Advocating for the Health Needs of Rural Communities:
Using the most effective strategies with the right audiences

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Policy

- Process by which elected officials debate and enact laws that govern and guide state policy from agriculture to zoology.
- Happens at the state, local, and federal level.
Mechanics of the Legislative Process

- Two distinct processes are happening simultaneously in the Capitol. Both are key to those in public health/human services.
  - Policy
  - Appropriations
Passing Legislation is Only the First Step…

• Implementation
  - Writing the Rules and Regulations
  - Executive Branch- Departments/Commissions/Individuals
  - State or Local Government
Mechanics of Implementation

- Agriculture
- Conservation
- Corrections
- Economic Development
- Elementary & Secondary Education
- Health & Senior Services
- Higher Education
- Insurance

- Labor & Industrial Relations
- Mental Health
- Natural Resources
- Office of Administration
- Public Safety
- Revenue
- Social Services
- Transportation
Advocacy –

What is it & can I do it?

• Individual citizen? Go for it!
• Organization? Consider:
  Type of organization
  Available funding or restricted dollars
  Federal & State Law
  Organizational By-Laws & Leadership
  Political Influences & Tolerance for Risk
### Advocacy –

**What is it & can I do it?**

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Adapted from Alliance for Justice resources, www.afj.org
Unofficial Working Definition of LOBBYING

Trying to influence legislation, including supporting or opposing ballot measures
INSUBSTANTIAL PART TEST

1. Lobbying is an “insubstantial part” of the organization’s activities; no clear definitions

2. Default test

or

501(H) EXPENDITURE TEST

1. One-time election – IRS Form 5768

2. Definitions of lobbying

3. Dollar-based limits

4. Expenditures only

How Much LOBBYING can public charities do?
What is the definition of LOBBYING for organizations using 501(h)?
SPECIAL “LEGISLATOR” RULE
Members of the general public are “legislators”

Ballot Measures
- Ballot Initiatives
- Referenda
- Constitutional amendments
- Bond measures

RAISE YOUR HAND FOR KIDS

DIRECT
Communication
Legislator
Expresses a view about specific legislation

GRASSROOTS
Communication
General public
Expresses a view about specific legislation

Call to action
NOT “LEGISLATORS”

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- School boards
- Planning commissions
- Zoning boards
- Housing authorities
- Sewer and water districts
- Other “special purpose bodies”
Regulations

Executive Orders

Enforcement of Existing Laws

Litigation

NOT LEGISLATION
TELLING TO CONTACT
legislator(s) or

PROVIDING CONTACT INFO,
like phone number, e-mail address,
mailing address, and/or other
contact info of legislator(s) or

PROVIDING MECHANISM
to enable communication
with legislator(s) or

IDENTIFYING
legislator(s)

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Alliance for Justice Training

• MFH offers it 2-4 times per year
• Join Health Policy email list [www.mffh.org](http://www.mffh.org)
• Next AFJ trainings are Oct. 12-13
• Details to come
Advocacy –

How do I get started?

• Be an active, informed voter and organization
• Learn your issue & who can change it
• Define a solution(s) & understand landscape
• Build a relationship with your legislators – before you need anything.
• Be effective in meetings & giving testimony
• Media advocacy
• Don’t recreate the wheel
Advocacy –

Learn your issue & who can change it.

- What laws or rules directly impact your clients, your organization, your interest area? Indirectly?
- What is the source of the policy? What is the process to change it?

Potholes?

Nutrition in Schools?

Missouri Medicaid?
Advocacy –

Define a solution(s) & understand landscape

• **Who** is involved that will…
  - **Take the action** needed (interest of individuals, priorities of the group)
  - **Support** your issue (arguments, actions, resources/organization)
  - **Oppose** your issue (arguments, actions, resources/organization)

• What is the **recent history** of this issue?
Advocacy –

Build a relationship...learn who/what influences them

- **Who is the decision-maker?**
  - Personal & political background conversation
  - Interest in (and knowledge of) this topic

- **How do you know this person?**
Advocacy –

Build a relationship...learn who/what influences them

Influences on a policymaker:

1. Personal
2. Professional/Leadership
3. Community
Community Influences on Legislators

Additional Influences:

Example Here

Example Here

Example Here

Example Here

Example Here

Example Here

Example Here

Example Here

Example Here

Additional Influences:

Example Here

Example Here

Example Here
Advocacy –

Be effective…in a meeting (BEFORE)

- Define a clear goal for the meeting.
- Consider the Person
  - Personal & political knowledge and experience
  - Interest in this topic
- Be thoughtful about who attends, materials you leave behind, location, and time.
- Set an appointment with scheduler/assistant.
Advocacy –

Be effective…in a meeting (BEFORE)

• Think about your issue…
  - Who else is for your issue? What are their arguments, data, etc.?
  - Against? What are their arguments?

• What materials will you need to make your point?

• Political will and timing – How does your issue relate to other “Hot” topics?
Advocacy –

Be effective…in a meeting (DURING)

• Relax!
• Be prompt & flexible (expect the unexpected)
• Be organized & concise
  - Convey who you are, what your agency does
  - Explain why you asked for the meeting
  - Include constituent impact/connections
  - Leave information, include your contact info
• Be truthful: it’s okay to follow up
• Make an ask…
Advocacy –

Be effective…in a meeting (DURING)

The Ask

• It is expected

• Types
  • Show me the money, PLEASE.
  • Vote for my bill, PLEASE.
  • Come to my event, PLEASE.
  • Help me convene a group to . . . PLEASE.
  • Introduce me to the director of the department of issues I care about, PLEASE.
Advocacy –

Be effective…in a meeting (AFTER)

• The meeting is just the starting point
• Longer process of relationship building
• Important dividends over time
• Follow-up is critical
Advocacy –

Be effective…in a meeting (AFTER)

Tips to help with follow up

• The old “I don’t know, I will get back to you” set-up
• “I forgot to tell you about . . .”
• Follow through on your ask
Advocacy –

Be effective… giving testimony

• Brief means brief
  - Aim for a single piece of paper (1-2 pages)
  - If budget permits, use color for emphasis
  - Consider including a relevant graphic
  - Make it easy to read (font, bullet points, margins)
Advocacy –

Be effective… a word on briefs

Things to include:

• Name & and contact information
• Bill number and title
• Issue
• Recommendations

• Issue analysis (background)
• Policy Option(s)
• Discussion
• References
• Identify multiple opportunities that are right for you/your agency to be visible.

• Creating an opportunity for your own event/showcase is a great step to grabbing the stage.
Six Ways to Start Advocacy Work

✓ Meet your legislators
✓ Invite your legislators to an event
✓ Sign up for (a couple) mailing lists for issues you care about
✓ Write a letter, email, tweet, blog post…
✓ Talk about what you know
✓ VOTE
Health Concerns in Rural Missouri

- Health professional workforce
- Transportation
- An aging population
- Oral health
- Mental health
- Financially stressed rural hospitals and clinics
- Technology
- Nutrition, food access, and obesity
Opportunities with MFH

• Advocacy Trainings/Workshops
• Innovation in Public Health Infrastructure
• Health Policy and Advocacy Opportunities
• Reimagining Approaches to Improve Access to Care
• MoCAP

– Jessi LaRose, jlarose@mffh.org
Questions?

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