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.