Harnessing the Power of Your Voice:
Advocating for Clients and the Social Work Profession

By Craig Hidy and Barb Meyer
What is Advocacy?
Advocacy Definition

Advocacy in all its forms seeks to ensure that people, particularly those who are most vulnerable in society, are able to: Have their voice heard on issues that are important to them. Defend and safeguard their rights. Have their views and wishes genuinely considered when decisions are being made about their lives.
Why Advocacy - Client Advocacy

**NASW Code of Ethics**

*“Social workers' primary responsibility is to promote the well-being of clients.”*

- Commitment to Clients
- Self-Determination
- Informed Consent
Why Advocacy - Profession Advocacy

**NASW Code of Ethics**

5 (b) Social workers should uphold and advance the values, ethics, knowledge, and mission of the profession. Social workers should protect, enhance, and improve the integrity of the profession through appropriate study and research, active discussion, and responsible criticism of the profession.

(c) Social workers should contribute time and professional expertise to activities that promote respect for the value, integrity, and competence of the social work profession. These activities may include teaching, research, consultation, service, legislative testimony, presentations in the community, and participation in their professional organizations.
Why Advocacy - Profession Advocacy

**NASW Code of Ethics**

6 (a) Social workers should engage in social and political action that seeks to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources, employment, services, and opportunities they require to meet their basic human needs and to develop fully. Social workers should be aware of the impact of the political arena on practice and should advocate for changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions in order to meet basic human needs and promote social justice.
Levels of Advocacy

**Micro Level**
- Contained systems:
  - Individuals
  - Families
  - Relationships

**Meso Level**
- Medium systems:
  - Neighbourhoods
  - Schools
  - Local organizations
  - Communities
  - Groups of people

**Macro Level**
- Large systems:
  - Healthcare systems
  - Policy
  - Law & legislation
  - Political subsystems
  - International assoc.

**INTRA- & INTER-PERSONAL**
Question of Advocacy

When an issue arises how do you get policy makers, community members, administrators, and legislators, etc. to make it their issue?
Policy Advocacy

Many problems could make a good issue for advocacy; however, any issue you select for policy advocacy should have these five qualities:

1. Existing objective/ natural outgrowth of organization’s work
2. Based in evidence - Proof it’s a problem
3. Evidence of how change in policy or implementation of a policy should improve the problem
4. Reasonably attainable in three to five years
5. Goals are specific and clear
Basics of Legislation - Key Roles in Legislation

- Legislators
- Personal Staff
- Constituents
- Lobbyists
- “Experts” - Researchers, Professionals working in the field, Individuals with Personal experience (McCoy, 2016)
How a Bill Becomes a Law

1. Bill is introduced
2. Committee Hearings
3. Floor Action
   - If passed (Sent to other house)
4. Committee Hearings
5. Floor Action
   - If passed with amendments
6. Returned to original house
7. Floor Action
   - If passed without amendments
8. Bill goes to Governor
   - If original house concurs
   - Bill becomes law January 1 of the next year
9. Most bills become law if not vetoed
Basics of Legislation - Who Represents You?

So I guess you guys should vote, you know?
Basics of Legislation - Meeting with Legislators

“Um, Can you repeat the part of the stuff where you said all about the things?”

- Research your legislators (history, interests, how they vote, etc.)
- Use talking points
- Share stories of how policy will impact clients
- Give info sheet, folder, etc.
- Leave them contact information
The Power of Your Voice

Dr. Steve Perry - The Role of Social Workers


2:15-7:18
Collective Voices Make Action

“Throughout history, it has been the inaction of those who could have acted; the indifference of those who should have known better; the silence of the voice of justice when it mattered most; that has made it possible for evil to triumph.”

Haile Selassie

“A voice is a human gift; it should be cherished and used, to utter fully human speech as possible. Powerlessness and silence go together.”

- Margaret Atwood
KSSWA is a professional organization dedicated to promoting school social work and helping students, their families and the community to enhance each child's educational experience.

KSSWA has a voice in developing policy at the state level, as well as regionally and nationally through our association with the Midwest School Social Work Council and the School Social Work Association of America.
Advocacy Efforts

Legislative Agenda

Governor’s Proclamation
Contacting Legislators
Organizational Advocacy Blasts
Committee and KSDE Testimonies
SMHAD
KSDE Statistics of School Social Workers

School Social Workers:

- 18-19 - 589
- 17-18 - 490
- 16-17 - 426
- 15-16 - 405
- 14-15 - 398

Increase of 191 positions in 5 years!

163 in last 2 years!
“Redistributing power is often a crucial component of successful large-scale, second order social movement”
1. Determine What Change / Root Problem

Is it short term or does it address the root problem?
2. Identifying Power Holders

Who are influential friends and foes?
3. Creating Coalitions

Identify and work with others who share goals
4. Learning Patience and Persistence

Small Wins are critical to obtaining long term goals
5. Measuring Success

What have you accomplished?

What have you achieved?

What does the data say?

When will you know you have reached what you want?
Goals

Short

Motivates the group and sets early “bench-marks”

Intermediate

Focuses on community and system change

Concrete building blocks - “bench-marks”

Long Term

Where you want to be at end of advocacy campaign
Resources/Assets

What assets are at your disposal?

What resources are you going to need? (Funds, people, contacts, etc.)
Supports/ Opposition

1. Allies
2. Opponents
3. Unsure

Meet my hand in the air!
Targets and Agents of Change

**Targets** - Who/what is causing the problem that needs to be changed (usually institutions or groups)

**Agents of Change** - Those who will actually cause the targets to make the change by one means or another (Decision makers/ Power Holders/ Influencers)
Strategy

Choose a strategic style (What will use your allies the best and produce the change you want to see?)
Action Steps/ Tactics

Keys:

● Carries out your strategy and fits your goals
● Fits your style
● Are doable and cost effective
● Makes your group feel good about themselves and what they are doing

Questions:

● What will be the scope of this action? Who will carry it out?
● When will this action take place, and for how long?
● Do we have resources to make it happen? What resources are available?
● Which allies and constituents should be involved?
● Which individuals and organizations might oppose or resist?
Getting Your Message Out

Two main ways to get in news:

- Promote an activity/event
- Be a professional resource “source” for story

Use Media to:

- Inform
- Recast
- Encourage
References


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