An Introduction to Legislative Advocacy: Effectively Delivering Your Message

Name of presenter
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VISION
A society where all people are valued and respected, and where all people have the knowledge, opportunity and power to improve their lives and the lives of others.

MISSION
The Institute on Disabilities leads by example, creating connections and promoting networks within and among communities so that people with disabilities are recognized as integral to the fabric of community life.
Objectives

• Understanding the importance of framing messages in advocacy efforts
• Understanding a basic strategy for framing messages
• To know how to prepare for meetings with policy-makers
• To know how to effectively deliver messages to policy-makers

“Humans use models, metaphors and other techniques to impose structure on the world and to reduce considerations. We use stories and exclude stories as we seek order.” (Frameworks Institute, 2002)
Necessity for Effective Framing

- Policy engagement is very value laden
- We use habits of mind/stories for making sense of the world
- Need a strategy to get your message through existing frames/values and above the noise

The Basic Strategy

- Trusted sources sharing information
- Need a compelling story about why we should care
  - Who is affected?
  - What values are at play?
- Engage others in solution(s)
Trusted Sources

- Relationships
  - With policy-makers
  - Coalitions, collaborations
  - Opinion leaders
- Credentials relevant to the issue/area
- Stories and experience
- Evidence

What is Your Issue?

Framing Your Compelling Story

Do your homework!
1. Who are you meeting? Who should you be meeting?
   - Legislator, Legislative staff
   - Committees, caucuses, leadership
   - Recently sponsored/co-sponsored
   - Currently championing which issues
   - Similar or relevant sponsored bills in past
   - Administrative/Executive Branch
2. What is the current context or climate?
   - What are they most worried about right now?
   - How controversial is the issue?
   - What is your angle? Why will they care?
   - What will they know about your issue?

3. Why are you there?
   - What is your relationship to the issues?
     - Why are you someone to talk to?
   - Why do you care?
   - How are people impacted at the local, state, national level?

4. Combine personal with research/compelling evidence
   - Anecdotal, individual patient(s), your personal experience
   - Then draw to larger issue – research, other opinion leaders
   - Make your expertise accessible
Framing Your Compelling Story

5. Practice your ask/request in an “elevator speech”
   – Don’t get “filibustered” (Bobby Silverstein)
   – Keep papers/supporting materials to a minimum
   – Engagement in solutions

Different Approaches for Different People

• Level of detail/technical knowledge
• Partnership/collaboration
• Different opportunities for input

Capitalize on Unexpected Events

• Media informs how people frame
• Tie events to policy issues when opportunity arises
Exercise: Your Message

1. What is your issue?
2. Who should you/will you meet with?
3. What is your message?
   - Issue
   - Your relationship to it/make it human
   - Evidence/why should they care
   - Solutions

Wrap-Up

- Engage the audience
- State the Problem
- Inform others about potential solutions
- Call to Action

EPIC format, from RESULTS (grassroots advocacy organization)

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