ADVOCACY 101

Nurturing Developing Minds
February 26, 2021
Goals for the Session

• Demystifying advocacy

• A few ground-rules for advocacy when you work at a not-for-profit

• Balancing Pragmatism with Idealism

• Adopting a network mindset and spirit

• Discuss upcoming statehouse legislation
Demystifying Advocacy – a Framework
Three examples

• Low hanging, but impactful, fruit: Buprenorphine’s prescription limit

• More sophisticated tactics required: South Carolina’s EITC Story

• Building a 7-nation army: Tobacco and the Truth campaign
Example: South Carolina’s EITC Story

15% refundable EITC legislation reintroduced by single member for 10 years, slow gaining momentum

2005-2014

ICS publishes child educational achievement impact research; EITC issue brief

United Way advocates for EITC & VITA

2015

ECCA includes “increased access to tax credits for working families” to agenda

ECCA leadership begins educating coalition

2016

May 2017 Roads bill enacted

Roads crisis & veto threat

ECCA begins “ground softening” education

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• Building a 7-nation army: Tobacco and the Truth campaign
Advocacy when you work for a non-profit

• First – A disclaimer.

• Second – especially for things relating to your day job – be aware of what is “on the reservation.”

• There are some legal employment protections for political activity and advocacy, which are beyond the scope of this conversation. If you’re thinking of advocating for something that your employer opposes, it may be wise to consult an attorney about parameters.

• Last – there are certain hard legal barriers for non-profits to be aware of.
“What is allowable?:” core guidance

- 501(c)3 Non-profits cannot intervene in any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office.

- As long as we carefully follow that principle:

  We can educate the public, officials, candidates, and campaigns about our issues, and recommended policies to address those issues; and

  We can encourage the public to engage in the electoral process (by helping individuals register to vote, and reminding them to vote).
Pragmatism and Idealism: Talking to policy makers

• Tell a story – most humans remember narratives better than abstract facts.

• Be prepared for the other side of an issue – know your opposition well, and agree with them as much as possible.

• Don’t invest yourself in being right – this work is seldom about right and wrong, and almost always about value trade-offs.

• Policy is a series of small gains, not windfalls.

• Forging a path for a new issue is most difficult work.
Build a network mindset & common agendas

• Story of the Early Childhood Common Agenda

• 4 leading organizations, 30+ signatories

• Helps when you need a clear voice, or for when you need an army (preschool expansion, EITC, etc.)
Questions?

Contact Us

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