



## **Strengthening and Building Up Legislative Relationships**

The Connecticut  
Mentoring Partnership

With increasingly frequency program directors are called on to be thinking strategically about how to advance our work in the public policy area. It is our responsibility to both our organizations and our clients/consumers to be involved in public policy activity.

We need to see things with a beginner's mind.

At this very core, advocacy work is relationship building. It does not happen overnight or all at once. Consider making at least 3-4 contacts with each of your legislators before the end of the year. Here are some possible ways to do that:

- Send you legislators a copy of your agency newsletter
- Invite legislators to your annual meeting
- Invite them to your fundraising and special events. Ask them to do a short greeting,
- Invite them to a Board meeting to speak. Invite them to present an award to a consumer or client.
- Invite them for a visit to your office or a program site to meet with your Board, staff, and/or consumers/clients
- Send a congratulatory note or email on to your legislator on something you read about them in the media, e.g.: "Thanks for supporting....", "I appreciate you attendance at...", "I appreciate your interest in/involvement with..."
- Send a holiday card-Hanukah, Christmas, Kwanza, New Years', etc.
- Make an appearance at a community event where your legislator will be present. Introduce yourself.
- Call your legislator's Capitol aide to learn if there is a fundraising event or community event your legislator is sponsoring that you might attend.
- Send your legislator a letter with a status report or update on how your organization in faring and what challenges you face, e.g. "I thought you would like to know what we are facing," e.g. staff turnover, loss of funding, increasing operating costs-health insurance, liability insurance, workers compensation, heating oil, gasoline for transportation, etc.
- Send a media clipping about your legislator with a note, e.g. "Thought you might like an extra copy" or "In case you did not see this..."
- Send them a media clipping about your organization, e.g. "Thought you might like to be aware of this..." Notify them of particularly positive news,
- Call or Email you legislator to ask their advice, e.g. "Would you have a suggestion on how to...." or "Could you recommend a community activist to serve on our Board?"
- Scan the news for community events/civic affairs where there is a chance your legislator may be present to give you a chance to say hi or introduce yourself, e.g. Veteran's Day Parade, Rotary Club, Chamber of Commerce meeting, school event, Town Fair or celebration, etc.
- Call your legislator to ask if they would have breakfast or lunch with you and your Board President. If possible, involve someone the Legislator may already know and trust.
- Ask your legislator to serve on your Board of Directors.

Carrying all the advocacy responsibility for your organization limits what you can accomplish. Make a concerted effort to involve a select staff and Board members and even consumers, clients and their family members where appropriate. If you are the only one in your organization focused on public policy and advocacy matters, conduct an assessment of who else should or could be involved. Begin talking with your with your Board and staff about the importance of advocacy. Broaden the net as wide as possible.

*Adapted from the Connecticut Association of Non-Profits*