Grassroots Advocacy For Community Health Centers

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What is Advocacy?

• **advocacy**
  n. The act of pleading or arguing in favor of something, such as a cause, idea, or policy; active support.
  
What is Advocacy?

• To plead the cause of another;

• To defend or maintain a cause or proposal

• To support or promote the interests of another – the patients; the community

- To be ACTIVE in the process – Bystanders are Bypassed
Why is Advocacy Important?

- Healthcare is for everyone!
- The people we serve are in the greatest need but receive the least recognition.
- Accountability - holding your decision makers accountable.
- Working together - meeting the needs of the community.
Why is Advocacy Important?

• Education for the new members of Congress and State Legislators who know little or nothing about health centers
• Who knows your community and your health center better than you?
• You CAN make a difference!

*Effective Advocacy = Power*
Characteristics of Successful Advocacy

• Truthfulness, accuracy, and consistency
• Resourcefulness, creativity, flexibility
• Positive experiences; positive relationships
• Controlled passion; fortitude, determination
• Exposure – professional lobbying, media
• Numbers – data and constituent support
• Buy-in - your cause must motivate another
What Health Centers Can Do?

- Voter Registration
- Educate elected officials, the media and the general public about issues affecting the health center
- Lobby, except that:
  - Federal grant funds may **NOT be used to pay for any lobbying expenses.**
  - A health center's lobbying activities cannot constitute a "substantial part" of the center's total activities.
What Health Centers Can’t Do?

• Support or oppose candidates for elected office
• Use federal grant funds for lobbying or voter registration activities
• Endorse or oppose a candidate for elected office – implicitly or explicitly
• Contribute money, time, facilities to a candidate
• Coordinate activities with a candidate
Ways Your Health Center Can Build Your Advocacy Efforts

• Get Organized
  – Create an Advocacy Plan for your health center
  – Designate a staff member to act as Advocacy Coordinator to help implement your plan

• Establish an Advocacy Committee of your board and/or staff

• Recruit advocates among staff, patients, and the community
Simple Ways You Can Be an Advocate for Your Health Center

• Join the Grassroots Action Center
• Take Action on advocacy alerts
• Attend health center events – show your support
• Tell your story – Why is your health center important to you?
• Register to vote
• VOTE!!
Some Things To Remember..

• Nothing beats face-to-face advocacy
  – Invite your officials to your health center
  – Visit elected officials and tell your story
• Personal stories matter
• Your voice can be the one that makes the difference
“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.”

--Margaret Mead
Advocacy Begins with Ordinary People…

…Having an Extraordinary Commitment.