

# Public Policy Advocacy for Social Change



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Empowered Parents:  
Educated, Engaged,  
Effective!

# Public Policy Advocacy for Social Change



“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

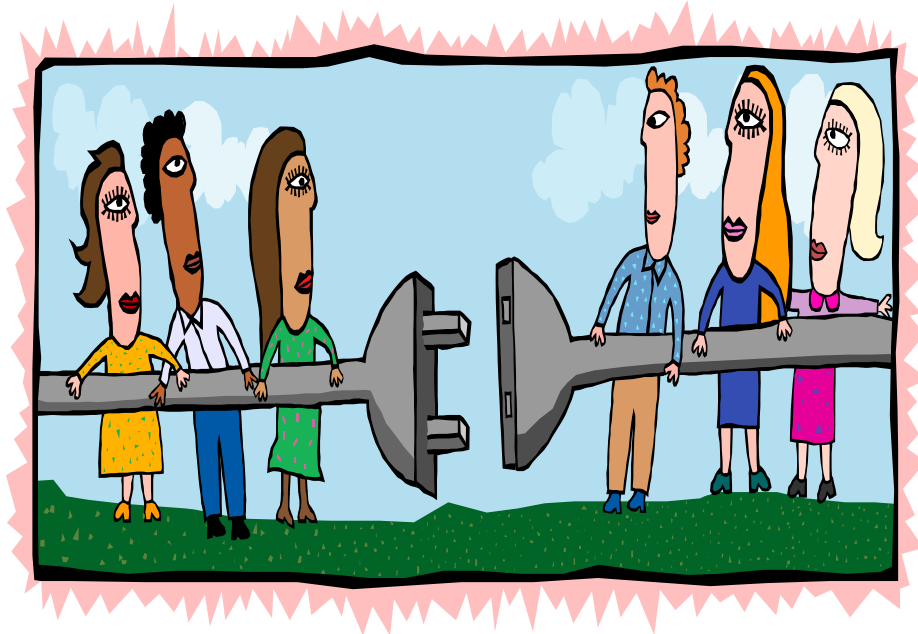
*Margaret Mead*

# What is Advocacy?



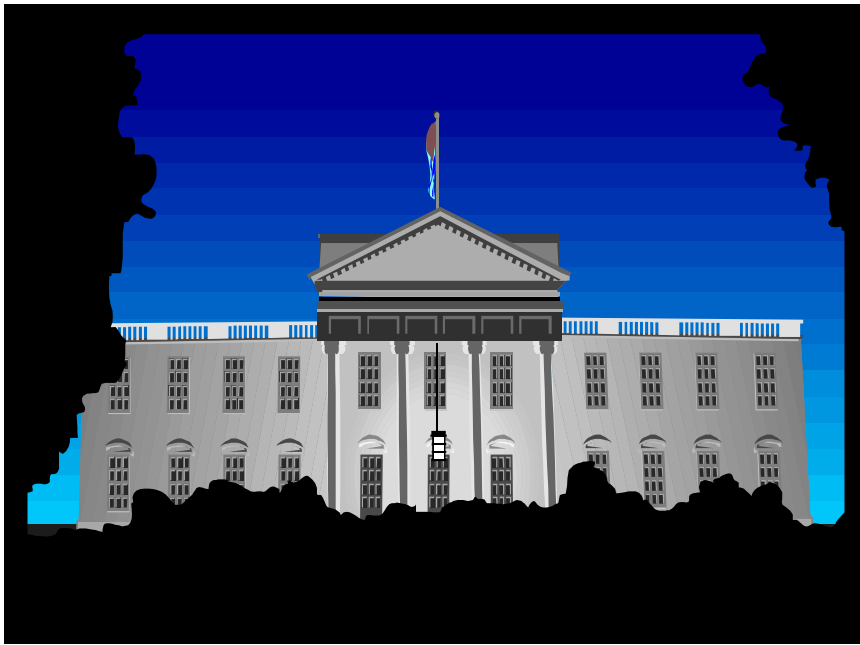
- Speaking, writing, or acting in support of a cause
- Using a variety of organized tactics to achieve a public policy goal
- Demanding a change to benefit the lives of many

# Advocacy:



- Asks something of others
- Puts the demands of people into systems
- Deals with issues and conflicts
- Involves people
- Creates a space for public discussion
- Finds solutions to problems

# Focus for Advocacy



- The Legislature
- The Executive
- Regulatory Agencies
- The Judiciary

# Social Justice Advocacy



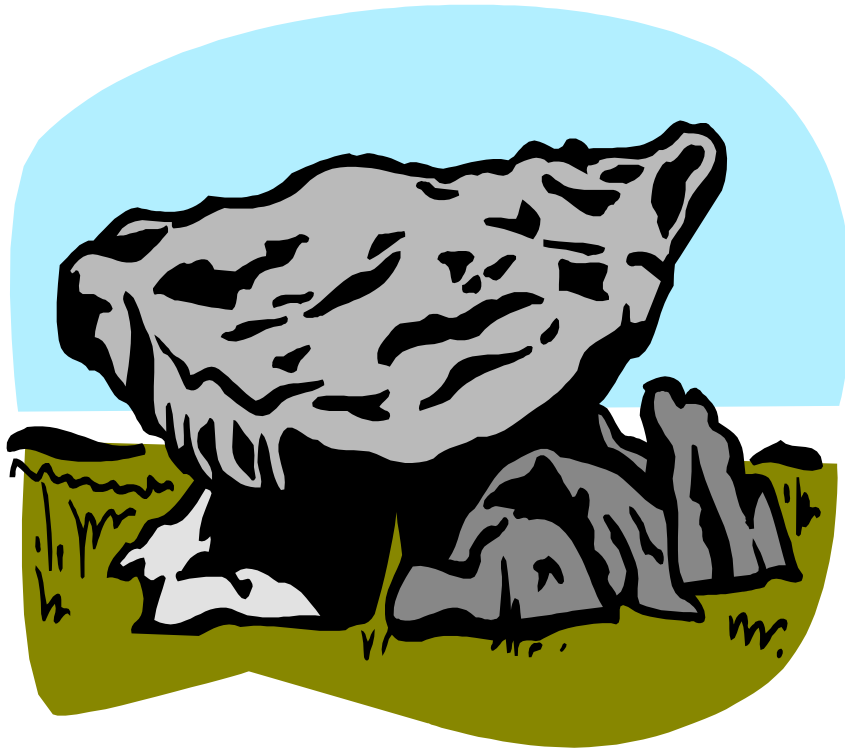
- Challenging power
- Assuming risks
- Telling stories
- Involving those affected
- Offering alternatives
- Principles vs. compromise
- Balancing the scales of justice and equity
- Holding ourselves accountable

# Vision, Mission, and Goals



- *Vision* - Your picture of the ideal situation
- *Mission* – What your organization will do to get there
- *Goals* – Significant steps toward the vision
- *Objectives* – The means to accomplish the goals
- *Action Steps* – Concrete steps to achieve the objectives

# How Change Happens



“Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never has and it never will.”

*-Frederick Douglas*



# Stages of Change



- Denial of the need for change
- Resistance to change
- Exploration of the change
- Managing the change
- Collaboration
- Compromise
- Maintaining momentum

# Change Agents



- Understand context, barriers to change, and stages of change
- Listen
- Respond
- Advocate
- Pursue change
- Intervene at the systems level
- Team with others
- Facilitate

# Strategic Planning Process



- Set ground rules
- Ask all questions
- Share experiences and opinions
- Leave space for others
- Be informal and relax
- All opinions count
- Keep it simple
- Brainstorm
- Small group
- Accept all ideas without debate
- Facilitate if necessary

# Strategic Planning Questions



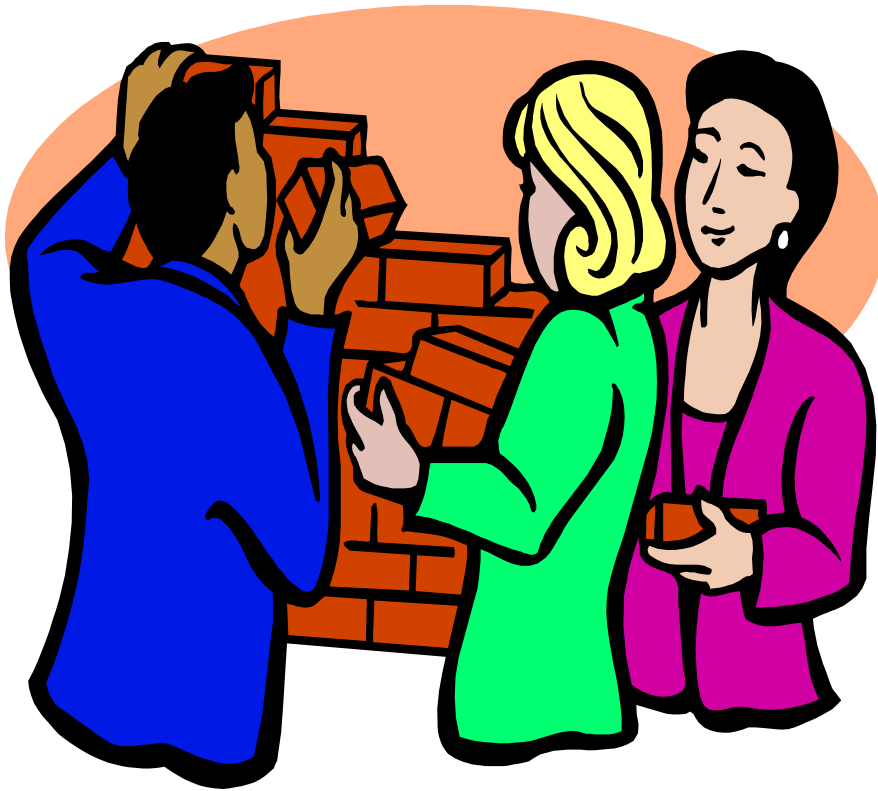
- What do you want?
  - Process goals
  - Content goals
- Who can deliver it?
  - Formal authority
  - Influence
- What message(s) do they need to hear?
  - Public interest
  - Self-interest

# Strategic Planning Questions



- Who do they need to hear it from?
  - Expert voices
  - Authentic voices
- How do we get them to hear it?
  - Persuasion
  - Pressure

# Strategic Planning Questions



- What do we have to build on?
  - Leadership
  - Supporters
  - Information
  - Resources
  - Tools
  - Access
  - Messages
- What do we need to develop?

# Strategic Planning Questions



- How do we begin?
  - Big enough to matter
  - Small enough to win
- How do we know it's working?
  - Implemented plan?
  - Increased engagement?
  - Improvements?
- Where do we go from here?

# Information and Research



- Knowledge will forever govern ignorance
- Know the most about your issue
- Find as many sources of information as possible
- Research arguments for and against
- Know who supports and who opposes
- Conduct surveys and opinion polls
- Use a survey to inform and educate



# Why do people get involved?

- They believe the issue is important to them and their family
- They believe they have something to contribute
- They believe that they will be listened to and their contributions respected
- They believe that their participation will make a difference



# How do people stay involved?

- Multiple opportunities for participation, from a small contribution of time to progressively larger contributions of time and effort
- The level of participation varies depending on life circumstances.



# Staying Involved

- Constituent receive sufficient advance notice.
- Constituent participation is facilitated:
  - Child care
  - Transportation
  - Dinner
  - Education & information



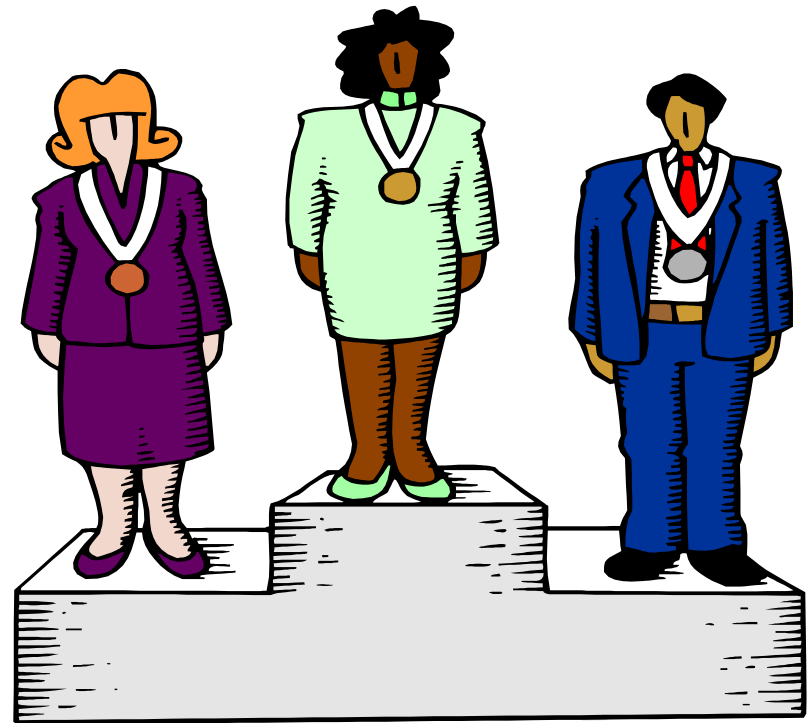
# Staying Involved

- Constituents are listened to; their ideas are supported and respected.
- Constituents do not experience retribution as a result of their participation.



# Staying Involved

- Their participation has an impact – it makes an appreciable difference.
- Their participation is appreciated; that appreciation is acknowledged.



# Opportunities to Participate in Advocacy

- Tell their stories verbally to an advocate & give permission to share
- Tell their stories verbally within a small group (focus group)
- Tell their stories verbally to policymakers (at public hearing, meeting with monitors, at their school or district forum, etc.)



# Participation Opportunities

- Share their stories in writing through:
  - Letter to the state
  - Letter to the editor
  - Letter to the monitors
  - Letter to an advocate with permission to disclose



# Participation Opportunities

- Reach out to encourage other constituent participation
- Assist in collection of documentation
- Assist in analysis of information
- Assist in information dissemination





# Participation Opportunities

- Serve as co-trainers
- Serve as members of task forces and committees
- Facilitate public forums
- Serve as members of monitoring teams



# Preparation for Participation

- Offer trainings, developed jointly with constituents & advocates
- Develop & disseminate informative, useful materials
- Meet and talk with constituents, sharing information, listening carefully to their strengths, needs & concerns



# Demonstrate constituent independence & contribution.

- Develop a plan to identify a diverse, representative group of constituents
- During & after meetings, specifically recognize the value of the constituent's participation
- Recognize individual constituent strengths while respecting differing methods of coping & adjustment



# Provide constituent-identified supports to assist participation.

- Provide convenient meeting times & locations.
- Compensate constituents for time, expertise & expenses.
- Clearly identify someone to be the primary contact for reimbursement & other issues; timely reimbursement & contacts are essential



# Provide constituent-identified supports

- Provide direct staff support, stipends, travel expenses, & childcare
- Identify these supports in RFPs, grants, & policies
- Provide complete, appropriate information prior to meetings in a timely manner
- Match veteran members with inexperienced ones to support new members & share ideas



# Provide constituent-identified supports

- Recognize that some constituents may require more and different kinds of support than others
- Encourage and facilitate constituent-to-constituent support and networking



# Provide formal orientation & information

- Provide orientations about the issues, participants & process.
- Provide informational support for constituents to participate as equal partners on a “level playing field”
- Provide technical assistance, leadership mentoring, training, & other leadership training



# Ensure diversity among constituents

- Honor the racial, ethnic, cultural, & socioeconomic diversity of families.
- Provide all materials in the constituent's preferred language.
- Recruit broadly from the community and the target population.
- Bring in new constituents.





# Ensure diversity

- Adapt collaborative models to diverse cultures. Manage changing distribution of power & responsibility.
- Incorporate principles of collaboration into professional education.



# Ensure diversity

- Ensure broad representation among groups based on the communities in question.
- Be particularly careful to include members of traditionally underserved groups.
- Avoid any appearance of tokenism.



# Be ready to hear what constituents say.

- Encourage and support constituents to find their voice.
- Ensure that member perspectives are not considered a separate component of the policy-making process, but are infused throughout.
- Always consider an individual constituent's story as valid.



# Respect the passion constituents have for change.

- Support staff in developing an understanding of the value of constituent participation.
- Provide clear information about your goals and how constituent input and participation fits in.
- Balance membership between constituents and advocates.
- Consider shared leadership – co-chairs



# *Remember:*

- *Empowering families to participate in advocacy for their children, their community, the larger society, is its own victory, regardless of the specific outcome of any particular effort.*
- *Democracy is not a spectator sport!*



# Outreach Strategies



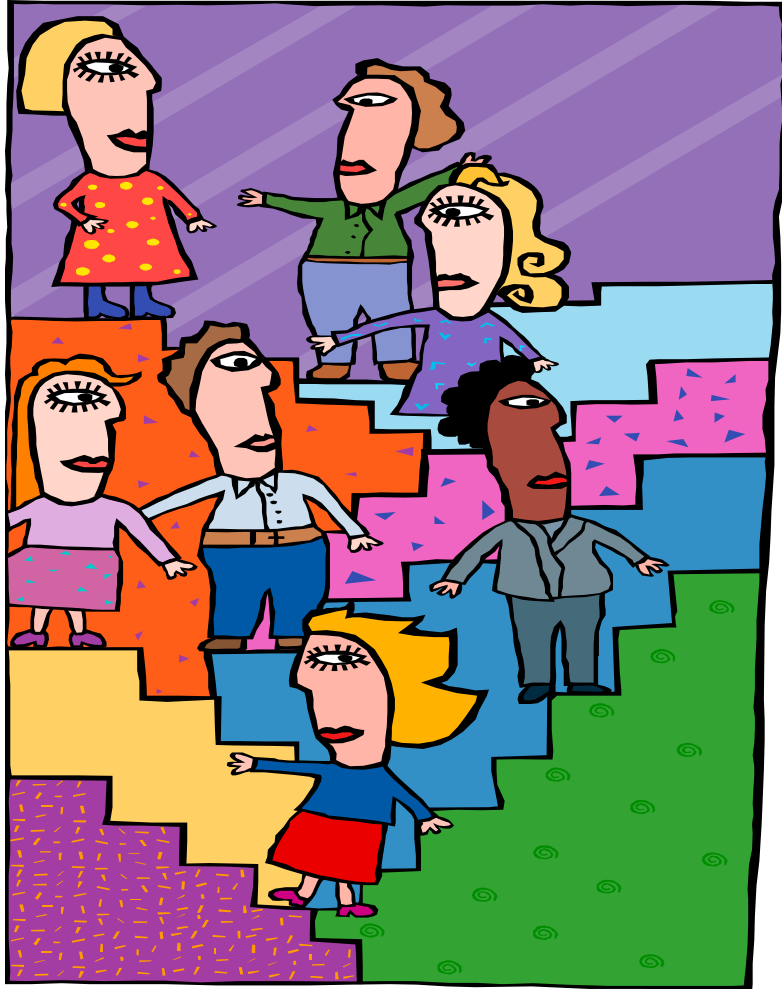
- Door-knocking
- Welfare office, food pantry, school
- Organizational media
- Community media
- Mass media
- “Mediating institutions”
- Public forums

# Mobilization



- Moving from spectators to participants
- Turning opinions into actions
  - Making a phone call
  - Sending a fax or e-mail
  - Writing a letter
  - Visiting a policymaker
  - Demonstration, march, sit-in

# Mobilization Steps



- Present information:
  - Your cause
  - The activity or event
  - Why it's important
- Outreach to constituents & allies
  - Phone, fax, e-mail, mail
  - One-on-one
  - Other organizations
- Orientation
- Needed supports for participation