Session.
Part III: Helpful Advocacy Techniques and Framework

Set up a “TAKE FIVE” TABLE. Help others write or call their elected officials in 5 minutes or less by providing all the information needed to send a quick message. Bring a laptop and/or cell phone and use the handout (description below) headed “Take Five.” You can also use “Take Five” tables to sign people up for your Network, or send messages about a budget item or issue.

Step 4. **Advertise your issue, not Nike.**

Anytime you are around elected officials (e.g., at a City or County Council hearing, a Town Hall Meeting, in Washington or at your state Capitol), wear or carry something (a conspicuous badge, a briefcase, or bag) that identifies your issue or agency. Your logo + bold lettering on a neon background will be seen even from a distance – e.g., WE PUT FAMILIES FIRST.

The politicians present will quickly realize those badges mean there’s an organized group that cares about an issue and has its members in the audience.

Put a slogan or the name of your group on the folder holding your “fact sheets” and handouts. Carry the folder to hearings or Candidate Forums, so the slogan shows.

Step 5. **Talk: mention key bills, issues, and budget items at every opportunity.**

Talk to anyone who will listen: at a PTA meeting, in a grocery store line, waiting for the street light to change, after services on Sunday. Get your key issues on other voters’ radar screens.

**NOTE:** If you do any of these things on your own time, or on unrestricted grant money, you can incorporate direct lobbying. If you are being paid by a federal or other restricted grant, use these techniques to provide information or bring attention to an issue, but leave out the lobbying call to action.
Take Five: Advocacy in Five Minutes or Less

Just like the famous Paul Desmond refrain, here’s something deceptively simple.

Experienced advocates know three things:

1. Phone and letter campaigns remain effective. Elected officials (and their staff) note the issues that generate the most letters and calls. They are a useful gauge of community support for/against an issue. But,

2. Broad appeals for action don’t work. Alerts that sound too general, or too complicated, get set aside.

3. The competition for attention is very keen. By now, there are so many groups sending out emails and “snail mails” requesting action that readers ignore much of what comes their way. And groups with tight budgets can’t afford to waste scarce staff time or resources on maintaining lists, postage, paper/emails, for long alerts that don’t get results.

If you want your appeals to produce results: make taking action easy, make it time-limited, and design it to fit into busy lives. Here’s one version that gets results.

A few years ago University of Washington social work students tried to get other students to write letters about legislative proposals they thought might harm children, but the answers they got just seemed like excuses. In response to their pleas, people said:

I don’t have time I don’t know what to say
I don’t know my legislator I don’t know the address
I don’t have any envelopes/paper/stamps I can’t.

To their credit, the students took the “excuses” seriously, treating them as real barriers to be eliminated. In the process they developed “TAKE FIVE FOR KIDS” - a way to be an advocate for children in just five minutes or less.

At a strategically located table, during lunch hour, they provided answers to all the “excuses:” sample letters, brief fact sheets, people to answer questions, blank paper/envelopes/stamps, plus the names and addresses of all the legislators. Visible to all was a big sign reading: TAKE FIVE FOR KIDS.

Right off the bat they generated a couple dozen letters. A week later they were back at their table with new information, and this time they got twice as many letters. Before long, people were referring to the Take Five Tables and inventing variations.

Some advocates have adapted the idea by renaming and re-formatting their legislative alerts, with a section for “actions you can take in 5 minutes or less,” or “TAKE FIVE
FOR ... (HOUSING, or CHILD CARE, or ...).” Like the students at their table, these alerts include all the key ingredients in a simple, easy-to-accomplish format that enables concerned citizens to fit advocacy into busy lives.

On a single page, usually within a “box,” are brief information, brief messages, and the information needed to contact a legislator by mail, email, or phone. Clip art can supply a clock.

People who get TAKE FIVE alerts in written form say they prop them on their telephones or computer keyboards every week until they’ve made their calls or written letters. (Guilt, they admit, is part of what makes it work: “you mean I couldn’t take 5 minutes a week to help out?”) Those who work for public agencies get their TAKE FIVE alerts at home. They cannot lobby while on the public payroll, but on their own time they are citizens like anybody else, and lobbying is allowed.

TAKE FIVE TABLES are popping up everywhere: in the lobbies of social agencies and hospitals, after services on Sunday, at PTA or professional group meetings.

One group set up a “Take Five Table” at the beginning of the cross-Iowa bike ride, hoping to expand their network in support of a new bicycle helmet law. They got 400 members signed up in just a couple of hours.

Women eager to see the Violence Against Women Act renewed in 2000 set up Take Five Tables beside the “Silent Witness” silhouettes of women murdered in domestic violence. More than 400 letters to their U.S. Senators resulted.

Psychology students at the University of Utah set up tables in the cafeteria seeking letters in support of higher education for foster children. They got over seven hundred during the course of a week. As one participant reported later:

“With only 2 days (4 hours each) at the tables, we got 271 letters signed in support of the bill! I am so thrilled at this success not only for the bill, but for the amazing number of students that wanted to get involved and learn a little more about the process (and learn who their legislator is!)."

“Take Five” alerts and tables work to: generate letters, win members for a grassroots network, inform the voting public, and win involvement in a community education campaign. People on the receiving end say that just knowing they can be advocates for something they care about, in five minutes or less, is empowering.

Tips: because they get so much computer-generated mail, many legislative offices make a distinction between “astro-turf messages” (i.e., identical cards or letters that might all be signed by the same person using different pens) and “real grassroots messages.” Both are noticed, but real grassroots communications get more attention.
To make sure the letters generated by your Take Five tables fall in the “real” category, even when the heart of the letter is identical, have senders do three things:

• sign and print their names
• put their home address
• add a personal note – even something as brief as “I really care” or “this means a lot to me” sends a message to the staff opening the mail. The possibilities are endless.
Lobbying by Telephone

Making Calls

When the legislature is in session you can call your legislators at their offices in the state Capitol. Lists of members’ names, office addresses, and telephone numbers are available from the Capitol, or the internet - often just www.(your state).gov, or www.state. (2-letter abbreviation)us.

Here are some tips for making calls to your legislators and/or their aides:

• Identify yourself by name and address.
• Identify the bill you wish to talk about, by name and number (if possible).
• Briefly state your position and how you wish your legislator to vote.
• Ask for your legislator’s stance on the bill or issue; ask for a commitment to vote for your position; don’t argue if the legislator has an opposing view or hasn’t yet decided.
• If your legislator needs further information, supply it as fast as possible.
• Do not be abusive; don’t threaten your legislator.
• Recognize that legislators are often away from the office, at Committee business or on the floor of the chamber, so you may talk instead to an aide. That’s great. Use these same basic rules. Staff are very reliable and will pass along what you said.
• Follow the call with a note restating your position, and thanking them for their time.

Using A Legislative Hotline

Some Legislatures have a toll-free, Legislative Hotline. If your state has such a line, it is a fast way for citizens to convey their views on bills. For the time it takes to make a single phone call, you can reach one or all of your legislators, and the Governor! When using a Hotline:

• State your name, address, and who should get the message (the name of your legislator(s) and/or Governor - they can tell you who your legislators are);
• Identify the specific bill(s) you are calling about - use the bill number if you know it;
• Briefly state your position - either support, opposition, or some combination.
• Keep the message simple – just a sentence or two.
Part III: Helpful Advocacy Techniques and Framework

It is important to remember that a Hotline is not an answering service, but only a service for brief messages about specific bills. If you wish to speak directly to a legislator you must call their office.

Whatever system your state has, if the line is busy (it often is), just keep trying. Getting through may take several tries.

Don’t Forget: 10 -15 calls or letters is enough to get the attention of a legislator!
Lobbying by Letter

Letters are an important, even critical, way to influence legislation. Letters to the writer’s own Senator and Representative are especially important. With the advent of the 9/11 tragedy, procedures for zapping letters to ensure they are safe from any noxious materials, makes the delivery of letters to Congress very slow. You may want to fax and mail the letters to ensure your message is received in a timely manner when addressing someone in Congress. Here are some guidelines:

• Make clear your position, and exactly what you want your legislator to do.
• Write in your own words. Tell how the legislation will affect you and others like you.
• Be as knowledgeable as you can be, but don’t worry if you’re not an expert: your personal experience is the best evidence.
• Avoid sending form letters, but if you send one, personalize it with a hand-written note.
• Don’t threaten, browbeat, or get nasty.
• Write briefly, on one subject at a time, and if possible refer to bills by name and number.
• Don’t try to become a pen pal. If you write too often you become a nuisance.
• If you ask a question and don’t get a reply, write another letter asking clearly for a response.
• When a legislator votes as you asked, send a thank-you note.

NOTE: If you are writing to your U.S. Senators or Representative, send the letter either to their office in the state (thanks to the anthrax threat, letters sent to the U.S. Congress go first to a postal facility to be irradiated; that can take 4-6 weeks), or send your message by FAX, or email (see below).

In short, an effective letter would include:

• Who you are (I am a voter in your district, and I belong to the 350-member Association of Pizza-Eating Voters....)
• What you want done (We are writing to ask your support of House Bill 1234 when it comes before your Committee....)
• What the bill does (This bill would require all public feeding programs - e.g., school lunch, senior citizen - to serve pizza three times a week).
• Who supports it (This bill is supported by a broad coalition of pizza makers, tomato growers, sausage producers, and the local Weight Watchers....)
Part III: Helpful Advocacy Techniques and Framework

- What you want done again, in slightly different words (Please make this possible, by voting for HB 1234 in Committee and again later on the House Floor....)
- Your name, address, and telephone number (Please feel free to contact us; we would be happy to answer any questions or be of other assistance to you in this matter).

Email is also effective. Two special rules apply to email:

- Be sure to include your real name (fun.gal@aol does not tell them you are a constituent);
- Be sure to include your home address – again so they know you are a constituent.

During the legislative session, letters to state legislators should be sent directly to the Capitol, and may be addressed:

    Senator (or Representative) _______________________
    State Capitol
    Capitol city, state name, zip code

**NOTE:** See sample letter to legislator in Appendix I, p. 128.
Hosting Site Visits with your Legislators

Site Visits – whether at your agency or at one of your projects - are a great way to inform legislators about the work you do and the people you serve. They offer a first-hand view of what government investments and non-profits are doing for the community. Plus, Site Visits help put a human face on complex issues and budget requests. When your issue comes before them next year, you want them to have a vivid, first-hand image – something a good Site Visit will provide.

But Site Visits only work when there is good planning and preparation.

Four elements are key.

1. THE MESSAGE

   What is your key message? What do you MOST want to get across to your visitors? How will you convey the agency’s mission?

   Given that key message, what one IMAGE do you most want legislators to take away about: the work your program does? the people you work with and serve? What images (happy children, poor work space, desperate families...) do you want them to carry away?

2. THE SETTING

   Given the message you want to convey, what locations/circumstances would be best? (Think about time of day, location, area of site, what you pass to get from place to place....)
Part III: Helpful Advocacy Techniques and Framework

3. THE MESSENGERS

Who can best make your points? What programs, classes, or activities should they highlight?

Who would you want present: Board members? Volunteers? Staff? Clients? Neighbors of the project? People familiar with your funding?

What would you want each participant to say/do?

4. THE SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

What written materials should your legislator(s) carry away from the visit? (Think of this as an opportunity to continue your message days or weeks later.) What materials will provide an effective reminder of the visit? What fills the information gaps? Are there any charts/graphs/photos, etc. that may take time to digest but which provide helpful information?
For Staff Paid from Government Grants

Here are five things to think about with respect to your role as advocates.

1. Advocacy and Lobbying are not the same:
   - **Advocacy**: Speaking Up; to plead a cause, make the case for another.
   - **Lobbying**: Communications with elected officials or their staff that urge a position on a pending piece of legislation. (Note: discussing an issue, responding to inquiries, is not lobbying.)

   Much of what you are likely to do is advocacy, not lobbying, and you can advocate for people, programs, and issues you care about at any time.

2. The Legislative Process is set up to answer 3 questions:
   - Is the bill a good idea? (gets answered in Policy Committees)
   - Is the bill a good use for Tax dollars? (Answered in Appropriations/Ways & Means Committees)
   - Can the bill win support of 51% of voters? (Answered on House & Senate Floors)

   While paid from public funds, you cannot lobby, but, you can help provide information to determine the answers to all three. It’s part of the job.

3. Along the way, there is much you can help with:
   - background/history
   - statistics (collect and interpret)
   - budget estimates
   - what changes in laws would mean
   - telling the stories
   - forming positions and educating legislators
   - educating the public
   - helping others who do all these

4. Some Possibilities:
   - Can join groups or coalitions as “informational members” (unlisted).
   - Can influence unions as to their positions; participate through unions.
   - Can exert influence through membership on faith community committees or as part of professional organizations.
   - Can do a lot on your own time: can be part of telephone and/or letter trees.
   - Can encourage family members to play active roles.
   - Can participate in local, state, or national advocacy groups.
   - Can invite legislators to agencies, prepare site visits, help community partners to set up and/or conduct site visits with elected officials.

5. Plus, you can help advocates in still more ways:
Part III: Helpful Advocacy Techniques and Framework

- Can aid in issue campaigns, provide reports, statistics, etc.
- Can explain Regulations and how they are developed.
- Can help others understand the process as well as specific bills/policies.
- Can be accessible to advocates – helps you reflect their views accurately.
- Can contribute to newsletters of nonprofit groups.
- Can help organize retirees – they can talk about things current employees can’t (e.g. some current workers are bound by confidentiality; retirees are not).
- Can attend lobby days – just be sure to take the day off if you plan to lobby.
- Can help with Fact Sheets – accurate information is in everyone’s interest.
- Can supervise interns, let advocates “shadow” you.
- Can speak at classes, congregations, PTAs, other community groups.
- Can distribute voter registration forms, League of Women Voter pamphlets.

Bottom Line: think of your job as including

**Outreach:** you can and should reach out to community groups, help them be more effective advocates;

**Motivation:** by making laws and policies understandable, you motivate others to get involved and to speak up;

**Basic Tools:** information on ‘Take 5’ Tables, letters, site visits.

**Careful Communication:** You can NOT abuse your role; can NOT speak for your agency unless that is your assigned job; you can NOT use public resources (e.g., state or federally-funded computer, salaried time, copy machine) to lobby.

But you do not give up your rights as a citizen by taking a job paid for by a government grant. You retain the right to speak up on your own time, using your own resources, and in your own personal style. And you DO have the right to help others be more effective advocates for themselves, their families, their communities, and the programs that help them.
**Do You Know Who You Know?**

What groups could you engage/inform as part of a grassroots advocacy campaign? How could you reach each group?

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**TOTAL**
Do You Know Who You Know Instruction Sheet

This is a simple exercise that any group(s) – large or small – can do.

At every table (e.g., 3-8 people per table), provide a master sheet of the “DO YOU KNOW…” sheet, plus enough copies for each participant.

Instruct the people at each table to work first as individuals, and then as a group. Every individual should list all the groups to which they have any connection, how they communicate with them, and an estimate of the number of people involved. Talk about them as they come up.

You are likely to hear someone say: “I’m not a joiner… I don’t belong to any groups…” or, “I don’t really have time for groups….” Offer some ideas to get everyone started. E.g., ask: “do you have an extended family? How do you communicate? How many people are involved?” Same with a faith community, people you exercise with or where you work, a professional association, people on an email chat list, where you volunteer or your children go to school.

If you are part of an organization that has chapters and a statewide membership, include the total number. So, for example, if you are a member of a 150 family PTA, and that PTA is part of the state-wide group with several thousand families – if you can get a message to all of them, count them all. The point is not to name people who agree with you, but just to identify all the groups to whom you could spread the word about an issue, a project, or an idea. If you speak up at your local PTA and then write the issue up for the statewide newsletter - that would count.

Once everyone has filled out an individual sheet – usually 10-15 minutes – and figured their individual total number, have the group add up all their figures for one over-all total for the table.

Then, the facilitator should ask each table to report the combined total for the table and ask the person reporting from each table to mention a couple of interesting groups that have not already been mentioned (i.e., if the first table mentions the PTA, the next table should mention a different group). Exotic or unusual groups are especially good for this purpose.

The numbers from each table should be written on a flip chart – with plenty of editorial comment – and someone with a calculator should tally them up for one big, HUGE combined total.

The point here will quickly become obvious. These numbers don’t mean we can persuade everyone we communicate with, but they do show how we can get our issues on a lot of voters’ minds and begin to build a network. That’s important. We often start out thinking we are powerless. “There are only six of us who show up for everything…” “We’re too small to make a difference…” “The other side is bigger and better organized; we can’t even compete….”

But once we stop to think “who we know…” we realize we can reach a lot of people.
Building a Grassroots Network

It helps to remember that every good organizing effort starts automatically with two goals:

**Win the Victory**  
**Build the Movement.**

You may be able to win something by having a powerful friend make a few phone calls, or calling in chits from important people you know – but you won’t have done anything to “build the movement,” empower others, or motivate anyone else to get involved. And all three will be necessary for more than winning a “quick fix” or small victory. So be sure to work toward any “victory” you choose, in ways that “build the movement.” This model does both.

*What follows is a variation on the “NACHRI Model”*

The National Association of Children’s Hospitals and Related Institutions -NACHRI - worked with its member hospitals around the country to develop Grassroots Networks on behalf of issues important to those hospitals and the children they serve. It revolves around a 4-Step Plan that began with small “teams” of people, and built a remarkably effective network in just 4 years. (Their model was designed for institutional settings, like Hospitals; with their permission it is modified here for other use.)

**Step 1.** Establish a “Team,” or “Core Group” of about 6 committed activists drawn from the key groups you hope to work with. (E.g., on health care for poor children it might include: a pastor, a doctor, a nurse, a parent, a social service provider.) That is because people respond more readily to those they regard as their peers. This peer-to-peer notion is very simple: if you want to recruit lawyers, you win over one lawyer and ask that person to recruit other lawyers. Want low-income parents? win over one and ask that person to recruit others.... It helps if Core Group members all have good ties to the groups they represent - or the possibility, i.e., they belong to a union, or sit on the Committee with the mailing lists, or have regular meetings, or they work (or live) in a place with a lot of people who can be easily reached.

This Core Group will decide your priority issues, your strategy, your goals, and your timetable: e.g., the number of people you hope to sign up for your grassroots network to work on specific priority issues - within 3 months, 6 months, and one year.

**Step 2.** Over the course of a year enlist about a dozen “Grass Tops.”

Grass Roots = citizens, voters, constituents, ... all of us.

Grass Tops = people who have an established relationship with an elected official.

Identify “Grass Tops” related to the level of government related to your campaign - City Council, Mayor/County Executive, state legislator, Governor, Member of Congress. There is a practical reason for this step. Elected officials
tally EVERY message, so every vote/voice counts. But when it comes to setting meetings, getting calls returned, those happen MUCH faster if the EO knows the person calling. Every time your Core group meets, try to identify at least one “Grass top” and who should try to recruit them.

One time in California, the mother of two chronically ill children said she couldn’t imagine herself as a Grass Top, she was too overwhelmed looking after her children. All she could think of was Barbara Boxer, but thought that didn’t count because she only knew Senator Boxer from their days carpooling together years ago! She was DEFINITELY a “Grass Top.”

Step 3. With your CORE group, identify all the groups to which you have direct ties (religious, work, sports, family...) and a way to communicate. Then - using the peer-to-peer notion - approach them about joining your Campaign. Tell them what you hope to accomplish, and ask whether their group might be interested. Try to find out just how involved they are likely to be. (You can use a simple survey with check-off boxes for activities requiring varying levels of commitment: joining a telephone tree, circulating a support letter, setting up a site visit for legislators, providing testimony.)

This will be an on-going process that lasts as long as you keep adding to your network. You’ll find you have connections to more groups and people than you think.

Step 4. Reach out to groups in the community you don’t already know or have ties to; see if any of them can be persuaded to join you. At first they may hold back and say they can’t agree on general terms, but they’ll be willing to consider a specific request with specific wording, plus a clear beginning and end. E.g., this might be true of a Rotary, Kiwanis, Junior League or similar group. It could include senior citizens, business groups, and other “odd couples.”

Through these four steps you can gradually build an effective Grassroots campaign. Along the way you’ll also need: A GOOD MESSAGE (frequently updated), the help of COMMITTED ALLIES, and TIME TO NURTURE RELATIONSHIPS with your recruits.

With a few exceptions, most of those you recruit will need 3 things from you:

A. reason to know it’s worth their effort;
B. confidence that THEY can do this;
C. easy (and enjoyable) ways to fit it into busy lives - you’ll be constantly using your CORE group to break things down into manageable tasks and decide who will do what.
You don’t have to turn everyone into experts in the legislative process or particular laws. That’s what the lobbyists do - they have to understand the details and the process. But most of the people in your Grassroots Network just need:

• a clear simple message or two;
• enthusiasm/optimism/creativity to see the opportunities where others see barriers;
• the training to say: “I don’t know the answer to that, but I’ll find out who does and get back to you.”

Over the course of a Grass Roots Campaign you may find yourself using:

• Telephone trees       • Email alerts
• Bumper sticker contests  • “Take Five Tables”
• Faith communities      • Unions
• Professional Groups    • Newsletters and bulletin boards
• Do You Know Who You Know  • Other groups’ meetings....

So long as you can remember to: keep assignments manageable, keep focused on your goals, and have a little fun... practically anything will be possible.
Building a Grassroots Network

Worksheet

Step 1. Establish a “Team,” or “Core Group” of about 6 committed activists. Your Core Group members should be drawn from the key stakeholder groups you hope to involve. Keep in mind that you want individuals with good ties to the networks they represent - i.e., they belong to a union, sit on a key Committee, have access to the mailing/emailing lists, attend regular meetings. Or, they could be individuals who work (or live) in a place with a lot of people who can be easily reached.

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<tr>
<th>Essential Stakeholder Group</th>
<th>Potential Core Group member</th>
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This Core Group will decide your priority issues, your strategy, and your goals, and your timetable: e.g., the number of people you hope to sign up for your grassroots network to work on specific priority issues - within 3 months, 6 months, and one year.

Step 2. Over the course of a year enlist about a dozen “Grass Tops.”

Grass Tops = people who have an established relationship with an elected official or key decision-maker at the level you hope to influence … city or county, state, federal.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elected Official/Decision-maker</th>
<th>Grass Top</th>
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Part III: Helpful Advocacy Techniques and Framework

Step 3. Identify all the constituency groups to which you have direct ties (religious, work, professional, sports, family, whatever...), and using the peer-to-peer notion, or already-established relationships - approach them about joining your Campaign.

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<th>Constituency Group</th>
<th>Peer who invites them to join in</th>
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This will be an on-going process that lasts as long as you keep adding to your network. Use the “Do You Know Who You Know” exercise when you meet with groups of supporters; you’ll find that collectively you have connections to more groups and people than you think.

Step 4. Reach out to groups in the community you don’t already have ties to.

E.g., a Rotary, Kiwanis, Junior League, military, or any previously un-involved group. It could include senior citizens, AAUW, business groups, and other “odd couples.”

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Coalitions – Some Basics

Never forget – a COALITION is not just a list of individuals. A COALITION is...
“an organization of organizations.”

Coalitions come in as many forms as there are issues and groups.

- Coalitions can be short-term or permanent,
- single issue (Low-Income Housing Network, Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities) or multi-issue (Voices for America’s Children);
- they can focus on a specific policy issue (Alliance for Tobacco Control) or a broad set of budget matters (a Children’s Budget Coalition).

Coalitions offer a means to bring communities together, to learn about common problems, and set some common priorities. Because they represent bigger numbers, there are more people to share the work: no one group will have to do everything.

But whatever their form, coalitions derive their power from their numbers – their ability to show people in decision-making roles that they are working to build the support required to pass muster with voters and decision-making bodies.

Beyond sheer numbers, coalitions offer many advantages. They:

- combine resources,
- offer a forum for thinking about problems,
- reduce competition for funding and volunteer time,
- provide an efficient way to work with a broad range of groups and agencies,
- offer support and expertise to small groups,
- provide a network for everyone involved.

Want to form a coalition? These simple steps will get you started.

1. Identify a priority that cannot be achieved alone. What’s the PROBLEM to address?
2. Identify a CONVENER, and pull a small CORE GROUP together to brainstorm;
3. Have the Core Group “frame the issue” by turning the problem into a good organizing issue (not too narrow, not too broad), set the agenda, and devise a timetable;
4. Then, use the Core Group to BROADEN THE COALITION.
   a. Start with LIKELY ALLIES – groups you feel reasonably certain share common interests and values on your issue. Once you have brainstormed your
way through all the possible likely allies, ask yourselves who has a connection with those groups and can make a personal contact to invite them to join.

b. Next move to UNLIKELY ALLIES/ODD COUPLES. These are groups that might join you on a specific issue, groups you may never have reached out to before.

Including Unlikely Allies signal to politicians that you are reaching beyond your usual allies to build the “51%” needed to win; and, in the context of closely-divided legislative bodies, all issues need allies from across the political spectrum to win.

5. Last, call an Organizing Meeting, set a Goal (or two), and get started.
Part III: Helpful Advocacy Techniques and Framework

Tools for the Capitol Leg of the Stool

One critical task for you and everyone you involve in your advocacy efforts is contacting elected officials and other decision-makers. Whether your purpose is to provide information about an issue or the families you serve (advocacy that is not lobbying) or to urge a position on a budget item or pending bill (advocacy that is lobbying), it is easier than most people think. Legislative staff at every level are there to take your messages and be helpful. State legislators are often part-time and VERY accessible. Even members of the U.S. Congress tend to be pretty approachable (they have to be “people persons” to run for office) – particularly those from small population states. The tools that follow were designed to help you, and those you are able to involve, have a voice in shaping the laws that affect you.

Because State legislators are so accessible, these tools were developed with them in mind, but the basic principles apply to every level of government. And while it is true that in every state the issues, people, and details are different, it is also true that every year there are many things that remain constant.

It helps to keep the basic timetable for your state in mind as you read this. The same process that unfolds over an entire calendar year in some states is compressed into just 30 days in others. You can find the “Session Calendar” with critical dates for your state by going to the state legislature’s website and looking under “Calendars.”

In nine states (CA, IL, MA, MI, NJ, NY, OH, PA, WI) the state legislature meets year-round. In seven states (AR, KY, MT, ND, NV, OR, TX) the legislature only meets every other year. In the remaining thirty-four, the legislature meets part of the year – for anywhere from 30 days to several weeks. Many of those part-time legislatures alternate the length: "long" sessions in the years they write a biennial budget, "short" sessions when they just make minor adjustments in the budget.

As in the other sections, the 6 tools that follow were developed for you to use. Each of these items can be modified to reflect the details relevant to YOUR state, copied (double-sided) and distributed. Feel free to use them in your efforts to involve others: in calling, writing, or visiting with your elected officials and empowering others to do the same. (They refer to actions at the Capitol, but can be used with slight modification wherever you encounter decision-makers.) The tools that follow are:

1. Meeting with Public Officials – tips for an effective meeting, plus a checklist to help you prepare for your Congressional visit.
2. Telling your stories – key elements of a brief, 60-90 second “speech” to prepare for use in talking to an elected official;
3. Taking it All Back Home – Useful strategies to share knowledge and “next steps” after a visit with a public official.
4. Testimony – how to plan a brief statement suitable for testimony at a public hearing (many state legislatures allow testimony from anyone who signs in)

5. Your Time at the Capitol – a useful guide to what to do when taking part in a lobby day or other visit to the Capitol;

6. Tracking budget items – following a bill is pretty easy thanks to the internet, but tracking a budget item can be trickier and this item gives useful tips for that part of the process;

7. When You Think Your Legislators are “Hopeless” or “Sure Things” – a few tips to keep in mind if you (or those you are working with) think contacting your particular legislators is a waste of time.

Meeting with Legislators at the Capitol

Personal visits are a highly effective way to help legislators understand your position or program. Legislators welcome visits from constituents. They want you involved! However, these are busy people, so time is critical; plan ahead and use the time well.

You have two state legislators: one state senator and one state representative. If you don’t know who your legislators are, you can: check the legislature’s website, call the local League of Women Voters, or call your County Clerk.

If you make an appointment with your Senator and/or Representative when the legislature is in session, there is no guarantee the legislator will be able to keep it. Legislative schedules change at a moment’s notice. Don’t take this personally; it is just “how it is.” In all of your visits, expect to be brief, specific, and polite.

Tips for an Effective Meeting:

• Make it easy for your legislator to meet with you: offer several possibilities and do your best to accommodate them.
• Make an appointment in advance by writing the request and faxing it - expect to get about 15 minutes. You can call the Capitol, or check the website for your legislator’s number.
• Be on time; be prepared; be polite; and be brief.
• Dress appropriately for an appointment in the legislature (not fancy, but not as you would for going to the store or working in the yard – e.g., wear slacks, not jeans or sweats).
• Try to learn in advance where your legislator stands on the issue.
• Don’t be surprised if they don’t know about your issue - that’s why you are there.
• Be prepared to explain how the bill (the issue) will affect you and others in the legislator’s district.
• Memorize a 60-second speech to use at the beginning of your meeting. It should include:
  – Who you are, and
  – Any group or Coalition you belong to.
  – The topic you came to talk about (e.g., the name and number of a bill).
  – What you want them to do (e.g., we want you to vote FOR.... or vote AGAINST).
  – A Fact Sheet with basic information, plus contact information for you, or your group.
  (This way, if the appointment is interrupted, you’ll still have gotten your point across; if the appointment continues, you can elaborate on these points.)
• If you don’t know the answer to a question that’s o.k; say you will find the answer and get back to them - and then DO.
• Before leaving, ask how you can be of help to them (more information? talking with others?).
• Follow up with a thank you note and any information that was requested.
Contacting Public Officials Checklist

Group visits with a public official would typically include 2-10 people. For each of the key issues your members wish to discuss with their elected officials and/or staff, your group should consider:

- We got a briefing, we have our Fact Sheets. Are there any gaps in the information we have on the topic? (Is there any information we need to feel confident talking about it?)

- What resources do we have here in the group to fill those gaps?
  - who has personal experience related to the issue (and could talk about it)?
  - who knows some ways this issue/bill will affect voters in the CD/LD?
  - who knows where the elected official stands on the issue?
  - who knows any reasons why the elected official might relate to the issue?
  - does anyone in the group have any special expertise that is relevant?

- Having discovered that there are resources within the group to fill gaps, and increase the confidence of the group to speak on the issue, there are four things to consider:
  a. Is there any easy, low-stress way to get information the group needs (like asking a lobbyist, reading a report or Fact Sheet, or calling a friend) before the visit?
  b. If someone has personal experience with an issue, can the group (or a member of the group) help him/her describe it in a brief and compelling way?
  c. What does the group need to do to make the personal issue a political one? E.g., can we relate the personal example to the impact on a broader group in the CD/LD? Can we identify other groups in the CD/LD who might share our views on the issue (e.g., I am personally concerned for the reasons I’ve mentioned, and I know that many people in my congregation/neighborhood/PTA/community council/organization ... agree; this comes up at our meetings a lot.)
  d. Everyone should memorize the following: “I DON’T KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT, BUT I’LL FIND OUT AND GET BACK TO YOU.” (That’s what anyone can say, any time, to a question for which you don’t have the answer.)

- For the visit itself, agree in advance:
  - who will go on which visit(s)
  - what are the key points to be covered
  - who will speak about each point and for how long
  - who will make “the ask” (i.e., ask for a vote; for where the elected official stands on the issue. One good technique is to say – “We will be reporting on this visit when we get home, by writing an article for our newsletter that goes out to 150 households, and we just want to be sure we are accurately reporting your views on this issue.”
Part III: Helpful Advocacy Techniques and Framework

Telling Your Story

“Numbers numb, jargon jars and no one ever marched on Washington because of a pie chart...Tell stories.” Andy Goodman (Good Ideas for a Good Cause)

Five Reasons to Feel Easy About Approaching Legislators:

1. You are not alone. As a member of an advocacy group, you can join with others to meet with legislators and/or their staff, or to help preparing for visits.
   – Group visits may have anywhere from 2-10 people.

2. Advocacy organizations and/or professional lobbyists can provide you with “briefings” on key bills and budget issues before the legislature, complete with tips for how to make your visits effective, answers to your questions, and decisions about who goes where/does what.

3. If you are asked a question you can't answer - no problem. Just say: I don't know the answer to that, but I'll find out and get back to you.

4. Still nervous? Are you thinking: "...I’ll never know enough about this; I'm just a parent... a volunteer... somebody who needs help.... " In short, " ... I’m no expert." If you think that's a disadvantage, think again.
   If you can tell your story, in a brief and compelling way, that may prove critical. Someone who speaks from the heart, with a real story to tell, is often far more compelling than even the most polished "expert."
   Experts can be hired. Real people, with real stories, cannot.

5. Here is help in telling your story in a "Legislator-friendly" way.

Two kinds of stories are needed:

- personal stories to get the listeners "hooked" so they want to hear more
- stories to illustrate the impact the issue/bill has in the State or the District.

Time yourself: each should be told in about 60-90 seconds (90 seconds is roughly the length of most t.v. news items). That's simply because of "meeting math:" with 7 people in a group visit, even if everyone takes only 2 minutes, that's already 14 minutes.

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Outline for a personal story.

Who you are: Your name and where you live (general area, not street address)

_______________________________________________________________________

Who you are connected to: If you are part of a group, mention it and the numbers involved (e.g., "I'm one of about 150 community people who volunteer with the _______ family service agency. We have a paid staff of 80, and serve over 500 troubled families a month,")

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

Why you came: "I'm here because …" or, "I came all this way because…” (Then, in two-three sentences, paint a brief "word picture" that conveys the personal experience that caused you to make this appointment; if possible, relate it to a bill or budget item – e.g., “Some of the families I’m helping are fine people, but they are struggling. I’m especially concerned about families like the Gordons – two grandparents in their seventies who live on fixed incomes. Recently they agreed to take in two of their lively young grandchildren when their daughter, the children’s mother, was diagnosed with leukemia.")

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

What you want the Senator/Representative to do: e.g., “…that’s why we want you to vote to increase funding for services to kinship care families….” Or, that’s why we hope you will vote YES on Senate Bill 453 – it will help grandparents like the Gordons….

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

NOTE: Hand over any Fact Sheet or Backgrounder on the issue you've just discussed. If you are part of a group meeting, one member of the group can hand over all the Fact Sheets or Position Papers.

Someone should hand over a list of everyone in the meeting, that includes contact information. If you are part of a formal group, include that address.
Outline for a District Impact story.

Who you are: Your name, with what program/agency, and where your program/agency is located (general area, not street address)

Who you are connected to: Name community partnerships or coalitions affecting the broader community; if you can, mention it and the numbers involved (e.g., We’re active with the Houston Coalition to End Childhood Poverty and we have an email list of about ___000; or,

…I am personally concerned, and I know that many in my congregation/community council ... agree; the problems faced by poor children come up at our meetings a lot.)

Why you came: I'm here because … or, I took time from my job because… (Then, in two-three sentences, paint a brief "word picture" that indicates how child poverty affects the State or Legislative District),

What you want the Senator/Representative to do: …that's why we want you to fully fund the school breakfast program… or, we want you to vote for Senate Bill 453…

NOTE: Hand over any Fact Sheet or Backgrounder on the issue you've just discussed. If you are all there to talk about the same issue, then one of the group can hand over any Fact Sheets or Position Papers.

Someone should hand over a list of everyone in the meeting, that includes contact information. If you are staying at a shelter, use that address.
Part III: Helpful Advocacy Techniques and Framework

Taking it all Back Home

A visit to the State Legislature offers many wonderful opportunities. Among them is the sense of excitement and enthusiasm that lobby days and other visits generate. Next it will be important to take what you are feeling and use it to motivate others at home.

You focused on a few key issues for this visit – but they will need sustained energy and attention for weeks to come. Having been to the Capitol, you are the ideal people to give those issues “legs” among your friends and colleagues back home.

So – FOR THE NEXT 10 MINUTES, work with a few people nearby to decide on next steps, elements in a “Campaign Strategy” if you will. Use everything you learned during this visit – plus everything you already knew - about influencing your elected officials on behalf of your priority issues.

Name 3 ways you can share this experience with others in your office:

_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

Identify 3 Key Contacts from other organizations or closely allied groups, (people with access to phone/email/mail networks) with whom you can share information about priority issues to broaden your impact. Decide who will contact them:

_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

Name three activities you could carry out, to build on the relationships forged - or deepened - this week with your Senators, Representative, and/or their staff (e.g., attending a “town hall” meeting; requesting a meeting when they are home on the weekend or over a holiday; writing a newsletter article about your experience today and sending them copies; co-sponsoring a public forum with other groups)

_______________________________________________________________________
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_______________________________________________________________________
Outline For Testimony

NOTE: Typically each witness gets about 3-4 minutes for testimony, but if time is short (and many people have signed up to testify) the Chair of the Committee will ask witnesses to limit their remarks to less time, or just to state their name/group/position on the bill. It makes sense to have a 1 minute version prepared, and also written copies of your full statement to hand out to the Legislators on the Committee (staff will distribute copies). If more than one of you wishes to testify together, you must either split the time, or let one person do the talking. All of you may be asked questions.

Testimony should include:

- My name is __________________________________________________________
- With me today is _______________________________________________________
- and we are here on behalf of (name group, agency, and/or coalition)

_______________________________________________________________________

- I want to thank the Committee for this opportunity to testify.

Our group/agency is (describe briefly; give number of members)

_______________________________________________________________________

- We support/oppose Senate Bill 543 because:

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

(If you wish to suggest changes to the bill, this is the time to do it.)

_______________________________________________________________________

(At the end say): We would be happy to answer any questions you may have. (Stay at the witness table to see if they have any questions for you.)

You can tell your story, briefly, and explain that there are others just like you who would also be affected, or you can provide basic information about an issue or a program that you care about. It always helps to be polite, be yourself, and be brief. Legislators appreciate all three. And try not to repeat what others have already said.

NOTE: See Sample Congressional Testimony in Appendix I, p. 130.
Part III: Helpful Advocacy Techniques and Framework

Things to do at the Capitol

If you visit your state Capitol, use your time well; don’t just hang around in the hallways.

1. Find the names and office locations of your Senator and your Representative(s).
   (Ask one of the many Capitol staff in the House and Senate Office buildings to help you. Or, there usually are lists of office locations and phone numbers posted on the walls of the halls of Congress.)

2. Go to the office of your Senator, and your Representative.
   If you have not written a request for an appointment, ask to talk with them. If they are not available, write a brief message.
   Leave a Fact Sheet about your issue if you have one, and put your name/contact information on it.

3. Whether you talk to your legislators, or leave a written note, your message should include:
   • your name, and where you live (be sure to put your whole address or Box Office number and zip code)
   • the group you are connected with, and if you know the number of people involved – especially in the Legislator’s District – mention that.
   • ask them to PLEASE VOTE FOR/AGAINST (your bill or budget item).
   • say why YOU care about this
   • If you know, mention why this is important in THEIR District.

4. Go to the Governor’s Office. There are usually message slips and pencils available. Leave the same message for him/her.

5. BE VISIBLE: wear a conspicuous name tag, carry a folder displaying your issue; talk about your issue everywhere you go. And - Have a GREAT time.

More useful tips:

• There is sure to be a cafeteria, and a document room for copies of Bills.
• There are many, many public bathrooms.
• There are many public hearings. Go to one on your issue, and sign in.
• If someone asks you a question, and you don’t know the answer – just say “I don’t know the answer, but I’ll find out and get back to you.”
• Everywhere you go, talk aloud about your issue or program – you never know who might be nearby, listening (it could be a Senator, legislative aide, or a media person).

Just Remember: The whole idea is to be seen!! and BE HEARD!!
How to Follow a State Budget Item Through the Process.

Influencing/Tracking Budget Items

Thanks to modern technology it is relatively easy to follow the progress of a bill by using the web site for your legislature and calling up information on a bill. Bills are often available by topic, by legislative sponsor, or by the bill number listed in email bulletins sent out by various advocacy groups. It takes a while to get accustomed to the “code” used to explain where bills stand in the process, but that can be done (many state Capitols have a one-page explanation of the abbreviations they use).

Following the progress of a budget item is a different matter. The short answer is - in most cases you can’t easily. That doesn’t mean you cannot influence legislative budget decisions; it only means that it is harder to know whether you have had an impact until key decisions are made public late in the Legislative Session.

The budget process is known; only the results are largely unknown – until the final budget is announced. What follows is a description of the process from one state; most have a similar process (check the timetable for the different stages in your state).

– In mid-December the Governor releases his version of the budget. (Most Governors are required to submit a balanced budget; state constitutions in all states but Vermont require that the legislature pass a balanced budget.) A Governor proposes, but the legislature disposes.

– In the opening weeks of a Session, the different Fiscal Committees of the legislature (as well as some Policy Committees) hold sessions to review the Governor’s proposed budget and invite public comment on it.

– In February or March there may be new Revenue Forecasts; if so, legislators typically wait to see them before making final decisions about the budget.

– Soon after new Revenue Forecasts are available, one of the fiscal Committees will make public its version of the budget. Within a few days to a week, the other chamber’s fiscal Committee will make its version public. At this point there are three proposed budgets on the table: Governor’s, House, and Senate.

Throughout this part of the process, legislators tend to say very little about the looming decisions on the budget. But they are thinking and talking about the many tradeoffs all the time – and that thinking/talking is influenced by what they are hearing from the voters back home. If calls and letters pour in - opposed to, or in support of, a particular budget item - legislators take note. The same is true of particular approaches to the budget itself (taxes/no taxes; program cuts/no program cuts; free services/fees, etc.).

Last week of Session a budget must be agreed to by both the House and the Senate, passed by them, and signed, vetoed, or partial-vetoed by the Governor.
Some Ways To Be Involved in a State Budget Process

Conversations with a variety of state legislative staff and state legislators yield the following advice for citizens who wish to track - and influence - a budget item.

If there is something in the budget that you want to protect or change:

FIRST, try to get your item included in the Governor’s proposed budget, since that often serves as a beginning blueprint for the legislature. In any case, as soon as the Governor’s budget is released, contact your own Senator and Representatives and ask them to protect (or change) those items that you care about.

In states with very short legislative Sessions, there may not be time to get something into the budget process if it isn’t already in the Governor’s proposed budget. The dollar amount is less important (that can be changed) than getting it into the process.

SECOND, be sure the Chairs and Ranking Minority members of the relevant policy Committees are aware of your concerns.

THIRD, be sure the Chairs and Ranking Minority members of the Budget-Writing Committees – often called Appropriations or Ways and Means – are aware of your concerns.

FOURTH, as soon as the fiscal committees’ versions of the budget are available, be vocal about their contents. (If details leak out before official publication, comment.) If possible, your advocacy group or coalition could hold a media event to react to the legislators’ proposed budgets.

FIFTH, try and find a champion for your issue, someone who sits on a fiscal Committee (e.g., Appropriations or Ways and Means). Work with them throughout the process. Send them good information. And get your fellow citizens – preferably from their home districts - involved.

The budget is the strongest reflection of our priorities and values. It conveys a sense of activities and people we care enough about to have a claim on our public funds. It is directly concerned with building and maintaining “community” – that notion of disparate people coming together with a common purpose, a “common unity.” If ever there were reason for citizens to speak up, the budget is it.
When Your Elected Officials Seem “Hopeless”

Here’s a familiar line: “My representatives won’t listen to me no matter what I say. They believe the opposite of everything I believe. I’d be wasting my time talking to them.”

Familiar yes, but wrong!

While it is true that successful political movements work with traditional allies and “swing votes” in the political middle, good advocacy is about winning over (or neutralizing) the opposition. Here are 6 reasons for approaching elected officials who oppose your view.

1. Conveying your position is basic to good advocacy.

   As citizens and voters, our job is to ask them to vote a particular way (and explain our reasons why); their job is to be asked. They can’t represent you (your issue, your group) unless you tell them how you wish to be represented. That’s basic.

2. Good advocacy shows that opposition is based on more than emotion.

   It is easy to dismiss people who have never spelled out their position as a “bleeding heart” or “no heart, no brain.” A well-articulated position is harder to ignore. Besides, elected officials often reflect the views of their voters - people you also have to win over.

3. They and their colleagues respect constituent pressure.

   If and when you DO win your legislators over to your side, they’ll need to be able to say their constituents pressed them to do it.

4. Even with opponents, good advocacy is a way to educate and build relationships.

   Legislators take positions in part based on what they believe their constituents want and value. Your letters, telephone calls, and visits inform your elected representatives about your issues, while also conveying that there is strong support for your position. Never give any elected official the right to say, “I never heard anyone support/oppose xxxx.”

5. People and minds change.

   Even the most apparently immovable legislators have been known to change their position on issues - particularly when the voters back home make clear they want a change. Twenty-five years ago almost nobody in public office was pro-choice, pro-diversity, or anti-tobacco; today, a strong majority of elected officials are. They didn’t change by accident, and didn’t change overnight: the persistent work of good advocates was key.

6. Never give up.

   We have to be a presence. Elected officials should NOT be allowed to cast votes affecting children and their families without ever having to face them or their advocates. They need to know that someone is watching…, and that someone is us.
Part III: Helpful Advocacy Techniques and Framework

When Your Elected Officials Seem Like “Sure Things”

Here’s a familiar line: “My representatives are already on my side. I’d just be wasting my time and theirs talking to them.” Familiar yes, but wrong.

While it is true that successful political movements build new allies and neutralize opponents, all good advocacy efforts also include ways to work with the legislators who agree with you.

Don't ignore your supporters because...

...your advocacy gives supporters a basis for their position.

Legislators take positions on issues based on their perception of what their constituents value. The more letters, telephone calls, and visits your elected representatives receive, the more you both can claim widespread support for your cause. This will help both of you in efforts to recruit other supporters and to diffuse any opposition.

...their colleagues respect constituent pressure.

It strengthens an elected official’s hand when they can tell a colleague: “I support this and I am getting mounds of mail and telephone messages from my voters. They really want me to support it.”

...advocacy is a chance to educate and build a relationship.

A supportive legislator is usually more than willing to learn more about an issue they care about. Legislators juggle many subjects and may be very supportive of an issue about which they have little knowledge. You can help make them better advocates by arming them with your best arguments. This is your chance to be a resource to your legislator and build a solid relationship. A good relationship may help you in the future.

...there is always more to do.

Good advocacy does not stop when you hear that your representative supports your cause. Well-informed, supportive legislators can help by talking to other legislators, publicizing your issue in their district newsletter, advising you on approaching others, speaking on the floor of the legislature or in caucus, and in countless other ways.

...saying thank you is part of good advocacy.

Thanking your supporters is an essential part of any political movement. Thanking legislators lets them know that you paid attention to their actions and appreciated their work. Even if you don’t win, it is important to say thank you.

...people and minds change.

Even the most principled politicians have been known to change their position on issues. As time passes, a politician’s values can change or advocacy from opponents can take its toll. Also, there is often pressure on politicians to compromise on controversial issues. Don’t let your inaction give your supportive legislators a reason to change their minds!
Building Relationships, Tracking Bills


Your voice counts. Working as a community and voicing their convictions, child advocates can make a difference. Contact your lawmakers often, in good form and with solid, compelling arguments.

Effective Communications

Contact your legislator early, while an issue is percolating. Write a letter, and follow up with a meeting. Keep the following points in mind:

- Be informed. Understand the pros and cons of the issue; your state child advocacy group can provide pertinent information. Read the bill in question. You can find state legislative bills online at your state legislature’s homepage, or at www.house.gov (click on THOMAS) for the U.S. Congress.
- Be positive and constructive. Compliment your legislator on some recent action, vote or speech.
- Share favorable articles from local newspapers.
- Personalize. Use your own words and share pertinent anecdotes.
- Be brief. To receive full attention, stick to one subject.
- Be persistent. Don't be discouraged by a negative reply. Keep in touch, and get others to do the same. Provide new information, because lawmakers appreciate being kept current on an issue.
- Solicit a response. Ask your legislator's stand on the issue and other specific questions.

Keep in Touch

Find out from your legislator's office the best way to get a message across. Each lawmaker communicates differently, and you can be more effective by taking the preferred route (e.g., phone, email, in person). Keep these tips in mind:

- On the telephone. It's best to call your lawmakers when they're in the district office. They're often there at the end of the week.
- By e-mail. Your lawmaker's Web site may be an excellent source of information, while also offering an e-mail link.
- In person. Make an appointment to see your legislator at the Capitol or the district. Demonstrate your knowledge.
Tracking Legislation

The legislative process can be confusing, but like anything else, it can be learned. And legislative advocacy, like anything, gets easier with practice. One key is to have a reliable way to track legislation important to your mission and your programs. Here are three ways to stay informed on the status of policy initiatives.

1. Subscribe to the newsletters, alerts, and publications that like-minded groups publish, or post on-line. These sources often include a more in-depth analysis that goes beyond the basics of a bill.

2. Find a tracking service or focused journal. There are legislative tracking services available. These may be too expensive for all but the largest agencies, but helpful to those doing a lot of policy advocacy. (Check first, some are not specific enough, and not updated frequently.)

One good source of state-level information is an electronic service called StateNet (www.statenet.com).

Several publications are devoted to tracking federal-level legislation and the “backstory” associated with activities in the U.S. Congress. Newspapers like the New York Times or Washington Post (which has a WEEKLY) do some of that, but there are three with a special focus on Congress: CONGRESSIONAL QUARTERLY - CQ Today, NATIONAL JOURNAL, and Roll Call). Television and radio can supplement, but not substitute, print publications on-line or hard copy. These sources provide useful background, help readers develop an understanding of the process, and keep readers informed when following up with legislative contacts.

3. Develop personal contacts. A third, effective way to track the legislative progress on an issue is through personal contacts with legislative staff, lobbyists, and other individuals who work directly on the issue. Building relationships takes time, but being able to call on key staff and informed contacts can be invaluable.

Try to have at least one contact at each level of government for the issues you are tracking.

If you have a large legislative agenda, or are following numerous pieces of legislation, it might be helpful to develop a chart to keep track of provisions, and progression through the legislative process. Lobbyists and key staff often develop “side-by-side” charts – comparing common provisions in existing law and each new proposed bill. Side-by-sides are extremely useful.

NOTE: A sample legislative tracking chart is included in Appendix I, p. 134.
Tools for the Media Leg of the Stool

You don’t need to turn yourself into a media professional to use media for advocacy purposes, just as you don’t need to turn yourself into a legislative expert or professional lobbyist just to talk to a legislator. But all those community people and decision-makers we hope to reach are often influenced by the media. As a result, if we wish to be effective, we need to include the media in our efforts.

Among the tools that follow there are a few that relate to traditional media: local radio, television, and newspaper outlets in your community. But if those seem daunting, it’s also possible to think in much less traditional terms – all the many ways we communicate on more than a one-to-one basis. A list of some of those ideas is also included, along with some handy resources for those who wish to pursue media work.

As in the other sections, the 5 tools that follow are for you to use. Each of these items can be modified to reflect the details relevant to YOUR state or community, copied (in most cases double-sided) and distributed. Feel free to use them in your efforts to involve others: in contacting local media and empowering others to do the same. The tools that follow are:

Thinking about Media – Some ways to begin thinking about media work, some handy rules, “framing a story.”

Media Basics – Basic things to keep in mind as you consider approaching reporters; includes a worksheet for “pitching a story” to a reporter

Tips from an old news pro – a longtime reporter-turned-communications director has some advice for those just starting out.

Non-traditional Media Ideas – low-cost, easy things to try if you can’t (or don’t wish to) work with traditional media

Media Resources – publications and web sites for those wishing to delve further into media work.
Part III: Helpful Advocacy Techniques and Framework

Thinking About Media

“The greatest art of the media advocate is to recognize what appears to be a non-story and transform it into a story.” The Advocacy Institute

Adapted from a Presentation by Jon Gould, The Children’s Alliance, Seattle, WA

Four Rules of Advocacy Media Work

1. The media needs you as much as you need them. We often feel like it is a gift or a favor when we get good coverage in the media. The reality, however, is that the media needs you. Why? Because you help them do their work. The media industry has a word for you: What is it? Each of you is a SOURCE. You know they use it often... they even use it as a verb... "sourcing." Your relationship with the media is mutually beneficial, and mutually dependent. You both get something helpful and you rely on each other. It is a professional relationship.

2. One message, many messengers. The media is a messenger...take advantage of it. A goal of your media efforts should be to have your message heard and read as many times as possible. For example, you can use the same product multiple times: a press release is easily converted into a letter-to-the-editor, a flyer, or a fact sheet. A press release to your city's newspaper should also be sent to community newspapers, posted on your website, sent to others via email, etc…. You worked hard on your message, don't keep it bottled up.

3. No one was born a media expert—In other words, we can learn the skills. Ten years ago, I didn't have the faintest idea how to write a press release and I would have been tongue-tied in front of the editorial editor of a major paper. Looking back, there are thousands of newspaper, radio, and TV stories that occurred because groups I was part of paid attention to the third leg of the stool and integrated media work as an essential component of our advocacy efforts.

4. Never forget Media Math:

\[
\begin{align*}
8 \times 1 &= 0 \\
1 \times 8 &= 4
\end{align*}
\]

This odd bit of arithmetic reflects the fact that messages need to be repeated – many times – before they are absorbed. If we have eight different messages, and convey each of them once, chances are that none of them will be remembered.

But if we take care to develop a well-crafted message, and find eight different times and ways to convey it, chances are that it will be remembered – maybe half the time. That’s why advertisers and political candidates put so much effort into one or two brief “messages” – and repeat them over and over. We can do the same.

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Part III: Helpful Advocacy Techniques and Framework

**Why Do Media Work?**

- To reach broader audiences: Our mailing lists, fact sheets, posters are not enough. A major urban newspaper has 200,000 readers/day. Radio drive time, over 300,000 listeners. Those are much bigger than most groups’ mailing lists.

- Outreach: Media can help us recruit new volunteers, board members, donors.

- Credibility: The public, policy makers, other media often use media coverage as a sign that an issue or topic is credible. Media establishes your reputation.

- Shape public opinion: Public opinion matters in policy advocacy. Nationwide there are twice as many people in public relations than in journalism (300,000 vs. 150,000). Twice as many are trying to influence the news than are reporting news.

- Win issues: Media is often part of a strategy to win an issue. Getting coverage in a specific district is one way to win support of a legislator in a certain district.

- Empowerment: Media is an opportunity for leadership and confidence building: doing interviews, speaking at press conferences, getting your name in print. It is energizing.

- Fundraising: Media gets the attention of donors, and helps promote your cause.

- We have no choice: We need to set the record straight. Powerful interests in society use media to shape public opinion and define issues on their terms—if we ignored media, we would not ever have our perspective in the public forum. We do media to counter stereotypes, and offer correct information.

- It's Fun: Being in the news is fun, it's validating, and it feels good.
Framing a Story

One key element of media work is how we “frame” a story idea. Framing means:

- Packaging a group of facts to create a story.
- Choosing the information YOU want

Framing is important because the way a problem is framed determines how it will be solved. We intentionally frame issues, because we have opinions about the way problems should be solved. Facts don’t speak for themselves… the meaning of facts is shaped by the context in which they are presented.

Effective frames work their way into our everyday language. E.g., those who oppose public spending use a deliberate frame about taxes, namely that they are bad, and too high. The taxes we pay are called the “Tax burden.” What if we used “tax share? tax contribution?” Something we all contribute to have a decent community. “Burden” implies something oppressive, weighing you down; “share” implies fairness, an investment.

Good frames resonate with familiar cultural themes:
- David v. Goliath: Classic underdog
- Rags to riches
- Cost disparities: misplaced priorities
- World v. community
Part III: Helpful Advocacy Techniques and Framework

Media Basics

(Adapted from a Presentation by Laura Strickler – Communications Director, The Children’s Alliance, Seattle, WA.)

Why “use” the media? Four good reasons:

• Media can mobilize and educate the grassroots– often for free
• Media can influence the actions of elected officials
• Media gives you, your organization, and your issues legitimacy
• Media offers a way to counteract misinformation about your organization, your clients, your issue.

What is newsworthy?

• Something NEW
• Unexpected information
• Something affecting many people
• Controversy, drama, human interest
• Anniversaries, special dates or events
• Good Stories.

What is NOT newsworthy?

• Age-old complaints
• Something affecting few people
• Routine
• Publicity disguised as news
• Good intentions.

How can you make YOUR issue newsworthy?

• Practice – brainstorm with others, develop sample messages, pitch stories
• Be timely
• Localize - Offer a local angle on a national report, anniversary, or event
• Be brief but provide the basic facts
• Prepare a good News Release or pitch that covers the “5 W’s:”
  • WHO you are
  • WHAT is the news
  • WHEN
  • WHERE
  • WHY (often answered by a quote).

Rules to Live By:

• Tell a Story
• Never lie – your credibility depends on it
• Use media to create change (not just for publicity)
• Don’t work in a vacuum (link your issue to current headlines, avoid jargon)
• Establish RELATIONSHIPS (with reporters, editors, news sources)
• Always, always, always… FOLLOW-UP.

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Media Pitch Worksheet

Your task: You sent a press release out last week about an event, report, or issue.

Now you need to follow up and pitch your story (we will assume your target reporters received your press release). Draft the “pitch” you would make.

Example of a pitch about work you are doing in support of H.R. 1111 – a (hypothetical) bill before the U.S. Congress to increase funds for emergency food.

Hi Bill, this is Rodney from the local food bank. (We talked after that great story you did last month - about hunger in immigrant families). I’m following up on a press release I sent out last week. Is this a good time to talk?

Great. Well, Congress is working on a bill to increase funds for emergency food providers - just like our 200 members. They’ll be voting later this week (TIMELY). As you know from stories you’ve done (THIS IS HIS “BEAT”), in these tough times (HEADLINES, RELEVANCE), food aid is really important. Between low wages and the high cost of housing in this area (LOCALIZE), many working people find it hard just to keep food on the table.

We’ve documented the size of the problem (INFORMATION), and the red tape the city put in place to manage the scarcity (CONTROVERSY). We think this bill (H.R. 1111) could make a critical difference right here in L.A. (LOCAL ANGLE).

I’ve got some families willing to tell their stories (HUMAN INTEREST), plus a business owner/program volunteer. Can I set you up with some interviews?

Your PITCH:
WHO: (who you are, who you represent) ________________________________
WHAT: (what’s the news?) __________________________________________
WHEN: (Timeliness… why now?) _________________________________
WHERE: (Scope of issue – local?  Statewide? National?)  ________________
WHY: (Why is this important? Any values involved?) __________________
RELEVANCE: (Can you relate it to headlines now?) ____________________
CONTROVERSY: (Only if it applies; don’t make it up) _________________
STORIES: (Do you have people willing to talk?) ________________________
VISUALS/ SOUNDS: (Consider visuals for t.v., background sound for radio)____
12 Media Tips from Steve Goldsmith

Office of News & Information, University of Washington

Here are a dozen pointers on getting into the news that I learned, painfully, over the decades of having my story ideas shot down by fish-eyed assignment editors:

1. Don't appeal to the reporters' altruism or friendship. Appeal to their hunger for a good story.
2. Don't give them enthusiasm. Give them ammunition.
3. A good news story is something new. Plus: surprising, fascinating, amusing or counter-intuitive - or has a direct and dramatic impact on the reader's or viewer's life.
4. Your opinions or feelings are not news - unless you are the Secretary of State and you have suddenly decided to break with the President's foreign policy.
5. Don't overlook the opportunistic nature of news. If your organization is active in part of Elbonia that just got devastated by a volcano, contact the news media at once! This is the moment when the public is interested in Elbonia. It won't be tomorrow.
6. Point #5 is more important than any 300-page strategic communications plan that gathers dust on a shelf. It means you have to follow the news and be quick on your feet.
7. Specifics are usually more effective than generalities.
8. Reporters feed on new, specific information. If nothing else, this can be a poll result, a survey, a research study, etc.
9. Journalism almost always requires the testimony of ordinary individuals who embody the story - a gay couple getting married, a flood victim, etc. Because of public suspicion over "unnamed sources," an individual (with rare exceptions) must give a name.
10. Don't ask the reporter to review the story in advance. You wouldn't want others to have that privilege.
11. News conferences, events and receptions are not, by themselves, news. Reporters have less free time than most people; don't ask them to waste it on something that won't produce a story. (And, while they are underpaid, they probably have had enough to eat, so free food isn't that much of a lure).
12. Before all else, remember Point #5!

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Non-Traditional Media Ideas

If you live in a small community, or simply aren’t ready to tackle anything more than a letter-to-the editor or anonymous call to a radio call-in show, you can still do some good media work – just of a non-traditional sort. Here’s a quick list of ideas; read them and come up with your own.

- In some areas the Home Shopping Network welcomes Public Service Announcements. They may appear at 3:00 a.m., but that’s when young parents are walking the floor with a colicky baby and turn the t.v. on just to survive. Result: this might be a great time for a PSA for the benefits of the WIC program, or home-visiting services, or any early childhood development services.

- Tell the national organizations you are associated with that you would be willing to help participate in local news events to publicize the release of a National Report. E.g., when the Kids Count reports are released, local reporters are always eager for connections to local families and service providers who can provide a local angle, and put a human face on the many charts and graphs.

- You can use a “Take Five” table to generate letters-to-editor or calls to a radio call-in show if there is something you wish to support, oppose, or call attention to.

- Consider involving the editor and reporters of a local High School newspaper (especially if they live in your family or neighborhood). Try to interest them in a series on Youth Look At Parenthood, or Teen Parents, or Foster Care from a youth perspective. Suggest that one part in the series should involve interviewing their legislators about the public policies related to the issue. Then be sure that copies of the articles get to the legislators, and also to the local media.

- Turn yourself into media. If you meet with your Senator or Representative and want to know their position on a bill or budget item, ask – and explain that you want to be sure you understand it correctly because you will be writing up a report of this visit for your newsletter that goes out to 300 households in the District.

- Help current and former “System” youth develop a “zine” (web-based magazine), newspaper, or insert for an existing paper (e.g., the local homeless newspaper, a congregation newsletter, or newsletter of any other group that’s likely to be interested).

- If your legislators come to your agency for a site visit, offer to write an article – with photo – they can use in their newsletter that goes out to all the voters in the District.

- Write short articles for your congregation or professional newsletters about your agency mission, a new project, or a policy before the legislature.

- Incorporate a media event into your annual conferences or future advocacy training.
Communications and Media Resources

Publications

**The Jossey Bass Guide to Strategic Communications for Nonprofits**
by Kathy Bonk, Henry Griggs, and Emily Tynes
The Communications Consortium Media Center, 1999.
(202-326-8700) [www.ccmc.org](http://www.ccmc.org)
An up-to-date guide with particularly good tips on how to develop a successful message.

**Prime Time Activism**
by Charlotte Ryan
South End Press, 1991
7 Brookline Street, #1
Cambridge MA 02139-4146
Orders 1-800-533-8478 [www.lbbs.org/sep/sep.htm](http://www.lbbs.org/sep/sep.htm)
*Prime Time Activism* is both a progressive academic analysis of the news media and a guide to help activists manipulate the news. It's a dense read for a busy practitioner, but there are lots of interesting ideas here, particularly if you're interested in theory.

**How to Tell and Sell Your Story Part I: A Guide to Media for Community Groups**
and **How to Tell and Sell Your Story Part II: A Guide to Developing Effective Messages** and **Good Stories about Your Work**
by Timothy Saasta
Center for Community Change, 1998
1000 Wisconsin Avenue, NW
Washington, DC, 20007
(202-342-0567) [www.communitychange.org](http://www.communitychange.org)
These booklets have excellent information on working with the media and developing messages.

**Making the News: A Guide for Nonprofits and Activists**
by Jason Salzman
Westview Press, 1998
(800-386-5656).
A how-to primer on how the media work and how to influence them.

**Media Advocacy and Public Health**
by Lawrence Wallack, Lori Dorfman, David Jernigan, and Makani Themba
Sage Publications, 1993
Thousand Oaks, CA
(805) 499-0721 [www.sagepub.com](http://www.sagepub.com)
Media Advocacy and Public Health focuses on how to devise media strategies and messages to advance policy goals. Its focus is public health policy, but the information could be used by any advocate. Check out Chapter 4, "Thinking Media Advocacy," and Chapter 6, "Media Advocacy Case Studies."
Part III: Helpful Advocacy Techniques and Framework

Web sites

**Benton Foundation/Best Practices Toolkit**
Benton is heavily involved in various aspects of communications for nonprofits. At this site, there are links to various projects, including the “Kids Campaign.” It’s a great resource for ideas and examples. Benton also maintains a well-indexed area called the “Best Practices Toolkit.” (It includes links to additional media advocacy resources.)
www.benton.org

**Communications Consortium Media Center**
1200 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 326-8700
The Communications Consortium Media Center is a public interest media center dedicated to helping nonprofit organizations use media and new telecommunications technologies for public education and policy change
www.ccmc.org

**Cause Communications**
1836 Blake Street, #100A
Denver, CO 80202
(303) 292-1524
Cause Communications helps activists and nonprofits publicize important issues. Also provides a list of useful resources.
www.causecommunications.com

**Chevron Community: Profitable Public Relations For Non-Profit Organizations**
Developed by Chevron's corporate-giving program, this Web site includes information that helps charities develop a public-relations plan and work with the news media to generate coverage of their activities. The site also has sample press releases, public-service announcements, publicity flyers, and thank-you notes.
http://www.chevron.com/community/other/pub-relations/index.html

**Government Website Links:**
- U.S. Senate – www.senate.gov
- Nonprofit Gate (government information and links of interest to nonprofits) – www.nonprofit.gov
- Links to state legislative information – Common Cause has a very good search engine that will provide information and links for all 50 states through their “State Legislative Look-up” – http://www.commoncause.org/states/states.htm
As you embark on your advocacy efforts, you’ll quickly find yourself needing a few more things.

- The first is a way to think about your advocacy readiness if you are just getting started, and a way to check progress as your efforts grow - something to guide and review your efforts three or four times a year. One possibility is the “Quick Assessment” following this section.

- The second is an Advocacy Calendar – a way to think about the different kinds of activities needed throughout the year. One version of a Calendar is also provided, but you may wish to consult with a local lobbyist or legislator to develop your own.

- Third, each state has its own laws that govern lobbying activities of the legislatures and state agencies, so it is important to have an understanding of what applies to you in your state. The National Council of State Legislatures has links on its Web site to the relevant sections of every state’s code that pertains to lobbying. You can see what laws apply in your jurisdiction by logging on to http://www.ncsl.org/programs/ethics/ethicsURLs.htm.

- Fourth, this training and toolkit cannot cover everything. Over time you’ll think of skills you’d like training in, or materials you’d like on topics not included here. By now there are many good publications and resources (see the list included at the end) to take your advocacy understanding to next steps. But we hope you will also contact the policy staff of the Alliance for Children and Families: we want to hear what you need, and want, to become more effective in your mission-based advocacy.
Advocacy takes many forms and a good advocacy system will have elements of each. Using this list, identify the strengths and weaknesses in your own (or your community’s) advocacy system. Throughout, keep in mind that advocacy is just about Speaking Up - but in ways which ensure that our institutions work as they should. Good advocacy helps everyone enjoy the benefits, services, and/or rights to which they are entitled.

Rate each of the following forms of advocacy as it exists in your community or group.

**Case Advocacy:**

**POOR ______ O.K ______ EXCELLENT ______**

This form of advocacy focuses on helping individuals deal with complicated bureaucratic structures to get the services or benefits they need and it is the first step for many. It is especially important to families with a mentally or physically disabled member. They quickly learn that speaking up is essential, and acting case-by-case is far too slow and not enough - which is when “case” turns to “cause.”

**Community Education:**

**POOR ______ O.K ______ EXCELLENT ______**

This form of advocacy is designed to influence ordinary citizens as well as opinion-makers through the use of information. It includes such activities as: asking a carefully-crafted question at a public forum, wearing a thought-provoking T-Shirt, making a presentation to the PTA or Kiwanis Club, carrying out a Media Campaign, and/or developing the capacity to analyze policies, provide statistics, and publish “chart books.”

**Capitol-Based Advocacy:**

**POOR ______ O.K ______ EXCELLENT ______**

This is where professional lobbyists as well as concerned citizens fit it in. Included are activities in the state Capitol during the legislative session that are intended to win better budgets and laws for children, families, and other vulnerable people. It includes testifying, participating in weekly or annual “lobby days,” and coming to visit your legislators and their staff when personal contact from the voters is critical.

**Grassroots Advocacy:**

**POOR ______ O.K ______ EXCELLENT ______**

This includes everything you do from back home to influence the policy process: writing letters, responding to legislative alerts, maintaining an effective telephone tree, expanding your network to include all likely allies as well as reaching out to unlikely allies, supporting good candidates, and sponsoring forums for citizens and legislators.

**Media Work:**

**POOR ______ O.K ______ EXCELLENT ______**

This includes developing relationships with print and electronic journalists in the community, participating in Editorial Board meetings, writing OP/ED pieces and Letters-to-the-Editor, as well as commenting on radio and T.V. coverage of your issues. Good media work involves generating positive coverage, as well as countering the negative.
Once you’ve identified any gaps in your advocacy system, identified those activities that your group can take on, noted priority areas for increasing your advocacy capacity, and are developing a legislative agenda, ask yourselves the following:

- Does everyone you are expecting to be advocates (including Board, volunteers, and staff) feel comfortable talking about your issues and the programs you care most about?
- Do you have the expertise to carry out your advocacy plans? Can you get it?
- How much time will your advocacy plan require? Do you have the time?
- How much will it cost? Can you afford it?
- Will engaging in the advocacy activities have benefits beyond immediate goals (e.g., will it increase community understanding? Reach out to potential new advocates? Increase diversity? Empower people? Build a movement for positive change)?
- Will the advocacy activity help current leadership or staff? OR
- Will it burden current leadership or staff?

NOTE: If the answer to any of these “Reality Check” questions proves worrisome, you need to re-think your advocacy plans, or find ways to slow down and deal with the gaps. E.g., you could arrange briefings and develop “talking points” for Board members or staff; you might raise funds specifically to enhance advocacy capacity; you could recruit individuals with specific talents; or you might scale back (or phase in) your plans.

Organizing: What Holds It All Together

All too often advocates find it easier to assemble their statistics and spell out the arguments for their position than to organize the citizens capable of using those facts and arguments to win better policies from decision-makers. That is not a winning strategy. Facts, statistics, research - all are important. But in a political context, even the best information in the world is no substitute for good organizing. Facts alone rarely persuade policymakers; organized voters using facts in a politically savvy way often do.

Good advocates know the importance of bringing people together (i.e., organizing) to get, keep, and use power to solve problems or improve conditions for people they care about; and they know the value of organizing coalitions (i.e., an organization of organizations). Organizing is the building block that makes your advocacy efforts work.

(Two good resources are, ORGANIZING FOR SOCIAL CHANGE: a Manual for Activists in the 1990s, by Bobo, Kendall, and Max; Seven Locks Press, 1991; and SO YOU WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE – Advocacy is the Key, by Nancy Amidei, 2nd edition 2004 – westernb@ombwatch.org).
An Advocacy Calendar has three or four seasons, depending on the nature of your organization and its goals. Each season has its special tasks, plus there is some work - e.g., with the media, on public budgets - that is needed year-round. Depending on your size, resources, and energy, identify one or more activities you can carry out in each “season;” put that on your Calendar, and on your group’s agenda. Revisit often.

**STATE SESSION SEASON: From January Until Late Spring or Early Summer.**

**Task:** Engage in Activity Related to the Legislature

- “Work” the legislative session in your state on your key issues.
- Respond to Legislative Alerts, activate Telephone/email Trees;
- Participate in lobby days, “Call-in” days by those too far from the Capitol, e-mail/snail-mail campaigns;
- Establish a regular (e.g., weekly) presence in the Capitol.
- Help others know what is happening in the Capitol
- I CAN DO at least the following: ______________________________________

**Task:** Do something related to the Media

- Respond to untruths, stereotypes, myths related to your priority issue(s).
- Try to promote stories that educate the public and promote informed public dialogue about your issues.
- Write and place OP/ED pieces on key issues, or help others to.
- Generate Letters-to-the-Editor on your highest priority issue.
- I CAN DO at least the following: ______________________________________

If you/your group participates in a group for these purposes, maintain the following -

- Regular meeting time (preferably weekly during the Legislative Session)
- List of group Members, with home and daytime email/phone contact information.
- Consider establishing “adopt-a-legislator” project so each State Legislator is paired with a member of your group who lives in their district, to serve as a resource and for purposes of on-going education of the Legislator.

**On-going Budget, Media Tasks:**

a. Try to Follow your priority budget items through the legislature.

c. Or, take part in a Non-profit Budget Coalition to monitor cross-cutting budget issues.

c. Try to have at least one media contact or event each month, by someone in your group.
FEDERAL SEASON: From Early Summer to Late Fall (overlaps with PREP SEASON).

Many small non-profits only have enough staff, volunteers, and energy to focus on one level of government at a time. Since State Legislatures convene in late Winter/early Spring, and much of the work by the Congress takes a few months to heat up, it makes sense to concentrate on state-level work early in the year, and then turn to federal issues once the State Legislature has adjourned. Adjust to meet resources and ability.

Task: Focus on one or two federal issues

Same techniques as for State work, time and distance permitting. It is essential to get your members on a good mailing list or Legislative Alert list for issues at the Congressional level.

☐ Develop a fact sheet on your priority issue, noting impact in your Congressional District(s).

☐ You (your group) respond to legislative alerts on key issues, activate network.

☐ Attend “town meetings” hosted by Members of Congress while home in the District ; ask a well-planned question about your priority issue(s).

☐ I CAN DO at least the following: ________________________________

On-going Budget, Media Tasks:

a. Work with National groups, and supply local impact information on priority Appropriations items before the Congress.

b. Try to have at least one media contact or event each month, on a key federal issue.

PREP SEASON: From early Summer until Election Day/Fall.

(These are allowable activities, but not all non-profits engage in them.)

Task: Get your issues before both candidates and voters

Some ways include:

☐ Co-sponsor candidate forums with your issues on the agenda.

☐ Attend others’ candidate forums and raise questions about your issue.

☐ Raise well-planned question(s) at all candidate forums.

☐ Write Letters-to-the-Editor; and call radio Call-in shows about your issues.

☐ I CAN DO at least the following ________________________________.
Task: Increase voter participation, especially among young adults
Some ways include:

☐ Register voters in non-profit agencies, at social functions, at community colleges.
☐ Work with Voter Education efforts that focus on your issues.
☐ Be part of GOTV (Get Out The Vote) efforts in your community.
☐ As individuals, on your own time, attend Fund-Raisers, or “Time-Raisers.”
☐ I CAN DO at least the following ________________________________

On-going Budget, Media Tasks:

a. Work with the Governor’s office and state agencies to get your priority budget items included in the Governor’s proposed budget.
b. Work with city/county agencies to get your priority budget items included in local budgets.
c. Try to have at least one media contact or event each month, by someone in your group.

PRE-SESSION SEASON: From fall/elections until the new legislative sessions (state and federal) in January.

Task: Educate the winning candidates

☐ Invite winning candidates to a “Site Visit” at your program or agency, and arrange for the winner(s) to meet with a group of consumers-members/clients/advocates.
☐ Co-sponsor an Issue Forum at a nearby Community College, college or university.
☐ I CAN DO at least the following ________________________________

Task: Get your community ready for the upcoming sessions

☐ Sponsor a Legislative Simulation, or advocacy training.
☐ Make sure telephone trees, snail-mail/e-mail lists, are up to date.
☐ Update group membership; recruit replacements, additions.
☐ Add key contacts to your networks.
☐ Develop and/or strengthen your media contacts.
☐ Prepare a one page fact sheet about your key issue(s).
☐ Start planning a Lobby Day to occur during the Legislative Session.
Review the Coalitions you belong to, and fill remaining gaps.

I CAN DO at least the following

Budget, Media Tasks:

a. Help generate a response to the Governor’s budget when it is released, focusing on your priority budget items included (or not) in the Governor’s proposed budget.

b. Work with city/county Council Members to advance your priority budget items (most local budgets determined in November-December).

c. Try to have at least one media contact or event each month.

NOTE: If you are a non-profit, it is important to involve two groups: a) people affected by your issue; and b) members of your Board and other volunteers. They often have established relationships with elected officials and/or their staffs, and/or the media, and can give your group added credibility with policy-makers and media alike.
Alliance Member Case Studies

Giving Voice – and Power – to an Immigrant Population: A Case Study

El Centro, Kansas City, Kansas

The rolling hills and plains of the central Midwest don’t usually come to mind as a backdrop to the struggles faced by Hispanic immigrants to the United States. Yet Wyandotte County, Kansas, almost exactly in the geographical center of the country, is home to an organization aptly named El Centro. The social service and community development agency has fearlessly placed itself at the very center of the struggle for social justice for the burgeoning Hispanic immigrant population in Kansas – and afforded this population a strong voice in the political arena.

El Centro was created in 1976 with a mission to improve the lives of Kansas City’s Hispanic residents, and a one-time $10,000 grant with which to fulfill that mission. Today, with a consolidated budget of more than $5 million, El Centro provides programs and services in nine locations throughout Kansas City and Overland Park, Kansas. El Centro serves families of all colors throughout this area; however, the agency has a particular expertise in addressing the needs of Spanish-speaking immigrants.

Agency services include child care, youth tutoring and mentoring, emergency assistance, domestic violence counseling, case management, job training and placement, ESL and GED preparation classes, a senior center and telephone reassurance program, financial education, Individual Development Accounts, affordable housing opportunities, small business development, policy advocacy and community organizing.

Demographic change creates urgent need for advocacy

The agency’s wide reach is vital, because it addresses the needs of a burgeoning population. In Wyandotte County, where El Centro has eight offices, the Hispanic population grew more than 125 percent between 1990 and 2000, according to the 2000 census. That statistic is even more dramatic when juxtaposed with the agency’s own research, which reveals that fewer than 18 percent of Latino immigrants in the area today report having participated in the 2000 census.

The population explosion of Hispanic immigrants in the area has not only expanded El Centro’s programs; it has refocused its mission. In the past several years, El Centro mobilized all its resources to understand and respond effectively to the sharply escalating growth of this population. Most of the growth, the agency learned, was driven by new immigration, particularly that related to agricultural, construction, and service industries. Many of these immigrants are undocumented. The rapid growth in immigration sparked twin phenomena that demanded El Centro’s organized and immediate response: the rising economic, social, and political power of Latino immigrants and a significant rise in anti-immigrant backlash and ethnic strife.
In 2002, within the context of dramatically changed demographics, El Centro committed to a highly strategic and intensive focus on public policy relating to immigrant communities. El Centro has always walked hand-in-hand with its clients. The agency traces this culture to its founding president and CEO, Richard Ruiz, and the first Board of Directors, which committed to partnering with and empowering the community they served. But the tremendous surge in the immigrant population created a sense of urgency. It also created new opportunities, new voices and new leaders. El Centro wanted to connect with these voices to identify and correct the root causes that brought families to the agency for help.

Does it affect the agency’s bottom line if its immigrant clients can or can’t get a driver’s license? No. Does it affect the agency’s ability to do its job? No. But does it affect, on a deep level, the people El Centro works with? Absolutely, agrees the El Centro Board. That is why this and similar issues must become the agency’s problem. It is, quite simply, the right thing to do.

The Board’s executive committee worked to effect the changes to the agency’s corporate status that would enable El Centro to participate in lobbying and policy work. The Board also made resource development for this work a priority. This represented a dramatic shift in emphasis for the agency.

In close consultation with its client base, the Board approves a legislative priority slate each year. Gaining community input is a difficult and time consuming process. The agency spends a great deal of time and resources collecting survey and sample information to give the Board an accurate sense of the issues affecting immigrant families. A critic once questioned the agency’s surveys, saying that people are being surveyed to death. The agency agreed that the middle class white population is probably surveyed ad nauseum. But limited-English proficient, undocumented immigrants? Never. No one thinks to ask what is going on in their lives, what’s important to them or what their concerns are for their children.

El Centro talks regularly with other community groups about the issues, and holds monthly conference calls with immigrant leaders around the state. The agency also meets weekly with adult and youth leaders and holds several town hall events each year that typically draw several hundred participants. In addition, El Centro analyzes the current political landscape to determine what public policy actions are feasible and possible.

Creating an effective advocacy Board

El Centro has created a diverse and committed Board. Some of the Board members are from the immigrant community the agency represents and are personally very involved within that community. Others are in business, in education, or involved with the church. Some are not Latino, not immigrants, and do not live in the community they represent –
yet are just as involved and committed to the agency’s mission. Board members scan the news for information, attend court hearings, contact legislators and form strong coalitions with other concerned people.

What makes the agency and its board so effective is a high level of authenticity and sincerity of purpose. The agency works hard to understand the interests and needs of its clients. From the Board on down, El Centro is committed to walking alongside its clients in their fight for justice.

Involving Board members in direct personal contact with families impacted by the issues is vital in motivating the Board. The Board is also encouraged to make face-to-face contact with politicians and influence leaders. A quarterly newsletter provides policy updates, and the agency relies on policy information and action alerts through ListServ and other sources.

**Building coalitions**

The agency strengthens its advocacy voice and achieves economies of scale by forming coalitions with other organizations that might not necessarily serve the same populations, but are facing the same issues. The Kansas Coalition around immigrant justice issues has been influential in helping El Centro develop its advocacy arm. Religious institutions are a natural partner, as are other refugee communities. In 2004, El Centro partnered with the Somali Foundation in voter registration. It has worked with the American Jewish Committee around organized bigotry and hate crimes, and with organized labor around immigrant worker protection and justice for all workers.

**Empowering the immigrant community**

Empowering its clients and their families, though, is El Centro’s primary focus. Many organizations only involve their clients when it comes time to ask for more funding, having them do a dog and pony show and tell their stories to legislators. El Centro does not believe that the agency’s role is to be a voice for the voiceless. That’s because the agency doesn’t believe its clients are voiceless. Instead, El Centro serves as a megaphone for its clients so their voices can be heard loud and clear when and where it matters most, and so their views can influence conditions that impact their lives.

El Centro doesn’t have to knock on any doors to seek out this population. The agency has an advantage in that potential advocacy volunteers come to the agency to learn English, to get their GED, to use the computer lab or bring their children to child care. Some volunteers walk in the door already fired up, asking where the agency can turn them loose. More often, though, the challenge is to help clients think beyond the specific need that brought them in the door and become part of a larger effort to effect social justice – and to help them believe in their own power to effect change.
Sometimes the advocacy potential of a volunteer is not immediately obvious. For instance, a 17-year-old high school girl who spoke little English was nonetheless able to go out and get 1,200 petitions signed supporting the DREAM Act, federal legislation to provide a path to citizenship for immigrant students. Because the issue was important to her, the young volunteer did truly amazing work in influencing her contacts and her family’s contacts, which were considerable.

When an 18-year-old girl attended a planning meeting with a committee of immigrant leaders, the other advocates generally overlooked her because she was very young and very pretty. As it turned out, the volunteer obtained a wealth of free radio publicity for El Centro. In addition, through her church and other connections, she filled two buses with people to attend a legislative event for immigration reform at the state capitol.

El Centro doesn’t expect every volunteer to be able to motivate 2,000 people to attend a rally at the capitol. Not everyone can play that role. But everyone has a role to play. El Centro has learned to provide diverse options to diverse advocacy volunteers. Some clients are ready to roll up their sleeves and take on large roles, working with Board members, spearheading event planning, using their connections, and contacting legislators and the media. One woman made a significant contribution by making food for the 300 volunteers who were mobilizing at the capitol; another volunteer bought several rolls of stamps for the postcard campaign for comprehensive immigration reform. There are others whose significant contribution is just to tell their personal story. Many families have been torn apart by immigrant laws; their stories put a very human face on the issue.

**Challenges to involvement**

Yet there are certainly barriers to finding and motivating advocacy volunteers at El Centro. Having to do everything bilingually is one. It takes extra time to accomplish advocacy work both in Spanish and English, and to ensure the accuracy of people’s voices in the translation process.

The transient population is another challenge. The lives of undocumented immigrants in particular are in constant flux. Contact lists must be continually updated and it is difficult to track people down.

Most compellingly, people are afraid to get involved and attract notice. El Centro acknowledges that undocumented immigrants are much safer sitting quietly at home than speaking out about the need for immigration reform. Some immigrants are too paralyzed by fear to get involved. They are afraid they might lose benefits or be reported to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Just before the 2005 legislative day in Topeka, a rumor was circulating that ICE would be picking up undocumented immigrants at the rally. Agency volunteers contacted as many people as possible the night before the event to assure them that the rally wasn’t some kind of trick. El Centro
Successful Mission-Based Advocacy Practices

is very honest about the possible risks and the protections the agency is taking against those risks. To its knowledge, the agency has never had a client who was negatively impacted by participating in advocacy work.

El Centro’s activism also has led to tough new challenges for the organization itself. Legislative initiatives such as the DREAM Act and driver licensing of undocumented immigrants have wrought considerable controversy. El Centro has received hate mail and threatening phone calls and has had to step up security in the building and at events. A Board member quit because of his growing discomfort with the agency’s service to undocumented immigrants, particularly El Centro’s backing of the driver’s license proposal and mortgage lending program. El Centro’s controversial stands have also resulted in the reluctance of some donors to continue to fund the agency’s programs. Other donors are confused, or forget that the agency primarily does social service work, because the advocacy work takes center stage.

Using the media

The agency has learned to use the media effectively in its public policy efforts. The Spanish-speaking media is especially supportive, but El Centro also seeks out the mainstream media to get the message out to people outside their client base and gain the support of the power structure that so directly impacts the agency’s work. Staff, Board members and volunteers participate in talk shows, meet with editorial boards, form relationships with reporters, hold press conferences and produce op-ed pieces. Their key message: Illegal is not a noun.

Changing attitudes, changing laws

From its board members to its immigrant family members, the organization has witnessed the power of committed individuals coming together for a common cause against great odds. In just a few years, El Centro has made remarkable strides in changing attitudes and changing laws – and in amplifying the voice of the population it serves.

The agency’s biggest win was getting a law passed that makes all Kansas high school graduates eligible for in-state tuition at public universities if they have attended school in the state for at least three years. This victory came despite significant opposition from national anti-immigrant organizations and from key elected officials. The agency and immigrant youth advocates met with legislators numerous times, secured positive media coverage and held a press conference in the Speaker's home district. El Centro also mobilized more than 200 students at the state capitol for Immigrant Student Day two years in a row, and had someone lobbying at the capitol almost every day of the legislative session.

El Centro also worked with legislators to introduce a bill to create a state housing finance agency, and provided testimony against proposed cuts to childcare funding. The
agency built diverse coalitions of law enforcement agencies, schools, banks, and other entities to support the legislation. El Centro worked hard on an Individual Development Account bill, which passed in 2005 with $500,000 in state tax credits.

Community forums were held around the state to engage immigrants in the agency’s policy work, identify priorities, and provide training. Immigrants also received media training which resulted in more than a dozen supportive editorials and dozens of high-profile articles. In 2003, El Centro took the lead on the Kansas City Coalition for the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride, working with diverse immigrant and refugee leaders to plan an event and raise funds. More than 700 immigrants and allies turned out for the event, a call to action on legalization, family reunification, and workers' rights which gained widespread media attention and brought new partnerships, especially with organized labor.

El Centro was not successful in gaining passage of a proposal to issue driver’s licenses to undocumented immigrants, primarily as a result of fallout from 9/11 and sharply increased restrictions in obtaining legal identification documents. The agency is continuing that battle, and others, at the federal and state level.

**Lessons learned**

- Be flexible and include people in the process. El Centro actively seeks the input of its clients to determine the most urgent issues they are facing, and works to connect them directly to the power brokers and decision makers.

- Show people you believe in them and understand and care about their issues. That will mobilize them to take action and believe in their power to influence change.

- Don’t underestimate the power of the ask. El Centro uses immigrant leaders themselves to invite other immigrants to get involved in advocacy work. They connect with agency clients at ESL classes and other agency programs, tell them that they understand their life and the issues they are facing, and explain why they should get involved.

- Don’t have too narrow a vision of who a leader can be and what a leader can do. El Centro learned that often it was not looking at the right people in the right way. The agency changed the way it views and welcomes volunteers in advocacy work, and offers numerous options and degrees of involvement. El Centro understands that heroes can be found in unlikely places.

- Build in extra time to counter language barriers and the challenges of a highly transient population.

- Fully understand and communicate the possible consequences of taking a controversial stand on issues. Be extremely clear with the Board, volunteers and other advocates about the risks and benefits of their involvement.
Agency background

FSW, formerly Family Services Woodfield, has been serving the Greater Bridgeport Connecticut area since 1849. Today, its programs annually reach more than 23,000 individuals and families in direct services, and impact the lives of 50,000+ people across the state.

The mission is to strengthen families and communities, providing services to help deal with immediate crisis and helping individuals and families move toward self sufficiency. FSW helps the working poor and families transitioning off welfare, at-risk youth, people infected with HIV/AIDS and victims of domestic violence. FSW is the largest provider of services for the hearing impaired in the state. Core services include psychiatric rehabilitation and behavioral health, an asset building division, social enterprise services, food delivery programs, and an interpreter for the deaf program at all 30 of the state’s acute care hospitals. A host of programs are targeted to youth who are at-risk or already involved with the justice system. Among them is the Youth Business Center, a program for high-risk youth to build upon their personal and professional skills by participating in youth-centered businesses. FSW is one of just 12 sites in the nation to receive funding from the James Casey Foundation to provide similar opportunities for youth transitioning out of foster care.

Asset building programs help families build self-sufficiency

After more than a century of providing services to low income people, the FSW Board came to the conclusion that the agency needed to do more than simply provide services to deal with immediate crisis. It had to foster long term solutions.

In the past decade, economic development has increasingly become a key issue for the agency. Of FSW’s clients, 70 percent have annual household incomes of less than $20,000; about half have less than $10,000 annual income. Many are elderly and subsisting on social security income. FSW began looking at its clients much more holistically, focusing on people who are marginalized, and realizing that no matter how excellent the agency’s social and mental health programs, individuals and families simply cannot be successful if they remain economically depressed.

The Board’s public policy committee began to examine strategies to bring more resources to help families rise out of poverty. They wanted to craft programs that would facilitate a hand up, not a hand out, that moved people from dependence to independence. The Board chair, Sandra Bromer, brought a wealth of experience as one of the founders of a homeless prevention loan fund in New York City. She championed the idea of asset building, and the committee examined ways to make it happen.
The Board unanimously endorsed the agency’s move to tackle the bigger, systemic issues, in effect establishing a completely new direction for the agency. In 2000, FSW took a leadership role in asset building with the creation of a subsidiary called Family Assets, which was certified by the U.S. Treasury as a Community Development Financial Institution. Family Assets encompasses a wealth of asset building programs through post-secondary education, Individual Development Accounts, emergency interest-free housing loans, home ownership, money management, financial literacy counseling, small business development and other programs to help clients improve their lives and develop personal and financial autonomy.

The Workshop in Business Opportunities (WIBO) is just one of these highly effective asset building programs. The 16-week business education program for low and moderate income people has graduated more than 300 individuals in the past six years and resulted in the creation of more than 140 successful small businesses in the Bridgeport area. These business owners are not only personally successful; they are providing jobs for others, paying taxes and rejuvenating neighborhoods.

**Advocacy an essential part of mission**

At FSW, social policy is not an after-thought or an add-on. It is a basic component of the agency’s mission, is included in the strategic plan and is backed up with considerable staff and financial resources.

The FSW Board has long had a social policy committee. Based on the agency’s successes in asset building programs, however, FSW’s strategic plan recently called for a rejuvenated and strengthened role of this committee and, indeed, of the entire Board, in advocacy work. The Board committed to becoming a far more vocal advocate in educating policy makers about asset building and other issues facing its clients. Each core program is required to submit at least one public policy issue annually that presents barriers for its clients. The social policy committee then develops an annual strategic advocacy plan and presents it to the Board, which selects several public policy priorities each year.

All Board members are educated about the issues and are encouraged to use their power and relationships to influence change.

**Funding sought for asset building programs and research**

FSW’s portfolio of asset building programs is unique in the country. Many agencies offer a few such programs; none come close to the breadth and scope of FSW’s programs.

Asset building is a relatively new form of human service, traced to the concept first outlined by Michael Sherraden in his 1991 book “Assets and the Poor: A New American Welfare Policy” When most people think of asset building, they envision meeting with
their personal financial planner to discuss IRAs and other pension/retirement programs. Few people understand the concept of asset building with low income populations.

The government, too, has been slow to recognize this concept. Historically, state and government funding helps people keep their heads above water, but rarely, if ever, goes the extra step to help lift them above poverty and become productive, self-sufficient members of society.

FSW’s asset building programs are thus 90 percent funded through private donations. The agency’s anecdotal evidence has underscored the tremendous return on investment of these programs. Asset building not only helps the individual and family, but impacts succeeding generations of the family. Indeed, asset building helps rejuvenate entire communities. Based on its experience, FSW believes emphatically that state and federal governments should provide more public support for asset building programs.

In 2004, FSW received a Families Count award from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the first Connecticut not-for-profit to receive this recognition. The award enabled the agency to meet with other organizations invested in asset building, such as the Brookings Institution and the New American Foundation. These organizations wholeheartedly endorsed the agency’s efforts, but stressed that it wasn’t enough to have anecdotal evidence when seeking funding. They urged FSW to gather quantifiable, longitudinal data to demonstrate the personal and economic impact of these vital programs. Armed with this information, FSW and other agencies and foundations could work not just at the state level, but also use the data at the federal level to achieve more public funding for asset building programs.

With limited resources, all FSW’s funds for asset building programs were going directly into client services. The Casey grant and subsequent conversations with think tanks and foundation leaders were the impetus that led the FSW Board to propose a bill for funding not only to expand capacity of its asset building programs, but to fund quantifiable research on economic return on investment.

FSW elicited the support of a local state senator, a friend of the agency, who submitted a bill to the 2005 General Assembly requesting $500,000 over two years that would allow the agency to grow its asset building programs and sponsor a longitudinal study of the return on investment.

Collaboration with other partners

FSW has partnered with other agencies in the state around a separate but related issue: to generate increased state funds and more equitable distribution of funds for IDA programs. The state provides minimal funding for IDA programming. Funding currently is through the Department of Labor and funneled through anti-poverty agencies. Like many agencies providing outstanding IDA programs, FSW is not a designated poverty agency in the state and thus has had to rely solely on private donations for these
programs. FSW joined a coalition of agencies working with the state treasurer’s office and with state legislators to ensure that agencies such as theirs can access these funds, probably though an RFP basis. This parallel work has raised awareness about the issues and the agency’s work and opened doors to policy makers who might be more receptive to FSW’s bill for funding of its asset building programs.

**Mobilizing support for the funding bill**

FSW began building the groundwork to help the agency achieve its advocacy objectives. An extensive branding campaign not only raised awareness of the agency’s programs, but had a call to action to draw people to its newly sophisticated web site. Here visitors could learn about the issue, see where the bill was in the legislative process, access e-mails and letters in support of the bill and contact their local and state legislators. As a result of the branding campaign, the FSW web site (www.fswinc.org) now draws an average of 7,000 visits per month, up from 2,800 visits prior to the campaign.

FSW staff, several Board members and other friends of the agency began by enlisting the support of legislators and other influential people at the local level who were already positive about the agency’s work. These local representatives, in turn, helped open doors to state policy makers. The staff achieved numerous face-to-face meetings with policy makers, including members of the appropriations committee, the state treasurer and the state treasurer’s staff.

The agency met with the media, including reporters and editorial staff of local newspaper to discuss op-eds and other earned media.

**Outcome**

The grassroots campaign achieved a tremendous amount of one-on-one time with influential policy makers and was met with bipartisan support. There was no real opposition to the bill. However, the bill did not make it out of the appropriations committee, largely because the state was facing difficult budget constraints.

FSW does not view this as a failure. They had an overwhelmingly positive experience in educating legislators and others of influence. The policy makers who supported the bill encouraged FSW to return to the 2006 General Assembly and indicated that the agency would be welcomed back.

**Obstacles faced**

Unfamiliarity with the concept of asset building for low income populations – on the part of the general public, state legislators and policy makers – was a significant but anticipated hurdle. Educating people about the importance of this relatively new human services focus and about the highly effective asset building programs of the agency remains a priority for FSW in the upcoming legislative session.
The state’s financial situation and political underpinnings has a very direct impact on the success or failure of any proposed legislation. FSW’s funding proposal was no exception. In 2005, the entire state of Connecticut was in turmoil, with the state budget severely constrained and a former governor going to prison on ethics charges.

Even supportive legislators cautioned the agency that bills typically do not go through in the first year and that passage of the bill would probably be a multi-year initiative.

**Gearing up for the next General Assembly session**

FSW has not wasted any time between legislative sessions. Staff and Board understand that advocacy isn’t something you do for four months and then forget about. They have been working consistently on sending a clear message, identifying new contacts and strengthening existing relationships. The overriding goal is simple: educate, educate, educate.

The agency has strengthened ties with key senators and representatives who will mobilize in support of the bill, keeping them apprised of the issue and updated on the agency’s work.

Board members want to be more involved. In 2005, many Board members wrote e-mails and letters in support of the issue, but few met face to face with legislators. For the 2006 campaign, they have committed to taking a more visible and vocal role. The Board is currently developing a strategic plan that will include greater Board involvement in advocacy and will, in particular, work to leverage their relationships with key legislators.

FSW is continuing to refine its ask. The agency staff and Board are meeting with economists and others in the field of asset building and bringing speakers to the agency to continue to educate themselves and constituents about the need. FSW is also reframing the message. The agency wants to remove labels and knock down silos. It’s not about people who are HIV positive. It’s not about people on welfare or kids coming out of foster care. The issue is poverty and empowering people to become personally and financially successful.

The newly redesigned web site will be used as an even more powerful source of support. The agency is currently devising a data base of Friends of FSW and will send action alerts to keep them aware of issues and urge them to voice their opinion with local and state representatives.

If the bill passes through committee in the upcoming session, FSW will involve clients to provide compelling testimony about how the asset building program has helped them. The agency is also working to strengthen the voice of its clients and their families and involve them more closely in advocacy work.
FSW is already meeting with editorial staff at local newspapers to work on op-ed pieces so the agency can raise general public awareness and support as soon as the legislative session begins.

**Lessons learned**

- The support of your public policy committee, executive committee and entire Board is essential.
- Include advocacy in your annual strategic plan to ensure that it receives adequate staff time and financial support.
- Talk with others who have been involved in a similar process, not just about specific initiatives but about how to identify and influence key players.
- Understand that all advocacy is an education process. You can never provide too much information to too many constituents.
- Have a plan, but stay flexible. The plan is a living document that will change as conditions change.
- More often than not, advocacy doesn’t have immediate results. It is long term work. Stay the course and don’t give up.
Building a Community of Advocates: A Case Study
Lutheran Child and Family Services of Illinois

Martin Luther taught that the entire community – church and civic leaders and citizens alike – must care for those who could not care for themselves. Lutheran Child and Family Services of Illinois has embraced that mission since its predecessor was formed in 1873. Like Martin Luther, agency president and CEO Gene Svebakken believes that all human service agencies, faith-based or not, have the responsibility to seek social justice and promote the common good. Social justice must be the priority of every CEO, every staff member and every trustee, Svebakken stresses. Abdicating that responsibility would severely erode the strength and integrity of the organization.

LCFS provides counseling, adoption, foster care, residential services and community programs throughout the state of Illinois. The agency has a two-pronged approach to dealing with the needs of its clients: creating programs and services to address the current situation, and working to correct the root cause of the problem. Thus, advocacy is as important a component of the agency’s work as direct services. LCFS works to educate and involve trustees, staff, clients and other constituents in public policy that impacts children and families.

Advocacy required of trustees
A key criterion in selecting trustees is a commitment to the mission of social justice. Trustees can be educated about the issues, Svebakken emphasizes, but that passion must be a given. Advocacy is included in the trustee job description and Board manual for trustees, and is one of the performance objectives in the trustees’ annual self-assessment. Before joining the Board, trustees agree to become educated about the issues and speak on behalf of the agency and its clients within their church and broader community.

Governance model fosters advocacy
The Board created a formal social concerns committee almost 25 years ago. But LCFS’s advocacy efforts gained full strength in the past several years with the adoption of a policy governance model. Through this model, the Board creates ends statements – mission-related policies that identify the results the agency should achieve – and then gets out of the way and lets the people with the expertise do the work. The policy governance model frees the Board to focus on the broader issues and gain an understanding of the critical social needs of the day.

As the trustees began defining the ends, it quickly became apparent that they couldn’t be accomplished without impacting the political arena. The trustees were initially hesitant to become involved, notes Board chair Tony Stevens. They believed the agency was at the mercy of state agencies and political decisions they could not influence. However, the trustees recognized that if agencies such as theirs did not stand up for children and families, surely nobody else would. As a group, they took the official stand that they
have an influential voice and they must use it. One of the agency’s ends statements has undergone substantial development in the past several years and is clearly crafted around the agency’s mandate to advocate for the common good.

**Education informs action**

Svebakken notes that lack of information is the greatest barrier to Board involvement. Thus, the LCFS Board places a strong emphasis on continuous learning. The agency focuses on giving trustees the education, encouragement and resources to communicate the need, gain the support of the community and effectively influence policy decisions. Trustees learn about the cutting edge issues in child welfare, family violence, drug addiction … whatever is going on in the real world of the people the agency serves. Board meetings typically feature a speaker or panel of experts who discuss the issues and trends in child welfare. Then they break into small groups to discuss the issues and decide whether and how to act. Svebakken believes this approach results in a spirit of creativity and strengthens the trustees so they can be more effective advocates.

Armed with a sound knowledge of the issues affecting children and families, trustees can not only set advocacy priorities but react quickly to upcoming legislation. In a two-day presentation last summer on children’s mental health issues in residential treatment, trustees were updated about state-of-the-art treatment and current and upcoming state and federal policy. Out of that knowledge base, the Board supported the agency staff in participating on a state child welfare advisory committee, refashioning best practice guidelines for adolescents nearing the transition out of entitled care. In another instance of advocacy, the agency was surprised to learn of proposed cutbacks in funding for therapeutic day schools. Already well versed on the issue, the Board and agency staff were able to quickly mount a grassroots effort. The funding was restored.

Svebakken and David Roth, director of public policy and community development, monitor issues and proposed legislation, analyze the agency’s resources and get strategic communication out to stakeholders. The Washington D.C. public policy staff of the Alliance for Children and Families and Lutheran Services of America is vital in keeping LCFS informed of issues at the federal level and helping the agency develop strategy. With that back-up, the agency can focus on mobilizing a well-organized, effective response.

**Public policy work group leads advocacy efforts**

State funding for children’s mental health services has been rapidly eroding. In 2000, proposed state budget cuts would severely compromise the agency’s ability to provide residential care and family treatment. The Board recognized the urgent need to act.

A 12-member public policy work group was created, comprised of trustees, leadership staff and volunteers. The work group meets monthly to identify and study issues and takes
information back to the Board for action. In setting public policy priorities for the year, the
group focuses on a small number of issues the agency can most effectively influence.

The public policy work group also leads the effort in creating key messages to empower
colleagues. The dire need for additional funding so the agency could continue to
provide vital services was the primary message in the early years of the work group.
Over time, LCFS realized that legislators were weary of agencies approaching them
annually with their hand out. However, legislators were open to partnering with human
service agencies and citizen advocates to create positive outcomes for children and
families. The agency adopted that more inclusive message and has achieved greater
success in gaining the support of trustees, donors and legislators.

The work group also takes the lead in developing relationships with public officials.
Members of the workgroup are selected on geographic representation, in addition to
other qualities, so the agency has relationships with diverse and representative public
officials across the state. Members of the policy work group schedule personal visits to
discuss issues with representatives in their home districts and work to maintain those
contacts. The agency thus has well-established, ongoing relationships with Republicans,
Democrats, African Americans, Caucasians, rural, suburban and urban policy makers.
This helps ensure that no matter what the issue, there will be a balance and
representation of the agency’s voice.

One of the first priorities set by the work group was the need for transitional services for
youth moving out of residential care. In Illinois, 40 percent of youth who leave
residential care end up in a locked facility. It costs the state $90,000 per person per year
– and that’s just for warehousing, not rehabilitation. Working in coalition, LCFS
introduced a concept to key public officials to redirect funds from the prison system to
preventive service programs for at-risk youth, and then mobilized grassroots support. A
two-year effort resulted in passage of Re-Deploy Illinois, a pilot program that redirects
funds from prisons and incarceration programs to prevention services for at-risk youth in
targeted communities. Now the agency is taking this effort a step further: it is asking for
creation of a youth corrections department to provide treatment alternatives for youth
rather than incarceration. The proposal is tax neutral; savings from adult corrections
would provide the funding for programs. Although there is strong opposition from
correction system labor unions, the agency believes the proposal is winnable in 2006.

Selecting partners in advocacy
LCFS looks for synergy when identifying collaborative partners in advocacy efforts. Natural
partners include the Lutheran community, other child welfare partners and justice oriented
advocacy groups. The agency initiates broad outreach, connecting with neighborhood
groups, religious groups of many denominations, government and private organizations –
anyone willing to work with them in promoting these issues, even if they have different
perspectives or agendas. The differences between the country’s two Lutheran denominations
is an issue the agency struggles with, Svebakken says. Although the denominations have the
same heritage, they implement their theology differently and there is often mistrust between

Successful Mission-Based Advocacy Practices
the two groups. Hurricane Katrina vividly illustrated that when there is a common concern, boundaries disappear and people find a way to work together to help people in need.

Sometimes the agency collaborates with unlikely partners. LCFS trustees had learned through experience that while legislators were often sympathetic to the need for funding for children’s and family services, there simply was no money available. That motivated the Board to consider where the state could generate more income. A statewide campaign to restructure the Illinois tax system, called A+ Illinois, was in its formative stages. LCFS trustees studied the initiative and unanimously endorsed the campaign. In fact, LCFS was among the first human service agencies in the state to back the initiative.

Illinois has one of the country’s lowest income tax rates, with a disproportionate burden falling to those with the lowest incomes – the very population the agency is most concerned with. A flat tax rate adds to the inequity. To balance the low tax rate, Illinois imposes higher property taxes and imposes countless onerous fees that particularly impact businesses and farmers. Through A+ Illinois, LCFS and other human service agencies have joined forces with education advocates, farmers, business owners and other advocacy groups to lobby for tax reform that will benefit their interests.

The campaign was LCFS’s lead public policy initiative in 2004 and 2005, and remains so for 2006. The LCFS Board’s unanimous decision to support the initiative speaks to the power of education. The trustees, who come from a wide variety of political perspectives, might conceivably believe that higher taxes would negatively impact their own family and business. Through education about the issue, however, the trustees acted as a unified, consensus-building voice on behalf of the agency’s clients.

The agency knew when it signed on to the initiative that so momentous a change in policy would be a long term effort and would acquire many natural enemies. For the past two years, LCFS has worked to build coalitions. In the second year, legislation was proposed and got through committee but never came to a vote. In 2006, LCFS plans to ring the bell: to get the policy through committee and passed through both Houses so the governor can’t veto the legislation.

Creating vehicles to influence policy

Once potential advocates are empowered with education about the issues, they must be provided with the means to act. Through its own staff and connection with the Washington D.C. public policy staff of the Alliance for Children and Families and Lutheran Services of America, the agency helps constituents establish relationships and communicate the message. Advocates receive e-mail updates, action alerts, letters and e-mails to send legislators, help in scheduling appointments with representatives, and other guidance in influencing public policy.

LCFS is working to create a stronger Lutheran voice in public policy. The agency sponsors Lutheran Day, a massive public policy event held at the state capital each
spring. Lobbying in support of the A+ Illinois initiative has been the focus the past several years. Partnering with its sister agency, Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI), LCFS drew about 100 people to the event in 2004. In 2005, there were about 200 participants from several Lutheran entities. Next year, the agency hopes to increase the number to 400 to 500 participants. LCFS holds its Board meeting in Springfield on Lutheran Day, so all trustees participate in the events.

To attract additional sponsors and participants, the agency restructured the day last year. First, policy experts update advocates about the issues and teach them how to effectively engage their public officials. Next, Lutheran faith leaders educate them about the faith-based motivation for engaging in advocacy. Then the advocates are off, individually and in teams, to meet with their representatives. Not all are successful in scheduling a meeting, but all the advocates come away with the understanding that they can have an impact and it is up to them to drive the relationships with their legislators. In the evening, participants attend a community-building banquet to celebrate successes and motivate further action.

Lutheran Services in America recently recognized LCFS, LSSI and the Lutheran Network for Justice Advocacy, for its joint efforts to organize Lutheran Day.

LCFS has become more savvy in promoting the event. It advertises through church channels, distributing invitations to congregations through mail and e-mail lists. LCFS has also enlisted the support of the president of each of the three geographic districts of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod in Illinois. In 2006, LCFS will provide bus transportation to Springfield for participants.

Follow-up with representatives after the event is not only encouraged, but facilitated. Board members and other advocates continue to contact their representatives, visit them in their home district and provide updates on the issues. In 2005, the agency learned through the Alliance public policy staff that the federal government was proposing Medicaid cuts that would directly impact its clients. Agency advocates met with Congressman John Shimkus, who sits on an influential committee. He expressed his support in maintaining services for children. Following the meeting, advocates invited the congressman to visit an LCFS program in his district that is supported by Medicaid funds. He repeated his pledge of support. Now advocates in his home district are contacting him personally, reminding him that he has visited LCFS programs and has seen how they work, expressing their thanks for his support and asking for his continued commitment. This was just a small part of a large national effort to prevent the cut. They were gratified that Republicans pulled the legislation from the table before it came to a vote.

**Building public policy advocates**

LCFS considers the state’s Lutherans a vast, untapped advocacy group. In 2004 and 2005, LCFS began to build a new structure that will be a primary means for addressing
public policy. The agency will promote the involvement of Lutherans in the development of a civic society which promotes the social well-being of all its citizens. Through this effort, LCFS will create a community of advocates who understand the issues, will build relationships with elected officials and gain a voice at the table. These advocates will include agency trustees, staff, volunteers and other supporters gained through strategic alliances with other organizations. This effort is a major priority for LCFS in 2006.

Lessons learned

Through its ever-greater involvement in public policy work, particularly in its work on the A+ Illinois initiative, the agency has learned to work in broad collaboration whenever feasible and effective. It has also learned that it is often not easy to predict who will and will not line up in support of the issue. Alliances can be won in unusual places. The broad support of farmers and business owners for the A+ Illinois movement, for instance, was a surprise to the agency. The groups have different perspectives, but the same goal: to achieve a more equitable tax structure.

In its work on the A+ Illinois initiative, the agency admits that it underestimated the incredible power of the anti-tax movement. Even compassionate, well-reasoned people are instinctually defensive when they hear the word “taxes” and are suspicious of the government’s ability to use the added revenue wisely. It’s a challenge to overcome resistance to additional government intervention. It’s a challenge to overcome resistance to higher taxes that might hit trustees and other potential supporters in the pocket.

Svebakken also observes that while human service agencies understand the problems facing their individual clients, it is difficult to translate that knowledge and compassion to action on the part of a larger audience. Through the lens of its child welfare work, the agency will redouble its efforts to focus on these massive problems and how the legislation will directly benefit children, families and communities.

LCFS will more narrowly customize its message to its own constituents. The widely diverse state includes the third largest urban center in the U.S. and some of the country’s most isolated rural areas. The population ranges from massive wealth to abject poverty, from right-wing Republican to far-left Democrat to those rugged individualists who are suspicious of any government whatsoever. The agency is working to craft effective strategic messages appropriate to each group.

In the past year, LCFS has also involved the people it serves more directly in defining public policy initiatives. The agency has always mediated the client voice through its leadership staff, but now it is asking clients directly about their most urgent needs. Last year, the agency included public policy questions in its client satisfaction survey to identify their priorities. Recently the agency conducted a survey of clients across seven programs and identified child care and education as their top priorities. The trustees are now considering how to incorporate their clients’ real-world perspective with the agency’s strategic direction and advocacy work.
**Successful Mission-Based Advocacy Practices**

**Jewish Board of Family and Children’s Services, New York**

This multi-million, 3200-employee agency in New York serves over 60,000 clients and has an 82-member board of directors.

Its enthusiastic Executive Vice President and CEO, Dr. Alan Siskind, speaks energetically about the increasing role his Board is playing in advocacy. The agency was worried about New York City’s decision not to pay the state recommended reimbursement rate for child welfare. A Board delegation, headed by Board President, Jean Troubh, was sent to meet in Albany in March when a lot of advocacy occurs and lobbyists mobilize.

Preparation for visits like those comes when a 12-member Legislative and Public Policy Committee meets every six weeks to learn and work on the agency’s agenda that comprises issues like mental health and child welfare. The action is concentrated at state and local levels in areas where funding has been a problem. Successful programs like residential care, violence and Children’s Day Treatment have not occupied their attention since their funding streams have not been threatened recently. But the idea is to have members of the Program Committees represented in the Public Policy Committee. Marilyn Johnson, Division Director for Preventive Services staffs the Committee, and helps organize appointments with the assistance of a UJA lobbyist in Albany, who also accompanies the delegation when they make their visits. The ingredient for success is being there at the right time.

Johnson laments that the issues seem to be “the same ones over and over again” but stresses that what they do is support the work of coalitions of voluntary mental health agencies they currently partner with. Preparations to make the Board members conversant and comfortable with the issues are the subject of many discussions and this time they were armed with a 5-year report chock full of financial data their budget director prepared for them to share with legislators, particularly those that are members of the Senate Finance and the Assembly’s Ways and Means Committees, the Office of Mental Health, the Division on the Budget. Very powerful data was presented and six staffers were present.

Another successful tactic for them has been inviting these important government officials to visit their programs. Children and adult clinics in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Staten Island were visited and Board members that had relationships with particular officials did the inviting. Most of the Council members and the Council Chair, Gifford Miller, were visited; letters were sent to the Commissioners and the Chair of the Assembly’s Health Committee was honored by the organization. Throughout the visits, a strong message was conveyed that Boards are not keen on supporting deficits, and the reality that some agencies have had to close their doors was impressed upon the officials.

The prestige of the organization, the combined message the Jewish Board and its allies are sending, as well as the reinforcement that distinguished citizens that serve voluntarily on its Board are providing about why they care for their communities by showing up in Albany as well as at the sites visited, all combine into a powerful visual image of committed individuals working for a worthy cause.
Expanding Health Care for Children in Massachusetts

For a long time, charities that provide health care services in Massachusetts knew that there was a growing crisis posed by the numbers of uninsured children. Rising costs and increasing population meant that hospitals, community health centers, schools and recreation centers were barely able to meet the demands of families whose children were not covered by Medicaid or the State’s own children’s health care program (CHIP). In 1995, when the Children’s Defense Fund released a report stating that more than 87,000 children in Massachusetts lacked health insurance from 1989 to 1991 and only 70 percent of all the 2 year olds in the state were fully immunized, the charitable community and the families they represent organized themselves to lobby for the needed public policy changes.

Many, if not most, charities that provide health care and serve Massachusetts families and children worked in a coalition under the leadership of Health Care for All, a health consumer advocacy organization. The coalition engaged in grassroots organizing and lobbying for legislation that would expand Medicaid eligibility for children under 18. Charities that had never lobbied before urged their elected representatives in the state legislature to support children’s health expansion. Their lobbying effort included letter writing, phone calling, personal visits with legislators, working through the media to advertise their cause and, importantly, leveraging the power of the people they serve by encouraging parents and kids to act as spokespersons.

The coalition’s efforts paid off. Even though the popular Governor William Weld opposed the Medicaid expansion legislation, the legislature overrode his veto. This triumph would not have been possible without the direct and grassroots lobbying effort by community and state-based charities such as the United Way of Massachusetts Bay, the YMCA, Family Services of Greater Boston and Parents United for Child Care. Today, many of the children who could not play sports in school and had to live day to day worrying whether they might become ill or injured because they were without health insurance no longer have that fear because of well organized and spirited charity lobbying.

Charity Lobbying in the Public Interest
David Arons, June 1998

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• Alliance for Justice’s Nonprofit Advocacy Project works to strengthen the voice of the nonprofit sector in important public policy debates by giving tax-exempt organizations a better understanding of the laws that govern their participation in the policy process. Some useful resources and information on advocacy workshops are available on the organization’s Web site. http://www.allianceforjustice.org/nonprofit/index.html


• Delaware Valley Grantmakers’ Web site provides links to some great resources for grantmakers. http://www.dvg.org/knowledge/advocacy.htm

• Ginsler & Associates, Inc. has compiled a toolkit to enable voluntary groups to be involved in the Canadian government system. While this deals with issues in another country, many of the resources and links listed on the Web site are helpful and relevant to advocacy efforts in the United States. http://www.ginsler.com/html/toolbox.htm

Resources

- Independent Sector’s Web site provides several links to rules and tips for nonprofits that undertake advocacy work. 
  http://www.independentsector.org/programs/gr/advocacy_lobbying.htm

- Library of Congress offers legislative up-to-date information through “Thomas” legislative information on the Internet. You can find bills and track their status, see legislation introduced by certain members of Congress, and an assortment of other services. It is a vital way to stay abreast of the issues facing Congress. 
  http://thomas.loc.gov

- Michigan Nonprofit Research Program conducted a study of the state’s nonprofit organizations and their role in the public policy environment. You can learn about this program at http://www.gvsu.edu/philanthropy/mnnp_rece.htm.

- National Council of Nonprofit Associations provides some useful tools and resources on this page of its Web site. 

- NPAction.org is an online resource hosted by OMB Watch to support capacity building for nonprofit advocacy. http://www.npaction.org/

- OMB Watch publishes articles on topics related to nonprofit advocacy and the issues surrounding involvement. The organization has published a book entitled So You Want to Make a Difference that provides some useful tips in starting advocacy work. The book is not available online, but it can be purchased from the organization for $10. http://www.ombwatch.org


National Coalition for Homelessness. “NCH Advocacy Tips: Communicating with Congress.”


Click here for IRS Form 5768
Appendix B

Click here for IRS Letter on Questions Related to Nonprofit Lobbying
Guidance for 501 (c)(3)’s During an Election Season

The following issue brief prepared Charity Lobbying in the Public Interest provides valuable guidance on the activities 501(c)(3) organizations may and may not undertake to avoid losing their tax exemption during political campaign periods. It was sent to you to refresh your memory about existing constraints imposed by the law.

Voter Education By Charities During Political Campaigns

Charities sometimes confuse working for the election of a political candidate with lobbying. These two kinds of activity are in fact very different. It is perfectly legal (and highly appropriate) for a charity to work for the passage of a particular piece of legislation, during a political campaign or any other time. Working for the election of a particular candidate, however, whether at federal, state, or local levels – is strictly prohibited and is cause for the charity to lose its tax-exempt status. While a 501(c)(3) group cannot work on behalf of or against candidates, there are a number of other voters educations activities, such as those described below, that it can legally engage in. If you plan to engage in any of the following activities, visit the CLPI web site for more information.

Electioneering. A 501(c)(3) organization cannot endorse, contribute to, work for, or otherwise support a candidate for public office, nor can it oppose one. This in no way prohibits officers, individual members, or employees from participating in a political campaign, provided that they say or do everything as private citizens and not as spokespersons for the organizations or while using the organization’s resources.

Candidate’s Statements. It is entirely proper for a charity to inform candidates of its positions on particular issues and to urge them to go on record, pledging their support of those positions. Candidates may distribute their responses both to the charity and to the general public. Charities, however, may not publish or distribute statements by candidates except as nonpartisan “questionnaires” (discussed in the following paragraph) or as part of bona fide news reports.

Questionnaires. Charities with a broad range of concerns can safely disseminate responses from questionnaires. The questions must cover a broad range of subjects, be framed without bias, and be given to all candidates for office. If a charity has a very narrow focus, however, questionnaires may pose a problem. The IRS takes the position that a charity’s narrowness of focus implies endorsement of candidates whose replies are favorable to the questions posed. The same applies when candidates are asked to respond to a charity’s position paper. Unless you are certain that your organization clearly qualifies as covering a broad range of issues, your organization should avoid disseminating replies from questionnaires.

Voting Records. Many charities follow the useful practice of telling their members how each member of a legislature has voted on a key issue. There is no legal problem with this practice provided that if the information is presented and disseminated during the campaign it is done in the same manner as it is at other times. A problem arises if an organization waits to disseminate voting records until a campaign is under way. If your organization has followed the practice of disseminating voting records as votes occur throughout the year, then you are safe in publishing the record of a vote that occurs during a campaign. If, however, your organization has not published the records regularly throughout the year, your group may not, during the campaign, publish a recap of the legislative votes throughout the legislative season. That is permissible, however, after the election.
Appendix C

Public Forums. Charities may invite candidates to meetings or to public forums sponsored by the organizations. The invitation must be extended to “all serious candidates.” It is best to write to them all simultaneously and to use identical language in the invitations. It is not necessary that all candidates attend. Even-handedness must be maintained in promoting and holding such a meeting or forum. The charity should not state its views or comment on those of the candidates. If there is a question-and-answer period, each candidate must be given an equal opportunity to answer questions, and the moderator should strive to ensure balance. Speeches or other remarks by candidates at the forum may be published as news items in the charity’s newsletter, if it is published regularly and if its circulation is limited to the organization’s normal distribution patterns.

Testimony on Party Platforms. As part of a lobbying effort, charities may testify before party platform committees at the national, state, or local levels. Responses to testimony may be reported in regularly published newsletters. Both parties’ platform committees should receive copies of the testimony. Any account of the testimony and responses may be reported in the charity’s regularly scheduled publication.

Issue Briefings and Candidates’ Statements. Issue briefings for candidates must be extended to all the candidates running for a particular office. A candidate may publish a position paper or statement on the issue, but a charity may not circulate the candidate’s statement to the media, the general public, or to the charity’s members until after the election.

Membership Lists. The charity may sell, trade, or rent its list to others, including candidates for office. If it does so, all candidates must be aware of the opportunity and be given the same access. An organization that gives or lends its membership list to a candidate is in effect making an illegal campaign contribution. To stay within the law, the group must be paid fair value in retain.

Additional Resources

These publications available from INDEPENDENT SECTOR will offer additional information and insight:


To order, call toll-free 888-860-8118 or visit www.IndependentSector.org.

The foregoing information is for the general guidance and is not intended to replace legal counsel.

For more information, please contact:
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www.IndependentSector.org/clpi
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Note: It is not clear how the rules apply, for instance to the First Lady, who does not hold an “elected position.” However, a person is considered a candidate from the period they form an “exploratory committee.”
Click here for Lobbying Registration Form

Click here for Lobbying Reporting Form
Public Policy Principles of The Alliance for Children and Families

The Alliance for Children and Families is the organization that was created in 1998 as a result of the merger between Family Service America (1911) and the National Association of Homes and Services for Children (1975). The Alliance fulfills its mission which commits it to:

- Strengthen the capacities of North America’s nonprofit child and family service organizations to serve and to advocate for children, families, and communities.
- Promote a public policy agenda that reflects the experience and value of nonprofit agencies in meeting the needs of children and families.

By:
- Advocating for sound and compassionate public policies on behalf of its more than 300 member agencies and the more than 8 million people they serve
- Playing an effective role in the public policy arena to advance issues that benefit providers and recipients of services
- Recognizing the interrelatedness of national, state and local policies and their effect of those we serve.

The following principles will guide the efforts of its Board of Directors, the Public Policy Committee and the Public Policy staff

1. Advocacy will be a significant effort to advance the public good in keeping with our nonprofit status and in pursuance of our goal to serve children and families effectively.
2. Unified collaborative efforts with members and other nonprofits will strengthen the Alliance voice by building consensus on key issues affecting children and families.
3. Our educational task will extend from our membership to members of Congress and the Administration to the general public, to increase awareness about the needs of the less privileged or underrepresented in our society.
4. Our policy agenda will be determined, adjusted and pursued every year so that our action can be timely, focused and effective, based on the just claims of children and families and our membership.
5. Coalitions and networks with other national organizations will enhance our capacity to influence public policy by bringing the unique strengths of our strategic partners to bear on issues of common concern, thus enhancing our own efforts.
6. We believe that our membership can be the best advocates for children and families by sharing their knowledge and expertise, and we will provide them with the balanced, timely and focused information they require to be the voice of those they serve. Building relationships with their elected members will be encouraged and facilitated to allow their organizations to have a broad impact on social service policy.
Committee on Public Policy

A. PURPOSE

Working with the Alliance for Children and Families membership and staff, to develop public policy positions for adoption by the Board of Directors, and to oversee and give impetus to the Alliance’s public policy agenda and action.

To make legislators at state and federal levels aware of the Alliance and critical issues affecting children and families.

B. RESPONSIBILITIES

The Alliance staff has the basic responsibility to monitor public policy developments, conduct research and inform the Committee of critical issues and opportunities which may impact or threaten children and families or affect the ability of Alliance agencies to serve their communities. The Public Policy Committee will:

1. Review public policy and program changes in light of the actual or potential impact on children and families and on the service field.
2. Recommend that the Alliance act, where appropriate, to strengthen and protect its interests and those of its members.
3. Work to strengthen the Alliance’s capacity to assist agencies to protect their interests and those of children and families at the federal, state and local levels.
4. Cultivate relationships and enlist the assistance of key (legislative and executive) government leaders by:
   a. informing them about the Alliance, its programs and critical issues affecting families.
   b. developing ways to recognize their work in sponsoring significant legislation and regulations affecting children and families and the service field.

C. TERMS

Members will have one to three year staggered terms with six new members being appointed each year.
## TIME SHEET FOR LOBBYING ACTIVITIES

**State Issues**
- General and Administration
- Salaries
- Telephone
- Transportation
- Postage
- Other Mailings: Duplication, Mailing

**Research**
- Meetings
- Legislative Report
- Invited Testimony
- Legislative Branch Officials
- Research

**Activity**
- lobbying
- Grassroots
- Legislative Branch Officials

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What Are Earmarks?

Federal earmarks—in Washington-speak—are known as line items, set-asides, or pork. The appropriations process is growing with these special requests for funding for specific programs in the jurisdictions that Members of Congress favor.

As Youth Today describes it, “the road to earmarks can be long and complicated, but a lot depends on where an... agency is, whom its leaders know in Washington and how the agency describes its work.”

The amounts of earmarks vary: 80 percent are for more than $100,000, 23 percent are for more than $500,000 and about 10% are for more than $1 million. The earmarking process starts early around March with the Appropriations Subcommittees asking their members to submit requests (generally 1-2 page documents describing the project and how it is good for society). The request is generally a letter from a particular Member of Congress that can be co-signed by other Members or which can be submitted with supporting letters from other Members of Congress, or notable citizens of the district where the project will be conducted. The earmarking process can take around 18 months and saleable projects are those such as a capital campaign that favors the Member of Congress’ district, projects with a unique edge or focus, projects that favor the family, or new immigrants in a community, youth projects etc. Generally, earmarks are for just one fiscal year.

The no-strings attached federal monies requested are then approved by the Subcommittee of jurisdiction and then by the full Committee, which harmonizes their costs with the money available. Although hearings are held, it is very difficult to get a slot to testify before the Committee to support the request but Members are often allowed to speak on behalf of the projects they have committed to support in a given year.

The final approval of the Appropriations comes when the Appropriations for the different Cabinet agencies is completed, usually around October or even as late as November.

After the Appropriations bill is enacted and signed by the President, then the favored organization needs to work with the federal agency through which the funds will flow. This process requires many documents to be signed before the money starts flowing. Under some projects 15% in matching funds is a requirement but often it can be met through cash or in-kind contributions (such as office space, etc.)

Ways to Work, an affiliate organization of the Alliance, has been fortunate to get $11.6 M in earmarks over several years for agencies that have Ways to Work programs in different jurisdictions under the Access to Work program in the Transportation Appropriations bill.
Lobbying groups are often contracted by agencies seeking earmarks because of their knowledge about where in the appropriations a project might best fit. Hiring a firm does not absolve agency CEO’s from making the rounds of Washington each year and visiting with members of their State’s delegation in the Congress so that they become familiar with the work of the agency in their state.

The Alliance and its agencies have used the services of the following firms to pursue their interests in the earmarking process:

David Gogol
Sagamore Associates
805 Fifteenth Street, NW, Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20005
Dugogol@bakerd.com

Gordon MacDougall
Beacon Consulting Group
507 C Street, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002
202-544-7944

Bill Broydrick
Broydrick & Associates
Billb@broydrick.com
Washington, DC 202-544-5321
Madison, Wi. 414-224-9393

These firms develop strategies, advise their clients as to where their project best fits in the appropriations scheme, they open doors and help present the best project proposal. They birddog the request and answer any questions that come up and use their political connections to advance the case, such as getting the petitioner a slot to testify at the Appropriations hearings. Their fees are high and sometimes they have a yearly retainer.
PREPARING A GOOD FACT SHEET  -- The Basics

What Are Fact Sheets?
Fact Sheets introduce you -- and your issue -- in a format useful to busy people. They come in many styles, shapes, and sizes, but every advocacy group needs at least one.

Good Fact Sheets recognize that busy people need something short and punchy to grab their attention. A good Fact Sheet says: “Read me. I’m a painless way to get acquainted with an issue.” (Anything long and complicated may not just be ignored, it can be counter-productive.)

Fact Sheets can do many things:
- identify your group with a particular issue;
- set out facts -- key statistics relating to a problem, issue, or group;
- provide Answers to commonly-asked Questions (Fact Sheets can use a Q&A format);
- set out information using graphics or charts;
- inform, persuade, educate (e.g., about a legislative proposal or budget request);
- make an argument for a particular course of action.

Good Fact Sheets rely on format...
Nothing over 1 or 2 pages;
No long sentences or wordy paragraphs;
Something easy to read, with sub-heads, “bullets,” and possibly graphics; and
Lay-out that carries the eye from basic facts to logical conclusions or the “pitch,”

   As well as content...
Your most compelling, most useful statistics;
Information arrayed to “make an argument,” targeted to a particular audience;
Homey examples, or simple ways to convey complicated points;
Reflecting careful thought about the audience, and what facts will work best with them;

Drawing a conclusion or suggesting something the reader can do,

...To make a point.

In Short: good Fact Sheets include most or all of the following:
- Basic definition(s),
- basic statistics, and
- basic information,
- organized to draw a conclusion or invite the reader to take some action, plus...
- the name/address/telephone number and contact person of the group responsible.
Sample Documents

Model Charter for a Public Policy Committee

A. Mission

It is the mission of the Public Policy Committee to develop a sound Public Policy Agenda to be approved by the Board of Directors that reflects member needs and to design a strategy to implement it.

B. Purpose

The Public Policy Committee is constituted in order to:

• Analyze public policies, issues, and programs affecting the nonprofit sector and children and families in light of the actual and potential impact on children and families and on the service field;

• Recommend legislative strategies and action, where appropriate, to strengthen and protect the agency’s interests and those of its members and clients and to achieve the implementation of policy positions;

• Consult with members and state-related entities in framing public policy priorities;

• Work to strengthen the agency’s capacity to assist partner agencies in protecting their interests and those of families at the federal, state and local levels;

• Cultivate relationships and make aware about its priorities key legislative and executive government leaders and recognize their efforts to help children and families;

• Organize effective efforts for the agency to undertake action in pursuit of public policy goals.

• Identify emerging policy issues and assist the staff in developing appropriate responses.

• Mobilize agency Board members in pursuit of public policy goals when appropriate.

C. Responsibilities

1. The agency public policy staff has the basic responsibility to monitor public policy developments, conduct research and inform the Committee of critical issues and opportunities which may impact or threaten children and families or affect the ability of the agency to serve the community.

2. The Public Policy Committee may recommend the establishment or appoint specific task forces or work groups to assist the board and staff in creating policy guidelines around particular or emerging policy issues.
Appendix I

D. Terms

The Committee will consist of _____ members including agency volunteers and staff, leaders, policy staff or grassroots advocates. Members serve one to three year staggered terms with one third of the new members being appointed each year. The Committee meets at least three times per year. Intermediate teleconference meetings may be held as policy issues require.
The following draft Job Description for a Member of the Board of Directors of a nonprofit corporation could be enriched by adding a statement (9) that articulates the civic engagement opportunities available to them. The suggested paragraph is in **bold**.

Our intent is not to prescribe what should be included in a typical job description for a Board member but rather to point out the possibilities when recruiting new Board members to add a component to your current job descriptions in order to facilitate strengthening the advocacy potential of an agency.

**Job Description: Member of the Board of Directors**

General Powers. The affairs of the agency/corporation shall be managed by its Board of Directors between meetings of its members, which shall act with due regard to the cooperative nature of the corporation and in conformity with such policies and recommendations as may be adopted by the Members in accordance with the corporation by-laws.

The powers and responsibilities of the Board shall include:

1. Hiring the president.
2. Seeing to the required evaluations of the corporation.
3. Electing members.
4. Allocating the resources of the corporation.
5. Raising funds for the corporation.
6. Forming and overseeing the activities of the committees of the Board.
7. Implementing the basic program policy decisions of the membership.
8. Making recommendations to the Membership on matters of concern to them, such as official resolutions of the corporation, major program policies, and the dues formula.
9. **Collaboration in the framing and implementation of the public policy agenda of the agency.**
10. Members serve for _____-year terms.

The board shall exercise the foregoing powers, and its authority generally, in conformity with all other applicable provisions of the agency’s by-laws.
Appendix I

**Issue Brief**

**Mental Health Parity**

**The Alliance for Children and Families’ Recommendations:**

- Congress should pass comprehensive, mental and behavioral health parity legislation during the second season of the 109th Congress that expands and builds upon the 1996 Mental Health Parity Act.

**Issue Background**

The Mental Health Parity Act (MHPA) of 1996 sunseted on September 30, 2001. This federal law prohibits discriminatory annual and lifetime dollar caps for mental health benefits as compared to medical and surgical benefits. The Act has imposed minimal costs to employers and health plans. However, the General Accounting Office in a recent report found that 87% of complying health plans have evaded the spirit of the law by replacing dollar limits with arbitrary limits on inpatient days and outpatient visits.

**The Impact of Mental Health Parity on those with Mental Illness**

*According to the Surgeon General’s Report on Mental Health, about 20 percent of the U.S. population are affected by mental disorders during a given year.*

About 20 percent of children are estimated to have mental disorders with at least mild functional impairment. Over 50 million adults suffer from mental or substance abuse disorders annually. The National Institute of Mental Health has shown that success rates for treatment of disorders such as schizophrenia (60%), depression (70-80%) and panic disorder (70-90%) surpass those of other medical conditions (heart disease, for example, has a treatment success rate of 45-50%).

**Parity in Mental Illness Coverage Can Save Money**

Providing equal coverage for all illnesses makes good economic sense; when mental illnesses go untreated, costs begin to escalate.

*The National Institute of Mental Health estimates that the annual cost of untreated mental illnesses exceeds $300 billion, primarily due to productivity losses of $150 billion (missed work days and premature death), health care costs of $70 billion, and societal costs (increased use of the criminal justice system and social welfare benefits) of $80 billion.*
Providing Parity for Mental Illness is Affordable

A growing body of research and actual industry experiences indicate that parity can be implemented without substantially increasing premiums.

The National Mental Health Advisory Council, in its 2000 final report to Congress, estimates an approximate 1.4% increase in total health insurance premium costs when parity is implemented.

Since implementation of North Carolina’s state employees’ parity law in 1992, mental health payments, as a portion of total health payments, decreased from 6.4% to 3.4% in FY 1996. This represents a 47% reduction in costs. During the same time period, there was a 64% reduction in hospital days paid by the State Employees Health Plan for mental illness (NC State Health Plan Office).

Why Do We Need Mental Health Parity Legislation Enacted into Law?

While the enactment of the Mental Health Parity Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-204) was an important step toward ending discrimination against individuals with mental illnesses, the federal law is limited in scope and application because it only applies to mental health annual or lifetime cost limits, not to substance abuse, copayments, deductibles, or inpatient/outpatient treatment limits.

On March 15, 2001, Senators Pete Domenici (R-NM) and Paul Wellstone (D-MN) introduced the Mental Health Equitable Treatment Act of 2001, S. 543. This legislation mirrors the already existing Federal Employees Health Benefit Program (FEHBP) parity benefit by proposing to expand existing law by addressing limits on deductibles, coinsurance, co-payments, other cost sharing, and limitations on the total amount that may be paid with respect to benefits under the plan or health insurance coverage. The Federal Employees Health Benefit Program (FEHBP) implemented full parity benefits to its 9 million beneficiaries on January 1, 2001.

Representative Marge Roukema (R-NJ) introduced the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Parity Amendments of 2001, H.R. 162 which was referred to the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Health. The bill proposes to extend full parity to those who are covered by mental health or substance abuse plans. The only significant difference between S. 543 and H.R. 162 is in the area of substance abuse treatment. S. 543 would not apply to substance abuse treatment, whereas H.R. 162 would mandate parity for substance abuse treatment.
There is strong support in Congress for building upon and extending the 1996 Mental Health Parity Act. S. 543 passed the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee unanimously on September 6, 2001. The Senate also passed the Domenici-Wellstone Amendment to the FY 2002 Labor, Health, and Human Services and Education Appropriations Bill (H.R. 3061) by a voice vote on October 30, 2001. The major difference between the Domenici-Wellstone Amendment and S. 543 was the effective date of the law. S. 543 would have taken effect on January 1, 2002, and the Domenici–Wellstone Amendment would have taken effect on January 1, 2003. Although the Conference Committee did not include the Domenici-Wellstone Amendment in the final compromise version of the bill, a one year extension of the existing 1996 Mental Health Parity Act was enacted.
Alert on Health Savings Accounts and their Impact on EAP Providers

Rising healthcare costs create many concerns for families and individuals that struggle to find ways to pay for health services. For some the answer has come in the form of Health Savings Accounts (HSAs), which arose from Medicare legislation passed in 2003. These personal accounts allow individuals and/or their employers to deposit money for future medical expenses, and these funds are not subject to taxation. Funds in the account carry over annually, and they remain under the control of the individual regardless of whether or not a person changes jobs. In order for an individual to be eligible for these accounts, he or she must be covered by a High Deductible Health Plan (HDHP). These plans have a minimum deductible of $1,000 for individuals or $2,000 for a family and annual out-of-pocket costs cannot exceed $5,000 for individuals or $10,000 for families. High Deductible Health Plans can result in higher out-of-pocket expenses if care is received outside of the plan’s network, and first dollar coverage (no deductible) applies only to preventive care. In order to be eligible for an HSA, an individual cannot qualify for Medicare or be claimed as a dependent on anyone’s income tax returns.

The current concern with HSAs is that there is a stipulation that the individual must not be covered by other health insurance plans. The Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA) states that while this does not apply to injury, accident, disability, dental, vision, or long term care plans, it is unclear if eligibility for an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) would make a person ineligible for a Health Savings Account. If EAPs are classified as not deductible health plans, then an EAP recipient would not be eligible for an HSA. However, if EAPs are not classified as such, then analysts believe there is no problem with an individual obtaining a Health Savings Account. Language on HSAs is in the Internal Revenue Service Code of 1986, part VII of subchapter B of chapter 1, section 223, and there is a provision within that allows for a “safe harbor” if the preventive care deductible has not been met. Thus, while HDHPs can provide preventive care benefits with a deductible below the minimum annual level (or no deductible at all), section 223 does not require this type of scenario. Because of this ambiguity, the Internal Revenue Service at the Department of the Treasury is seeking comments concerning what the appropriate standard for preventive care should be, and to what extent (if any) benefits provided by Employee Assistance Programs should be included in this standard of preventive care.

Obviously, the financial incentives of HSAs will make them an attractive and popular option for those who qualify. Because of this, the future of Employee Assistance Programs and those who administer them would be uncertain if the EAPs are not classified in a way that allows employees to take advantage of both plans. The Employee Assistance Professionals Association has prepared information on the effects of the proposed actions by Treasury which can be found at http://www.eapassn.org/public/pages/index.cfm?pageid=677.

It is for this reason that action must be taken by May 28, 2004 to ensure that the U.S. Department of the Treasury protects the EAPs. If you wish to submit your concerns to policymakers, please send comments to:

CC:PA:LPD:PR (Notice 2004-2)
Room 5203, Internal Revenue Service
POB 7604
Ben Franklin Station
Washington, DC 20044

Because of the time constraints we would prefer that you e-mail your comments to the following address: Notice.2004.2.Comments@irs.counsel.treas.gov

Please also send us a copy of your comments at policy@alliance1.org
Appendix I

Legislative Action Center

Action Alert

Oppose Restrictions on Targeted Case Management

On Thursday, November 3, the Senate passed a budget reconciliation bill that makes major cuts in human services programs, including Medicaid targeted case management (TCM). Beginning November 7, the House will vote on its final budget reconciliation package, which includes the same provisions. The targeted case management provisions would disqualify the use of Medicaid funds for TCM if there are “other third parties liable to pay for such services” without regard for whether those other programs are legally available or adequate to pay for TCM services. For example, TCM for some children in foster care can be funded under Title IV-E, but the funding cannot be used for children who are not eligible for IV-E based on the 1996 Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) criteria. Under the Senate reconciliation provisions, the existence of Title IV-E could prevent the use of any Medicaid TCM funds for even those children who are not IV-E eligible and therefore cannot legitimately receive services under that program. States would have to bear the burden of providing case management services that cannot be covered under these other potentially “liable” programs, or would have to make the decision to cut these services that are so desperately needed.

Now the bill will go into conference for the House and Senate to agree on a final version. Please urge your Senators to oppose these provisions in the final reconciliation conference bill, and urge your Representatives to vote no on the provisions in the House bill. Tell them to preserve targeted case management for vulnerable populations.

Your Message

This system requires that you provide your name and contact information. This information will not be used for any purpose other than to identify you to the recipient.

http://capwiz.com/alliance1/mail/oneclick_compose/?alertid=8201706
Appendix I

Oppose Restrictions on Targeted Services

Optional text to House: (edit or add your own text)

As a member of the Alliance for Children and Families and an advocate for services for vulnerable children and adults, I ask you to oppose the targeted case management provisions of the House budget reconciliation bill. These provisions would disqualify the use of Medicaid funds for TCM if there are "other third parties liable to pay for such services" without regard for whether those other programs are legally available or adequate to pay for TCM services. For example, TCM for some children in foster care can be funded under Title IV-E, but the funding cannot be used for children who are not eligible for IV-E based on the 1996 Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) criteria. Under the reconciliation provisions, the existence of Title IV-E could prevent the use of any Medicaid TCM funds for even those children who are not IV-E eligible and therefore cannot legitimately receive services under (Tip: Cutting-and-pasting? Save as plain text first.)

Optional text to Senate: (edit or add your own text)

As a member of the Alliance for Children and Families and an advocate for services for vulnerable children and adults, I ask you to oppose the targeted case management provisions of the reconciliation bill passed by the Senate on November 3. These provisions would disqualify the use of Medicaid funds for TCM if there are "other third parties liable to pay for such services" without regard for whether those other programs are legally available or adequate to pay for TCM services. For example, TCM for some children in foster care can be funded under Title IV-E, but the funding cannot be used for children who are not eligible for IV-E based on the 1996 Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) criteria. Under the Senate reconciliation provisions, the existence of Title IV-E could prevent the use of any Medicaid TCM funds for even those children who are not IV-E eligible and (Tip: Cutting-and-pasting? Save as plain text first.)

Your Closing:

Sincerely,
July 15, 2004

The Honorable Rob Portman
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
Fax: 202-225-1992

The Honorable Danny K. Davis
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
Fax: 202-225-5641

Dear Messrs. Portman and Davis:

The Alliance for Children and Families wishes to express its gratitude to you for your efforts on the Second Chance Act of 2004 (HR 4676). This legislation is an important step in addressing the problems of prisoner re-entry in America. Given that approximately two-thirds of the 650,000 prisoners who will be released this year are likely to return to prison within a few years, it is essential that services be provided to these individuals. There are significant financial ($30 billion to house offenders in state facilities) and societal costs related to public safety associated with ignoring the problem of prisoner re-entry, and we commend your initiative on HR 4676.

The Alliance and its 320 members are very interested in this issue. Some of them offer programs to support the rehabilitation of violent offenders. In fact, we have organized a panel to address prisoner re-entry and describe programs working to integrate former inmates at a regional public policy summit our members will take part in on October 6-7 in Philadelphia. We have also posted a CAPWIZ alert on our Web site urging our members to support the bill.

The Alliance for Children and Families is a nonprofit membership association representing 320 child- and family-serving organizations in North America. Member organizations provide an array of community-based programs and services to all generations and serve close to 8 million people each year in more than 6,700 communities.

Again, the Alliance thanks you for your work on prisoner re-entry issues and for sponsoring HR 4676. We look forward to working with your respective offices on this bill. Please feel free to contact me at (202) 429-0400, ext. 15 or via e-mail at cvotaw@alliance1.org.

Sincerely,

Carmen Delgado Votaw
Senior Vice President, Public Policy
Sample Press Release

Release Date: August 2, 2004
Contact:
Peter Goldberg, President & CEO
800 221-3726 Ext. 3600

Alliance Nonprofit Engagement and Fund Development Initiatives Receive New Funding

Milwaukee, WI -- Two Alliance for Children and Families initiatives that are helping human service agencies across the country build stronger advocacy engagement and fund development programs have received grants that will enable the Alliance to provide training and information to nonprofit boards of directors.

The Alliance for Children and Families is the nation’s largest association serving private, nonprofit child-and family-serving agencies.

The goal of the first initiative, "Building Community Voices," is to provide the board leadership of nonprofit human service agencies with the tools and information they need to engage in mission-based advocacy. Funded by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the program’s goal is to train nonprofit directors and officers and other agency volunteers to become stronger and more sophisticated advocates for children, families, and communities. A previous grant from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund underwrote an Alliance study on the perceived barriers to effective mission-based advocacy within the nonprofit community and the issuance of a series of recommendations for bypassing those barriers.

The second initiative, supported by a grant from The Hearst Foundation, Inc., continues the Alliance’s resource development program begun in 1998. That initiative laid the groundwork for a fund development model that, according to an Alliance research study, has increased revenue from philanthropic sources by an average of 40% for agencies participating in the Alliance’s Resource Development Network.

The new grant enables the Alliance to plan and conduct training sessions across the country for nonprofit organizations to equip them with fund development best practices and to engage them in a national network of ongoing support. As with the advocacy effort, this current fund development effort is centered on volunteer board engagement and the critical role board members play in successful fund development.

Nonprofits seeking more information on how they can avail themselves of these efforts can contact Tom Harvey, Alliance vice president of membership, at tharvey@alliance1.org, or by calling 800 221-3726. More information on the Alliance is available at www.alliance1.org. Alliance members provide a wide range of services in more than 6,800 communities in the United States and Canada.
Appendix I

Testimony of Dr. Curtis C. Mooney, on behalf of the Alliance for Children and Families, before the Subcommittee on Human Resources of the Ways and Means Committee

Hearing on Oversight of Child Welfare Programs

January 28, 2004

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Subcommittee, I am testifying here today on behalf of the Alliance for Children and Families, an organization of which my nonprofit organization is a member. The Alliance for Children and Families is a nonprofit membership association representing 320 child and family serving organizations in North America. Member organizations, such as DePelchin Children’s Center, provide an array of community-based programs and services to all generations, and serve close to 8 million people each year in more than 6,700 communities.

Motivated by a vision of a healthy society and strong communities, the Alliance’s mission is to strengthen the capacities of North America’s nonprofit child and family serving organizations to serve and to advocate for children, families and communities.

I have spent the past 28 years working at four agencies in three states with children who have been abused and neglected. I am a social worker by training with a Masters in Social Work from Washington University in St. Louis and a Ph.D. in Social Work Administration from the University of Texas in Arlington, Texas. For the last 7.5 years I have served as the President and CEO of DePelchin Children’s Center in Houston, Texas. One of Houston’s oldest charities, DePelchin provides some 30 different programs in the three broad areas of a) prevention of child abuse, b) children’s mental health services, and c) child welfare services including foster care, residential treatment and adoption services. My agency provides services to over 20,000 individuals annually. We are funded via United Way, individual contributions, state and federal grants, and contracts with the state of Texas for child welfare services and health insurers for mental health services.

By holding this hearing, the Subcommittee has taken up a timely topic that merits our collective attention. There is a growing consensus among national advocacy groups, child welfare providers, as well as many state officials and policymakers that the current mechanism for funding the nation’s child welfare system needs revision, and must be revamped. Child welfare funding has eroded, and scant attention has been paid to maintaining adequate funding for children in the foster care system, who often have severe physical and psychological needs. It is imperative that any proposed changes promote and invest in increased prevention and early intervention, while assuring the protection, permanency and wellbeing of our country’s most vulnerable children.

The Alliance believes that the following major topics need to be reflected in discussions that lead to the framing of meaningful child welfare reform:
• Through experience, trauma research, and neuroscience, we now have a clearer understanding that child safety cannot be measured by physical safety alone. There must be a common definition for child safety that is consistent throughout the states which includes not only physical safety but behavioral and emotional wellbeing as well. It should be noted that research has shown that neglect in boys is more harmful to their developing brain than physical abuse.

• Any refinancing of the child welfare system must respond and be responsive to every child regardless of where a child lives. We must assure that standards and expectations for child welfare outcomes do not get reduced in large urban (often-poor) areas across the country. Quality standards in relation to caseload size, supervisory ratios, and minimum standards of practice should be funded and expected for all children.

• Safety, permanency, and wellbeing are often only considered as ultimate system outcomes. These measures should mark a child’s experience in the child welfare system and should be expected and achieved in every day practice. To achieve this we must have a system that invests in and expects quality and places the highest value on assuring adequate resources for maintaining reimbursement rates to assure highly competent and professional staff services and placement resources.

• Prevention, family-based services and successful reunification of families should be our highest priority. It should be noted that to build the necessary capacity needed in these areas will take a sustained one-time effort to mobilize additional resources over at least 3-5 years before the system will begin to see a steady and real decrease of children in placement and a realization of those savings for reinvestment in the front-end of the system.

• We must recognize and respond to the often serious and severe physical, behavioral, and emotional needs of children in the system today. The Federal Government should continue an entitlement funding mechanism for children with these special needs, to ensure that family centered services, including residential care and treatment, are available and effective. Too often, these children experience repeated failed services and placements due to lack of quality assessment and placements that do not meet their needs.

• Currently, the federal commitment to facilitating a shared partnership of research institutions, federal and state agencies and community-based service providers is outstanding. Any system changes must continue the incentives states now have to conduct research and evaluation.

• The child welfare system, including the agencies holding city and state contracts for provider services, must be funded to possess the internal capacities for continuous quality assurance and improvement. The federal Child and Family Service Reviews are but a starting point for achieving quality assurance within the system. The ability for child welfare systems to improve themselves should not be
Appendix I

based on the latest high-profile case or audit. Instead, a portion of federal and state funding should be dedicated to internal quality improvement within child welfare organizations.

- In order for a child welfare system to be successful, we must interact on a daily basis through both policy and funding with multiple federal agencies and funding streams as they play out at the local level. Both the federal government and state governments need to clearly identify these agencies and funding streams and assure that we are working together to adopt and achieve a common set of child and family-centered outcomes and values that will guide them in their daily work and accountabilities. For instance, it is time that Medicaid and the child welfare system work together in a concerted way to assure that the unique physical and behavioral health needs of children in the child welfare system are being met.

- The deteriorating state of the child welfare workforce can no longer be ignored, and in fact is at a crisis point needing both federal and state response. Adequate education and training, continued competence, quality of supervision, pay and benefits of critical front-line staff must be addressed. The Alliance supports legislation such as Representative Cardin’s bill (H.R. 1534) that works to reduce the many substantial barriers to maintaining a qualified and effective human services workforce.

- It is time that we address the clear connection between poverty and family violence. Safety, permanency, and wellbeing of children must include a family’s ability to assure the needs of a child can be met and work with these families to improve their economic security. Since we now know clearly that there is a correlation between the stresses of poverty and the neglect and abuse of children, these families simply are at a higher risk.

- The outcomes of the IV-E Demonstration Projects and Waivers should guide the way for child welfare reform. Before significant reform policies can be crafted, an analysis of those states using flexible funds with current IV-E dollars should be conducted. The challenges and lessons learned from these states can be used effectively to revamp the current child welfare system to better serve children, families and communities. In the future, once a demonstration program has proven success through outcomes and cost neutrality, all states should be able to implement the program without a waiver.

Alliance Key Concerns Regarding the Administration’s Flexible Funding Proposal

The Administration has attempted to respond to the needs of the child welfare system with a proposal that would dismantle the current entitlement system and restructure the Title IV-E foster care program. While legislation has not yet been introduced, many aspects of the Administration’s proposal have been revealed through congressional testimony and public conversations with Administration officials.
The Alliance for Children and Families and its member agencies have many concerns about reform of the child welfare financing mechanism. Any such reform must provide states with guaranteed federal funds and a long-term partnership necessary to both meet the varied needs of vulnerable children and their families as well as systematically reform a system long overlooked by the federal government. Service delivery systems as complex and critical as child welfare cannot be reformed overnight by simply extending flexibility to a dwindling pool of resources.

The “look back” provision for foster care streamlines the IV-E process, but maintaining the provision for Adoption Assistance accomplishes just the opposite. An assessment of the child’s household income at removal is required at time of adoption; a IV-E determination would have to be completed regardless. If the eligibility determinations remain a part of the foster care process, the “look back” must be corrected to reflect current Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) eligibility standards. If eligibility determinations are eliminated from foster care, the “look back” provision should be eliminated from adoption determinations as well.

State flexibility, while desirable, transfers a greater share of responsibility and risk for the child welfare population to the states. The partnership between the federal government and states in providing services to abused and neglected children must be maintained and states should be discouraged from diminishing their investment in the child welfare system once receiving federal dollars. Additionally, Congress should create appropriate and minimum standards in areas such as caseload size, and give guidance to participating states to ensure the progress of child welfare reform. A continued federal match opportunity for states will leverage additional resources from state legislatures.

Conclusion

As a provider of services in Texas for many years, and as a representative of the Alliance’s 320 nonprofit family service agencies, I can tell you from experience that the nonprofit sector takes very seriously our mission to provide service to all people in need. However, we are increasingly finding that our contracts with state and local agencies do not provide adequate funding for the expectations for which they carry. We stand ready to be full partners with you, the state, and our communities but that partnership must go both ways. As an independent sector, we have demonstrated the knowledge, experience, and commitment to work with you as a partner in developing any changes necessary in policy, minimum standards and practices in the child welfare system.

The Alliance for Children and Families would welcome the continuing opportunity to share the voices of America’s service providers with the Subcommittee as it deliberates on the child welfare system.

I would like to thank the Subcommittee for giving me the opportunity to testify, and would be happy to answer any questions at this time.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bill No. By Subject</th>
<th>Sponsor Party [Number of Co-sponsors]</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HR 8</td>
<td>Rep Kenny C. Hulshof, R (MO-9) [206]</td>
<td>To make the repeal of the estate tax permanent</td>
<td>Passed/agreed to in House. Placed on Senate Legislative Calendar under General Orders</td>
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<tr>
<td>HR 22</td>
<td>Rep John M. McHugh, R (NY-23) [112]</td>
<td>To reform the postal laws of the United States</td>
<td>Passed House; Received in Senate</td>
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<td>HR 27</td>
<td>Rep Howard P. McKeon, R (CA-25) [15]</td>
<td>To enhance the workforce investment system of the Nation by strengthening one-stop career centers, providing for more effective governance arrangements, promoting access to a more comprehensive array of employment, training, and related services, establishing a targeted approach to serving youth, and improving performance accountability, and for other purposes.</td>
<td>Passed; Referred to Senate HELP Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR 95</td>
<td>Rep. Paul Gillmor, R (OH-5) [2]</td>
<td>To establish a National sex offender registration database, and for other purposes</td>
<td>Subcommittee Hearings held</td>
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<tr>
<td>HR 127</td>
<td>Rep Stephanie Tubbs Jones, D (OH-11) [16]</td>
<td>To provide loan forgiveness to social workers who work for child protective agencies</td>
<td>Referred to the Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness</td>
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<tr>
<td>HR 151</td>
<td>Rep. Robert Menendez, D (NJ-13)</td>
<td>To ensure that all college students and their families have the tools and resources to adequately save for, finance, and repay their postsecondary and post-baccalaureate expenses.</td>
<td>Referred to the Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR 235</td>
<td>Rep Walter Jones, R (NC-3) [9]</td>
<td>To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to protect the religious free exercise and free speech rights of churches and other houses of worship.</td>
<td>Referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR 240</td>
<td>Rep Deborah Pryce, R (OH-15) [17]</td>
<td>To reauthorize and improve the program of block grants to States for temporary assistance for needy families, improve access to quality child care, and for other purposes.</td>
<td>Referred to Committee on Ways and Means, and in addition to the Committees on Energy and Commerce, Education and the Workforce, Agriculture, and Financial Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>HR 244</td>
<td>Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee, D (TX-18)</td>
<td>To create a separate DNA database for violent predators against children, and for other purposes.</td>
<td>Subcommittee Hearings held</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR 254</td>
<td>Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee, D (TX-18)</td>
<td>To provide for the establishment of a task force within the Bureau of Justice Statistics to gather information about, study, and report to the Congress regarding, incidents of abandonment of</td>
<td>Referred to the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Alliance for Children and Families, Legislative Tracking Chart,
#### 109th Congress: Bills in the Senate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bill No.</th>
<th>By Subject</th>
<th>Sponsor [Number of Co-sponsors]</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S 6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sen Rick Santorum (R-PA) [3]</td>
<td>A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide permanent family tax relief, to reauthorize and improve the program of block grants to States for temporary assistance for needy families and to improve access to quality child care, and to provide incentives for charitable contributions by individuals and businesses (includes the non itemizer deduction), to improve the public disclosure of activities of exempt organizations, and to enhance the ability of low-income Americans to gain financial security by building assets, and for other purposes.</td>
<td>Referred to Committee on Finance</td>
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<tr>
<td>S 9</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sen Michael B. Enzi (R-WY) [2]</td>
<td>A bill to improve American competitiveness in the global economy by improving and strengthening Federal education and training programs, and for other purposes</td>
<td>Referred to the Committee on Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 14</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sen Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) [13]</td>
<td>A bill to provide fair wages for America's workers, to create new jobs through investment in America, to provide for fair trade and competitiveness, and for other purposes</td>
<td>Referred to Committee on Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 16</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sen Edward Kennedy (D-MA) [17]</td>
<td>A bill to reduce the cost of quality health care coverage and improve the availability of health care coverage for all Americans</td>
<td>Referred to Committee on Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 20</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sen Harry Reid (D-NV) [22]</td>
<td>A bill to expand access to preventive health care services that help reduce unintended pregnancy, reduce the number of abortions, and improve access to women's health care.</td>
<td>Referred to Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 90</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-HI)</td>
<td>To amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for the establishment of a National Center for Social Work Research.</td>
<td>Read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 94</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sen Richard G. Lugar (R-IN) [4]</td>
<td>A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for a charitable deduction for contributions of food inventory.</td>
<td>Referred to the Committee on Finance</td>
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<tr>
<td>S 114</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sen John F. Kerry (D-Mass) [6]</td>
<td>A bill to amend titles XIX and XXI of the Social Security Act to ensure that every uninsured child in America has health insurance coverage, and for other purposes.</td>
<td>Referred to the Committee on Finance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Advocacy Tools

Another value added service for our members brought to you in partnership with Innovative Options.

Are you able to talk to legislators in the geography that is most meaningful to them – their district?

Innovative Options provides your agency the ability to speak legislators’ language and mobilize your advocates. Our Advocacy Package provides an external tool and internal tool for advocacy efforts. Legislative Maps, the external tool, show your data in the geography that matters most to legislators – their district.

http://ozanam.org/innovativeoptions

How to read: Each Senator district is shown in a different color. The labels show the district number, senator name, and summary information for Agency A. The summary information covers: number of clients served, number of agency board members; and number of Agency A employees.
Legislative Reports, the internal tool, provide you the ability to quickly mobilize. Each advocate receives a summary of their legislators which contains the legislator’s contact information. The person in charge of advocacy for your agency receives a report for each contracted legislative body that summarizes where your connections are found. For more information on how to show your agency’s impact contact Beth Dawson at 816.508.3573.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: Victor Vahn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address: 3109 NW 107th Terrace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House District: 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room Number: 405B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitol Address: Missouri House of Representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City State Zip Code: Jefferson City, MO 65101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone: (573) 751-1470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:jerry.nolte@house.mo.gov">jerry.nolte@house.mo.gov</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee: Appropriations – Health, Mental Health and Social Services Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism Committee</td>
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<tr>
<th>Name: Jerry Nolte</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>House Party: R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Address:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City State Zip Code: Gladstone MO 64118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fax:</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: Luann Ralston</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senate District: 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room Number: 419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitol Address: State Capitol Building</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Missouri House Committee

**Committee:** Appropriations – Health, Mental Health and Social Services Committee

- **District:** 33
- **Representative:** Jerry Nolte
- **Board:** Cathy Baker
- **Board:** Mary Kline
- **Board:** Victor Vaughn

- **District:** 50
- **Representative:** Michael R. Brown
- **Board:** Lyle Smith

**Committee:** Budget Committee

- **District:** 50
- **Representative:** Michael R. Brown
- **Board:** Lyle Smith

**Committee:** Children and Families Committee

- **District:** 35
- **Representative:** Doug Ervin
Printing Note: You can print the entire manual from the TOC except for Appendix A, B, and D. For these appendices you will need to go to the linked file and select print from there.