



The Art of Advocacy

How to Influence Your Elected Officials

Session Objectives

- Understand the difference between lobbying and advocacy
- Learn basic strategies for developing an advocacy plan, connecting with elected leaders and effectively communicating your needs
- Learn about best practices and dos and don'ts in advocacy
- Learn about the resources available and how to use them

Lobbying or Advocacy

- What is lobbying?
- Who lobbies?
- What is advocacy?
- Who can advocate?
- When should we advocate?



Lobbying

- Lobbying is the act of attempting to influence decisions made by officials in the government.
- A lobbyist is an “individual who is paid to communicate with federal public office holders in an attempt to influence government decisions.” (Lobbyists Registration Act)

Advocacy

- Advocacy is the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal.
- An advocate is someone who speaks on behalf of a cause or proposal. The advocate may be an individual or an organization.



Advocacy

- Advocates use every opportunity to support their cause or issue. Advocacy is a process, not an event. It's a marathon, not a sprint.



Road Blocks to Advocacy

- Lack of comfort with the advocacy process
- Don't know where to start
- Don't know where to get help
- Don't feel you are “expert” enough to advocate



Build Your Advocacy Strategy

- Identify the issue - what is your need, concern, or problem to be addressed?
 - Is it a local, state or federal issue?
 - Is it a legislative issue or an administrative one?
 - Who can address the issue for you in the correct venue?

Build Your Advocacy Strategy

- Develop your request – make it clear and succinct, provide a clear rationale and support your request with evidence, statistics, and reports.
- Set goals – what is your desired outcome? What outcomes or alternatives would be acceptable?



Craft Your Message

- Clearly and specifically state your request – what do you want them to do (e.g. vote for a bill or change a regulation)?
- Provide a sound rationale – why do you want them to do it (e.g. what good or bad result will occur)?
- Explain the implications for constituents – who will be helped (e.g. patient care will be improved in the official's district because X, Y or Z).
- If the request will cost money, explain the costs and how you expect your request to be funded.

Polish Your Message

Remember, make it:

- Clear
- Concise
- Compelling
- Personal



Connect with Leaders

- Know who your government leaders are
 - **At the local, state and federal levels**
- Make them know who you are
 - **Get to know them on an ongoing basis**
- Let them know how you can help them
 - **Show them that you are a resource of information**
- Explain how they can help you
 - **Elected officials want to be responsive to their constituents**

Options for Communicating Request

- Written communications - Emails, Letters
- Oral communications - Calls, Meetings:
 - **In their local/district office**
 - **In their State or Federal offices**
- A combination of written and oral communications is most effective

Communicating Your Request

- Determine the individuals or groups to whom you will make your request.
- Coordinate your request. Determine who else will you notify who may be able to influence the outcome (e.g. staff).
- Determine when and how you will follow up – respectful persistence often carries the day.
- Develop timelines and assignment of responsibilities.

Build Coalitions

- Garner support from within your agency and other agencies in your vicinity. If your request is to state leaders, enlist the support of your state EMS association.
- Keep your team informed of your progress along the way.
- Look to develop relationships with organizations of common interest. Share information or join in more formal coalitions.

Benefits of Coalitions

- Access to more resources – information, labor, perspective, expertise, etc.
- Avoid “reinventing the wheel”
- People with same interests are more likely to be effective by collaborating



Advocacy Tips

- Be confident. Tell your story and share your experiences with your elected leaders.
- Be knowledgeable of the issues.
- Be honest and use plain language; be polite.
- Speak from the heart, but don't over-tell your story.
- Stay on message.
- Ensure that your group reflects the diversity of your EMS community and agencies.

Advocacy Tips

What doesn't work?

- Contacts that look purely bought and paid for, i.e. professional rather than grassroots;
- A confrontational style that harasses or insults politicians;
- Members who are under-informed or are speaking to issues without conviction;
- Providing members with tools that make them look like wound-up robots.

Advocacy Tools

Make the most of technology to:

- research a particular position;
- monitor government positions;
- organize, mobilize, and communicate with members;
- promote a viewpoint, attract supporters and organize campaigns.

Online Legislative Service

- Online and accessible
- EMS-specific federal legislation
- Elected official background and contact information
- Election and candidate background and contact information
- Specific grassroots campaign alerts
- Media contacts

Online Legislative Service

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Key EMS Legislative Issues

Urge Support for Congressional EMS Caucus

Congressional support for emergency medical and trauma care at the federal level is needed now more than ever. A robust Congressional EMS Caucus will bring a more disciplined focus on legislative issues and form a more collective and cohesive bipartisan message on EMS issues to support EMS providers nationwide. The U.S. House of Representatives Congressional EMS Caucus will help promote, educate, and increase awareness around the federal policy issues impacting EMS and serve as a resource for policy questions.

The Art of Advocacy – Best Practices

- Muscle Theory of Advocacy
 - Exercise your advocacy muscle so you have good and strong relationships
 - But don't overtax the muscle because too much communicating can be counterproductive
- Credibility is Key
 - Always be truthful even if it seems it will diminish your position
 - If there is opposition, acknowledge so, and respectfully explain why you are right and they are wrong

Grassroots Advocacy

- Effective advocacy relies on local participation.
- Grassroots communication of concerns has the greatest impact on local politicians.
- Broad-based communication will be more effective if it supports a central message.
- Personalized approaches to political leaders works best - real people explaining real concerns.



Thank you!

For more information, please contact NAEMT.

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