



Advocating for Change

The purpose of this handout is to define advocacy and outline the four keys to advocacy.

Definitions

- **Advocacy** is **EDUCATION** on an important issue. It is sharing your lived or professional experience or providing information to lawmakers so that they can make informed decisions. Advocacy is limitless.
- **Lobbying** is a **DIRECTIVE** on a specific piece of legislation. It becomes lobbying if it involves these three things: (1) decision makers, (2) actual legislation, and (3) asking for a vote. Lobbying has legal limitations and requirements.

Four Keys to Advocacy

1st Key: Know Your Issue

You are the expert — your lived experiences (personal / professional) give you power:

- Data matters and stories make the difference. Share those that are the most compelling.
- What is the topline message of your issue, and what do you want that person to do about it? (realistic and actionable)
- Share factual information. It is okay if you do not have the answer. You can return with it later.

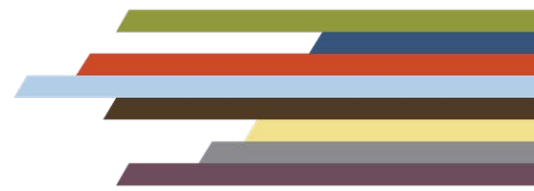
Do your homework:

- What is the background / history of this issue?
- What do supporters / opponents say? Be honest.
- What are the decision makers' beliefs and how can your messaging align with their interests and values?
- Who influences the decision maker(s)? (i.e., affiliations, church, hometowns, etc.)

2nd Key: Get to Know the Process

Know the process:

- Know the “rhythm” of your governing bodies — when do they convene?
- Know standing committees — where will your issue land first?
- Know key deadlines — legislation filing, legislative process, interim schedules.
- Know key position holders in committees and legislative bodies — who holds the power to accomplish what you need done?





- Know that every state and level of government operates differently — find sources to study to get to know the process you will be working through for local, state, and federal government entities.

Sources for Getting to Know Your State Legislatures:

- Arkansas: www.arkleg.state.ar.us
- Oklahoma: www.oklegislature.gov
- Texas: www.capitol.texas.gov
- New Mexico: www.nmlegis.gov
- Louisiana: www.legis.la.gov

3rd Key: Know Your Target

Focus your efforts:

- Identify who and what level of government can solve the problem:
 - Is it an administrative issue?
 - Is it a legislative issue?
 - Is it a school board, city council, county government, state, judicial, or federal issue?

Clarify your goals:

- What do you want the decision maker to do with the information you are sharing?

Build and maintain a relationship with your decision makers:

- Subscribe to their newsletter
- Attend their events
- Request a meeting to introduce yourself; be genuine

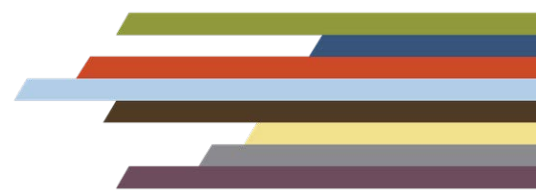
4th Key: Know Your Strategies

Coalition build / mobilize:

- Know your timeline
- There's power in numbers — find out who else is working on it, you do not have to do this alone.

Communicate with key elected officials or agencies:

- In person meeting / inviting lawmakers to your meeting
- Email — the more personal, the better
- Phone
- Letter — the more personal, the better
- Social Media
- Op-Ed / Letter to the Editor





- Public Comment
- Factsheet - easy to read, 2 pages max, include contact info

If the outcome does not reach your intended goal:

- DON'T GIVE UP!
- Evaluate your strategy
- Reassess the tactics
- Reengage with a fresh look
- Do not burn out and do not reinvent the wheel.

