



## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

with Legislators (and their staff)

### WHY?

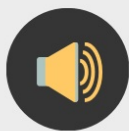


**Direct service alone is not enough...**

"Arguably, the most important U.S. public policies come from nonprofit organizations lobbying for their causes"

– David F. Arons, in *Nonprofit Governance & Management*

### WHAT

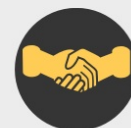


#### Advocacy Defined

Advocacy is any action that speaks in favor of, recommends, argues for a cause, supports or defends, or pleads on behalf of others.

– Alliance for Justice

?



#### "Relationships" Defined

- + Pleasant
- + Effective 2-way communication
- + Mutual trust & respect
- + Mutually beneficial

Adapted from Kansas University Tool Box

# WHO?

Do you know who your legislators are?



Find your Missouri legislators

Find your federal legislators



## Prioritize your relationships

1. Chairs, vice chairs, members of key committees
2. Those important to the issue
3. Legislative champions



## Key influences on a policy maker

1. Personal
2. Professional/leadership
3. Community

## Legislative Staff



Average 1-3 staff per legislator (some part-time)  
+Vary in age, experience, and influence  
+Listed on Legislators web pages  
+Often able to provide more one-on-one time  
+Can provide expertise on specific issues or pieces of legislation

# WHEN?

Timing is everything!



Look up state legislative session.

View congressional calendar

# WHERE?



- + The Capital
- + Local Offices
- + In-District Meetings
- + Campaign Events
- + Town Hall Meetings
- + Host events at your organization

# HOW?

## Before the Meeting:

1. Define your goal
2. Create common bonds
3. Define yourself - you are the expert!



## The First Meeting:

- + A formal appointment
- + Invite them to your agency or community
- + Bring others
- + Start with a call
- + Testify at a hearing



## Remember!

- + Bring stakeholders (board members, families that receive support, etc)
- + Maybe – just maybe – start smaller
- + Investigate hearings and public comment sessions
- + Legislators want to hear from you!
- + Always be eager to win support

## Effective Meetings

- + Clear & concise message
- + Know your issue - pitch!
- + Show your credibility
- + You are the expert

## Invite a policymaker to your agency /event

### Policymaker Benefits

- + Interact with constituents
- + Learn about your issue & your solutions
- + Good publicity
- + Creates additional community connections



### You/Your Agency Benefits

- + Educate Policymaker
- + Strengthen Relationship
- + Crowd Building / Public Relations
- + Media Publicity



## Think Through

- + Who will they meet?
- + What will they do?
  - Speak at an event
  - Present an award
  - Explain to stakeholders
  - Focus group
- + Will they give remarks or meet constituents?



# Maintain the Relationship



- + Thank him/her at the meeting or event & with a follow up
- + Send a note, handwritten is best
- + Continue discussions
- + Share photos
- + Tag them on social media
- + Make them remember you!
- + Keep in touch, put it on your calendar. Do it!

## Challenges

- Term limits (these require more prep work on our part....)
- Competing causes & priorities
- Current political climate
- Coordination between advocacy groups
- Redistricting



## Progress

- Term limits (these require more prep work on our part....)
- Competing causes & priorities
- Current political climate
- Coordination between advocacy groups
- Redistricting



**Together, we can make a difference.**

**Join MACA's vision: A state where all people and communities thrive.**