



# Toward a Healthy Future

Promoting the Health, Welfare, and Safety of Chicago  
Individuals, Families, and Communities



Department of Public Health  
"Providing the Prescription for a Healthy City"

## Developing Advocacy Plans, Strategies, and Tactics

Advocacy is a set of skills employed to influence policy— private or public, local, state, federal, or institutional. To advocate is to work in support of a particular issue or cause. Advocacy involves education and action, directed at changing the policies, positions, or programs of any type of institution. Advocacy consists of organized efforts and actions to influence decisions. Advocates may promote their opinions through actions such as mass mobilization, civil action, elections, lobbying, negotiations, bargaining, and court actions.

### Developing an Advocacy Plan

Prior to developing strategies, advocates need to clearly define and articulate the policy issue, the proposed recommendation, the affected population, and the current and potential resources available to support the policy change need to be determined. By clarifying these aspects, advocates will be able to identify possible supporters and opponents, which will help in building coalitions and preparing for possible resistance.

It is important not to just criticize the current policy, but to propose recommendations that will improve the situation. Advocates must consider the current political situation, including personal and institutional positions.

Oftentimes, organizations that have similar policy agendas establish coalitions around specific advocacy issues. Coalitions that are effective are able to involve a diverse mix of organizations and individuals, thereby demonstrating the broad-based appeal of their advocacy issue. Policy and decision-makers are more likely to seriously consider the

requests of multi-sector coalitions that have a wide influence in several areas and that represent many populations. A coalition with a diverse membership provides increased access to resources, contacts, and networking that can prove helpful for long-term advocacy work. While organizations may have different perspectives on the effect of the policy and how best to advocate for policy change, a strong coalition will incorporate these differences to develop a comprehensive plan for advocacy that will be agreeable to all.

### Strategies

A strategy is a plan of action devised to achieve a goal through specific tactics. Advocates generally develop multiple strategies to ensure a comprehensive approach. When creating strategies, advocates need to assess the current situation related to the policy area, clarify what they want to change, and determine how to facilitate this change.

### Strategies:

- Identify allies and opponents who can influence the outcome
- Identify advisors to decision makers
- Reduce the influence of opponents
- Identify effective tactics for each audience/policy maker
- Determine effective timing for tactics

### Tactics

Tactics are the activities employed to implement a strategy. Ideas for tactics often emerge from the development of the strategy or through planning of how the strategy will be achieved. When devising tactics, advocates need to consider the likelihood of reaching the target audience and motivating them to take action. Many times a combination of tactics is used to reach the target audience through multi-

ple avenues. This helps to saturate the audience with the message and reinforces their need to take action.

For each tactic, advocates need to consider:

- What policy making arenas, institutions, offices and individuals do you need to target, and why?
- What are the formal and informal policy making processes in the arena you are targeting?
- What are the particular perspectives, circumstances, and constraints with which your targeted policy makers have to work?
- What is being targeted: Legislation? Administrative rulings or regulations? Judicial decisions?
- What points of access and leverage do you and your organization have regarding key policy makers?
- Where in the policy making process should you make your intervention? Should the public be a target audience?

Advocates need to clarify the message and what action they want to occur as a result of the message:

- What is the specific message you want to deliver?
- How can it best be shaped for the respective audiences targeted?
- Who are the most credible messengers for the various audiences you are targeting?
- How are you going to get them involved?
- What do these messengers need to convey the information effectively and confidently?

To facilitate action, tactics can utilize influential resources, such as:

- Expert reports and opinions— to demonstrate that the recommended policy is supported by scientific knowledge
- Influence of allies— to utilize past collaborative relationships to garner support, with understanding that their support may be reciprocated at a later

date.

- Moral arguments from community leaders, churches, and other sources— to appeal to the moralistic and humanitarian point of view.

Tactics to address legislation include:

- Making contact with policy makers
  - Call/phone tree
  - Write letters/emails
  - Make a personal visit
  - Present testimony
- Speak at a town meeting
- Demonstration/Vigil
- Get press coverage
  - Issue a press release
  - Submit a letter to the editor
  - Submit an op-ed piece
  - Arrange an editorial board meeting
  - Request an interview on radio and television talk shows
  - Hold a news conference