

ADVOCACY 101

Mary Gannon

Advocacy

Advocacy is using your words and actions to create and impact change. Advocacy contains a broad spectrum of activities. Some advocates are comfortable tackling the entire spectrum while some only a few.

Message/Issue

Emphasize the urgency of your message. Child abuse is not going away. The longer it takes, more children will continue to be abused and there is a strong correlation those children will become abusers themselves. We have to break the cycle.

Targets

When you realize you have a need to advocate for an issue or a group of people, you need to determine your target audience – **Who** has control over issue you are concerned with? **Who** can control the outcome of the issue your concerned with? Do not waste your time and energy on the wrong people.

Elected officials – at all levels? Just one level?

Federal level – President, Senators, Representatives

Federal Agencies

Governor

Other Statewide Elected Officials – Attorney General, Sec’y of Agriculture, etc.

Legislators – Senators, Representatives

State Agencies

County Supervisors

City Council/Mayor

How do you approach your targeted audience?

Personal contact is the best way – phone call, email, attend one of their weekly coffees they hold during the legislative session, find out when and where they’ll be in your area no matter if it’s the county fair, a demolition derby or the 4th of July parade, get out there and meet them.

If you are going to be in Des Moines during session, do not hesitate to stop up at the capitol. You never know when you may be able to catch your legislator. If you cannot reach your legislator, ask if you can see his/her secretary. Leave a note with him or her. If you cannot meet with anyone, leave a note for your legislator telling him/her why you were there and leave all your contact information. Do not let the process or building intimidate you. Remember, your legislator got lost more than one time, too.

Reach out to the Media

Traditional Media

Talk to the editorial board – see if you can meet with them and get a supportive editorial. If not, get one of your leaders to write an op-ed - an article supporting your cause and telling your story. If you have an event, send a press release to the media in your area, they love a good story. These days the media are looking for stories. Make sure you advertise how the media can get in touch with leadership so you do not lose an opportunity to check in.

Social Media

Use Twitter, Facebook, and any other site to get your message out there. Partner with like-minded organizations and those who support the same issues and cross-link to those sites to increase the traffic to your site.