

Media Advocacy: **Using the Media to Accomplish Your** **Policy Goals**

Administration on Developmental Disabilities

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The reasonable man adapts himself to the world, the unreasonable man persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man.

-- George Bernard Shaw

Media Advocacy

**The *strategic* use of mass media
and *community advocacy* to
advance a social or public policy
goal.**

Media Advocacy

A movement-building, strategic use of media and community advocacy to advance social or policy change.

Generally (but not always) focused on influencing free/earned media.

Uses the media to make structural changes that will affect individual decisions.

Traditional Media

- **Professional Message Development**
- **Reinforces individual responsibility**
- **Focus on shaping public attitudes**
- **Gives people a message**
- **Takes care of media for community**

Media Advocacy

- **Collaborative message development**
- **Reinforces social responsibility**
- **Focuses on policy**
- **Gives people a voice**
- **Trains the community in media skills**

Media Advocacy: Shifting Focus

Problem Definition at Individual Level

- It takes a lot of education to change people's eating habits.
- People should exercise more.
- Families should take care of their own problems.

Problem Definition at Social Level

- Available food choices should be healthy.
- Communities should be planned for healthy lifestyles.
- Government's chief responsibility is the health, safety, and welfare of their citizens.

Traditional Media Presumes

- Problems are caused by individuals' lack of information
- There is an information gap

Media Advocacy Presumes

- Problems are caused by individuals' lack of power to change policy
- There is a power gap

Compared to PR, Media Advocacy Is

- More concrete
- More focused on a particular policy goal
- More decentralized, community-based, and community-owned
- More flexible and opportunistic
- More credible

What Does Media Advocacy Do?

- ***Changes*** (reframes) the way decision-makers look at community issues or problems
- ***Creates*** a reliable, consistent stream of publicity (media focus) for your issues and activities
- ***Explains*** how these problems could and should be solved
- ***Motivates*** community members and policymakers to get involved

Framing for Action

- ***Translate* individual problems into social issues**
- ***Present* a solution**
- ***Assign* primary responsibility**
- ***Make it practical***
- ***Develop* pictures and images**
- ***Tailor* your message**

Plan Your Media Campaign / Media Intervention

Communication plan

- Goals**
- Objectives**
- Strategy**
- Audience**
- Message**
- Evaluation**
- Time line**

Media Strategies

- 1. What is the goal, in precise and realistic terms?**
- 2. What is the message, in clear, simple terms?**
- 3. Who is the target audience?**
- 4. What outlets are best to disseminate the message and reach the target?**
- 5. What should the audience do when they have heard the message?**
- 6. What help will you need?**

Developing Your Message

- **K.I.S.S.**
- **Begin with research**
- **Resonate with your audience**
 - **Common core set of values**
 - **Based on what audience *wants*, not on what you think they *need***
- **Aim for high impact**
- **Test, revise, test, revise, test**

Maximizing Your Media Coverage

- **Know the beats**
- **Understand your media markets**
- **Respond quickly to requests for information**
- **Provide usable information**
- **Be honest and straightforward**
- **Remember media *relations***
- **Research what you don't know**

Ground Rules for Effective Media Advocacy

- **Media: *A means, not an end***
- **Keep your eyes on the prize**
- **Media is limited; the competition is not**
- **Media advocacy is only one part**
- **All that counts is the message received**
- **Most media is local**

Tips for Successful Media Advocacy

- **Develop your media strategy**
 - Ask the 6 questions
- **Media Relations / Public Relations**
 - Needs / benefits are mutual
 - Call when you don't need something
 - No permanent friends, no permanent enemies
 - Track the reporters on your beat
 - Credibility is your currency

- **Frame your story**
 - **Make your story *newsworthy***
 - **Never assume the reporter (or your audience) has background information**
 - **Localize, humanize, personalize**
 - **Anticipate and defuse your opposition**
- **Accessing the Media**
 - **News Conferences**
 - **News Briefings**

- **Communicating with the media**
 - **Press Release**
 - **News Advisory**
 - **News or Feature Release**
 - **Tickler (something that prompts to action)**
 - **Pitch Letter**
- **Media Presentations**
 - **Prepare your biography (1-page)**
 - **Do your research**
 - **Keep language simple and direct**
 - **Speak in bites (small short concise pieces of information)**