

Tips for Effective Advocacy

Know your legislator. Learn about your legislators and where they stand on the issues. Introduce yourself and offer yourself as a resource on issues related to social work and/or your specific area of practice. Find out what committees they are assigned to. Don't wait until you're lobbying for an important issue before making contact with your legislator!

Click here to find out who your legislator is and locate a biography
OR if you know your district #
follow the links below to the State of Georgia's website
and click on your legislator's name
Georgia House of Representatives
Georgia Senate

Know your issue. A thorough understanding of the issue is critical. Get facts, do research, read articles, consult the experts. Be sure to identify the issue properly -otherwise you cannot identify the appropriate remedy.

Know your message. Design an effective message that is simple and understandable. Do not assume that your legislators are familiar with the issue -- it is your job to educate them! Be concise and brief in your communication, highlight the most important points and supply additional background information/stats separately if necessary.

Personalize the message. Explain why the issue is important to you and why it should be important to your legislator also. Use personal examples of how the issue affects you, your family, and/or your clients.

Know the decision maker. Identify who has the power to resolve your issue. It could be a school board member, a county commissioner, a state legislator, or another government official. Once the appropriate individual or body is identified, learn all you can about that individual or body.

Know your opposition. Identify potential opposition and understand opposing arguments.

Know your obstacles. There are frequently obstacles to overcome before reaching your desired objective. Funding is one of the largest obstacles to success -- is there money available to implement the desired change? Become familiar with and monitor the appropriations process. Sometimes the obstacle may be an existing law or policy that needs to be changed. You can search the **Georgia Code** by keyword to identify existing statutes/laws.

Select a message that will be noticed. Form letters and postcards are often ignored. While visiting your legislator in person is the most effective means of communication, personal letters and telephone calls are also very effective. Faxes and email can be useful when timing is critical but a telephone call will garner much more attention.