

As an advocate, you want to make changes to improve the health and wellbeing of your community. Your passion for your cause is important, and effective advocacy requires planning, coordination, setting priorities, developing effective messaging and improving your communications skills.

## BECOMING AN EFFECTIVE ADVOCATE FOR YOUR COMMUNITY



- **Develop a clear statement of what you are advocating for.** What is the most important thing you want people to know? What do you want people to do? Keep it short. Avoid long explanations or jargon.
- **Put your statement in writing...and video,** on social media, in a podcast, on your website if you have one. Use different media and approaches to make sure that anyone who is interested has access to your messages.
- **Use Stories...wisely.** Stories and anecdotes are powerful tools for bringing your voice to the forefront. But, when you are advocating,

it's important to make sure stories advance your message. You can often focus on one or two critical experiences or moments that embody the issue you want people to understand.

- **Data matters.** It's important to back up your message and your stories with data that support your key points. It doesn't have to be complicated. A few strong data points can make a real difference in the strength of your argument.
- **Use the Media, when you can.** If you have a strong story or a compelling issue, don't hesitate to contact local media. Do some research to identify the right contact. Prepare your "pitch" in advance and be clear about why your message is important. Have at least one good story to add depth and humanity to your cause. Try to build good communications and relationships with your local media. And, remember, there are many outlets for stories including local TV, radio, online platforms and papers.
- **Organize and find strength in numbers.** Increase your impact by leveraging your contacts within your community. Consider hosting a meeting or town hall event and advertise it on social media and through flyers in your community. You might be surprised at who shows up! Make sure to get contact information and keep in touch with your growing base.



**Communicate. Ask questions. Advocate for yourself and others. Find allies and partners and work with them to strengthen your efforts.**



- **Churches are great resources.** For people of faith, the church can be an excellent resource, both for support during an illness, and as a way of sharing information and reaching wider groups of people.
  - **Visibility matters.** Flyers, social media posts, yard signs and even billboards can grow your base and push your message further than you might expect. As your visibility grows, so does the chance that your campaign might get covered in the local media – and thus, continue to gain support.
  - **Find Allies.** Look for places where your message and goals overlap with other organizations. They might not be identical, but you may still be able to work together to achieve a shared vision.
- **Identify local officials and leaders responsible for your area of concern.** It's not always easy, but it's important to find out who are the people in city, state and federal government responsible for making or carrying out policy in your area of interest. Get to know something about their backgrounds and history. Once you have your message and materials clear, set up an in person appointment to explain your cause and why it is important. Follow up with additional information and requests as needed.
  - **Be patient, but persistent.** It's not easy to change our health care system but it is possible. Clear messaging, strategic approaches, compelling stories, convincing data, coordinated efforts do make a difference.



This tip sheet was developed in collaboration with PAF and Health Equity Strategies and Solutions, with support from the Danaher Foundation, to promote patient education and empowerment.

The mission of Health Equity Strategies and Solutions is to help health related organizations, departments, and coalitions/committees to move past merely describing socio-demographic differences in health and to begin developing, implementing, and evaluating health disparities elimination strategies in order to achieve health equity for historically marginalized populations.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**



- Advocates in Action podcast
- Additional Self Advocacy resources



Patient Advocate Foundation (PAF) is a national 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that assists patients with chronic or severe illnesses in accessing high-quality, affordable, equitable health care. PAF provides in-depth case management, financial and social needs navigation, patient education, and direct financial aid for eligible patients. PAF works to ensure a more equitable healthcare system and to bring patient voices to the center of treatment and care.