

INTRODUCTION

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Effective Communication
and Policy Education with
the Georgia General Assembly

Goal

- The goal of any public policy education effort is to provide decision makers with credible, compelling information and data in a timely manner.

Providing Some Context

- 236 Part-time Members of the General Assembly
- 56 Senators each represent 172,000 Constituents
- 180 Representatives have 54,000 Constituents
- 1077 Individuals and 3035 Groups Registered to Lobby
- 2013: 695 House Bills and 1035 House Resolutions
- 2013: 279 Senate Bills and 731 Senate Resolutions
- About 50 Bills in Senate Health Committee
- Responsible for Passing a \$20 Billion Budget
- Only Meet for 40 Legislative Days-January 2014
- Limited Staff

Political Environment

- Republicans have super majorities in the House and Senate
- Governor and all statewide officials are Republican
- Over 1/3 of the General Assembly members have served less than 4 years
- Metropolitan/Rural Perspectives
- 2014 Election Year

Steps For Effective Advocacy

- 1) Establishing a unique identity for the Collaborative with decision makers;
- 2) Building personal relationships with key decision makers and their staff members;
- 3) Communicating credible, specific information in a compelling way; and
- 4) Creating alliances with allies and other stakeholders.

Establish Unique Identity

- Establish an Entity/Organization
 - Georgia Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention Collaborative
- Create a process for taking advocacy positions.
- Be unified and consistent in public policy statements.
- Stick to your area of expertise.
- Over time, every entity creates a brand.

Build Personal Relationships

- Who?
 - Local Legislators
 - Members of Key Committees
 - Leadership
 - Staff
- When?
 - Prior to the session
- How?
 - Get involved

Communicate Credible Information

- Have good data and accurate information
- Have an “elevator speech”
- But be ready to go deeper on your subject
- Acknowledge and address the other side of the issue/argument
- Timing is important
 - Make foundational arguments early in the debate
 - Issues are more focused later in the process

Communicate Credible Information

- Types of communications
- In-Person
- Correspondence

In-Person

- **Preferred and most effective**
- **Opportunity for give and take**
- **Body language and other non verbal factors**
- **Not always an option, often not a timely option**

Correspondence

- **Letters, emails, faxes, and even text messages**
- **Very practical way to be thorough**
- **Written correspondence can make it easier for legislators to carry your message for you**
- **Be as brief as possible (one page is best, third pages are never read)**
- **Leave it on a positive note**

Build Alliances

Create a team

- Can be Formal or Informal
- Share information and expertise
- Provide moral and practical strength
- Present a broader scope of influence

Review

- Legislators have a lot to do in a short period of time.
- Good advocacy involves:
 - creating a unique identity,
 - building good personal relationships,
 - sharing compelling information, and
 - working with allies.