

MEDIA ADVOCACY 101

Here are some key components to keep in mind when developing your media strategy:

Be prepared with facts

Have a clear analysis of the issues you wish to address, with data to give credibility to your argument.

Have a roadmap

Advocacy efforts need clear and specific goals and objectives. First determine a goal: this provides a sense of direction and a unifying theme. Next, develop objectives—what must happen to accomplish the overall goal?

Be aggressive!

Part of advocacy is dealing with opposition and dissent, which can be threatening. Get community support and use the media to your advantage—know where you stand and don't back down.

Don't be arrogant

Expertise and training don't have to come from academic institutions—they can also come from personal experience. Including the perspectives of those who have been directly impacted, will help create an authentic voice for your issue.

Know your enemy

A successful advocacy strategy takes into account who and what institutions must be targeted to achieve the goal. Learn their arguments, develop counterarguments, and carefully analyze their interests.

Money won't buy you love

Big corporations and representatives for private interests usually have more resources than public health advocates do. But people power can be more valuable to your campaign than money power. It's a power that lasts longer and changes relationships between communities and leadership. So work on building support for your cause rather than raising enough money to compete with industry.

On your mark, get set, go!

Develop a plan of action. The actions you take should be flexible and engage the community. The policy recommendations you are advancing must be specific, articulated in a way that is easily understood, and reasonably attainable.

Don't give up!

Changing policy means changing minds—and that takes time. But that doesn't mean sticking to a plan that isn't working. Set time limits for certain tactics, and develop an alternate plan if your original tactics are not yielding results.

Publication used:

Wallack, Lawrence, and Katie Woodruff, and Lori Dorfman, and Iris Diaz. *News for a Change: An Advocate's Guide to Working With the Media*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1999.