

Parents as Change-Makers

Advocacy 101

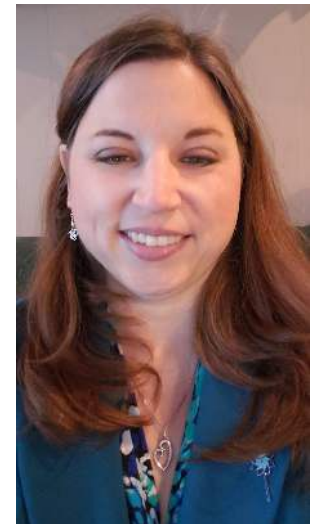


Presenters

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Logistics



- This webinar will be 90 minutes long and will include time for questions via the online chat function.
- We will record this webinar. We will share the recording with you and post it on nacac.org.
- Your line will be muted throughout the webinar.
- The webinar will include poll questions and opportunities for you to share information via the chat function, including if you are having technical difficulties.
- Please evaluate the session after the webinar.

Children Need Amazing Parents



CHAMPS is a national campaign to ensure bright futures for kids in foster care by promoting the highest quality parenting.





- Aims to spur policy reforms in 20 to 25 states over five years to:
 - Prioritize quality foster parenting
 - Ensure that foster parents are equipped with the training and support they need to help children heal, grow, and flourish.



Policy Priorities



1. Support relationships between birth and foster families
2. Implement data-driven recruitment and retention practices
3. Engage foster parents in decision making
4. Provide timely access to trusted, dedicated staff and peer support to foster parents
5. Prioritize placements with family members and other family connections
6. Ensure timely access to physical and mental health services

Engage Foster Parents in Decision Making

- Foster parents have valuable information about the child that no one else has.
- Information foster parents have is valuable to courts and agencies and can assist with case planning, permanency planning, educational decisions, and health care.
- Foster parent involvement in case planning is linked to increased foster parent satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.



Provide Timely Access to Trusted Staff and Peer Support



- Foster parents commonly report that the single most important factor in their ability to care for children is the ability to connect with someone they trust to discuss how best to meet the needs of children in their care.
- Research has also shown that support to foster parents is associated with improved foster parent retention and decreased placement failure.
- Policy should provide that every foster parent has access to someone who can provide needed support and advice in a timely way. The people who can best fill that role are often other experienced, successful foster parents.

Poll: What Is Advocacy?



What Is Advocacy?

- Think about a time when you were nervous to make a request but you got what you were requesting.
 - What made your request successful?



Advocacy 101

- Your voice matters!
 - You can make a big difference
 - To make a difference you have to advocate
 - Stories and sharing experiences are the best advocacy tools
- Policymakers can't fix what they don't know about and they don't know about it if they don't hear about it, from you.



Partners and Roles



There are different roles involved in advocacy. When working with others, it is important to think through who is working on your issue, and in what ways.

- Advocate
- Activist
- Strategist

Advocates

- Advocates make up the army
- Interested in and monitor several issues at once
- Provide power in numbers
- Prove to policymakers that the community cares about the issue



What Advocates Do



- Represent the grassroots
- Participate in group events
- Share personal experiences
- Activities:
 - Write letters
 - Make phone calls
 - Respond to alerts
 - Recruit others to join in

Activists

- Passionate and action oriented
- Persistent and not intimidated
- Keep issue highly visible and immediate
- Uncaring about the politics of the issue
- Take action in spurts



What Activists Do



- Put a spotlight on the Issue
- Put pressure on policymakers to act
- Frame the issue as a crisis
- Use extreme measures when needed
- Activities:
 - Rallies and marches
 - Demonstrations
 - Civil disobedience

Strategists

- Know existing laws
- Understand the system
- Have ability to write legislation, position papers, etc.
- Have ability to develop strategies and negotiate
- Have long-term relationships with policymakers



What Strategists Do



- Develop the issue and message
- Rely on advocates and activists for input and action
- Activities:
 - Write policy alerts
 - Spend time at the Capitol
 - Attend political events
 - Negotiate & mediate with policymakers, staff, advocates, state agencies

Every Role Has Value

- You don't have to play every role
- You may play different roles for different issues
- Every role and style is valuable as long as it contributes to the outcome
- Respect all your partners
- Coordinate all roles to avoid missed opportunities



Poll: Which Role?



Questions?



What Are the Steps?

- Identify the issue – develop the ask
- Determine where you need to advocate
- Collect data
- Identify partners and gather support
- Develop recommendations and strategy
- Evaluate, celebrate, recalibrate, sustain

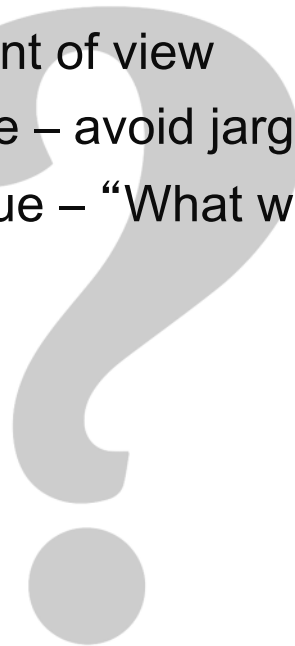


Developing the Ask



First...you must have one!

- ALWAYS from a child's point of view
- Easily understood language – avoid jargon, initials, insider phrases
- Put the audience in the issue – “What would you want for your child or a child you love?”
- Solutions-focused



Determine Where to Advocate



Work with strategist to understand

- Who has the power to make the change you seek
 - Example: State agency cannot undo a court decision or make court move faster
- Who is already working on your issue
- What is the strategy currently being implemented for your issue or a related issue
- Where are advocates (“the army”) most needed

Help with Data Collection

- Complete surveys
- Participate in focus groups
- Help compile data
- Use data in letters and phone calls



Identify Partners



Partnership = Strength in Numbers

- Who else is working on this?
- Who should be brought in?
 - Both usual and unusual suspects
- What emerging leaders do you want to recognize, elevate, and engage?
- Give to get
- Outreach efforts
- Wide cross section of supporters



Develop Recommendations



- Whom will it affect?
- How much will it cost?
 - To implement
 - If not implemented
- Logic model builder: <https://toolkit.childwelfare.gov/toolkit/>
- SMART goals
- Get buy-in from advocates

Everyone - Evaluate, Celebrate, Recalibrate, Sustain



- Evaluate your progress
- Celebrate your successes
- Recalibrate and tweak strategies
- Sustain your efforts

Don't give up!



Questions?



ADVOCACY WITH SPECIFIC AUDIENCES



Legislative Advocacy



STRATEGIST

- Develop relationships with key players
- Identify allies and opponents
- Monitor progress and changes
- Engage advocates at appropriate times and in strategic ways
- Coordinate efforts with partners, advocates, activists

ADVOCATE

- Understand the legislative process
- Study your issue
- Find your audience
- Plan for your interaction
- Follow-up

Executive Branch Officials



STRATEGIST

- Build relationships with key people
- Study agency policies and your issue
- Learn opportunities for involvement
 - Boards, committees, work groups
- Involve advocates

ADVOCATE

- Learn agency policies and your issues
- Hone your personal story
- Serve on boards, committees, work groups

Working with Media



STRATEGIST

- Develop relationships with media
- Write press advisories and press releases
- Study the issue — be seen as an “expert”
- Write op-eds with others

ADVOCATE

- Be willing and ready to be interviewed
- Study your issue — statistics, trends, etc.
- Hone your personal story
- Learn to write op-eds

SHARING YOUR STORY



The Power of a Personal Story



- There is power in a personal story:
 - A story paints a picture and makes something real to others
 - A story enables people to establish a connection
- For advocacy, it's great to combine stories with data and numbers to show how many have similar experiences or who can be helped



Establish Your Goals



- Identify your goal(s)
- Decide what messages relate well to that goal
- Develop rough talking points
- For example, if you're highlighting the need for support services for older children or those with more challenges, talking points might be:
 - Children who face a variety of challenges *are* being raised in families.
 - Families are the best place for *all* children and youth.
 - There's a family for every child.
 - Families need training and support to help ensure they can meet the needs of children and youth.

Identifying Your Storytellers

- Brainstorm who might be the best messengers
 - Types of families
 - Young people who have experienced foster care or adoption
- Solicit stories
 - Find constituents of the policymakers you're seeking to influence
 - Ask others for recommendations
 - Seek diversity of story and storytellers
- Choose the one or few people whose stories best convey your messages and show the diversity of the issues (don't have three people tell the same story)



Messaging Tips

- Make sure it connects to your goals
- Keep it simple
- Be positive and strengths-based
- Use person-first language
- Leave them with a possible solution



Data and Resources

- Children's Bureau Child Welfare Outcomes reports:
<http://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/data/overview>
- Child Trends data on adoption, foster care, kinship care in your state: <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/state-level-data-for-understanding-child-welfare-in-the-united-states>
- Members of Congress Look-Up:
<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/members>
- State Legislators Look-Up:
<https://www.commoncause.org/find-your-representative/>

Tools



- Challenges/Solutions
 - https://www.nacac.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/ChallengesSolutions_FINAL.pdf
- Infographics
 - www.canva.com
 - www.infogram.com
 - www.spark.adobe.com
- NACAC Website
 - <https://www.nacac.org/advocate/how-to-advocate/>

Questions?



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