MAKING YOUR VOICE HEARD

## PRESENTED BY ADVOCATES FOR SENIOR ISSUES

## OF KENT COUNTY

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# *At some time, a group or organization you belong to may need to make its voice heard.*

KEY POINTS IN ADVOCACY

1. Clarify what you want
2. Go to the right official or key person
3. Work with others in a coalition
4. Set a strategy you can carry out
5. Know the interests of reporters
6. Be civil, truthful & realistic
7. Follow up, and keep at it!

CLARIFY WHAT YOU WANT

What needs to happen?

* Ask those who know
* Write a position statement

Educate you own group

* Get your position statement to them
* Use field trips to the “scene”

GO TO THE RIGHT OFFICIAL OR KEY PERSON

Who is the organizational key person?

* What have they done before?
* What is their specialty?
* Have they been approached before?
* What arguments have worked?
* Ask the official or key person for background information before asking for action.

WORK WITH OTHERS IN A COALITION

Form coalitions

* Those with similar concerns
* Those with different philosophies, but with this one point of agreement

SET A STRATEGY YOU CAN CARRY OUT

Start with a clarification of the issue discussed earlier

Questions on strategy to answer:

* Cooperation or confrontation?
* Broad coalition or a narrow one?
* Quiet discussion or demonstrations?
* Lots of publicity or none?

What are your resources?

* Contacts with officials and key persons, media
* Coalition partners
* Motivation, skill, money

KNOW THE INTERESTS OF REPORTERS

Who specializes in your area of interest?

* Learn the specialties of reporters
* Work with reporters on your “beat.”
* Meet with reporters when there is no story

Getting the information out.

* Send routine information to the media
* Publicize the problem before the solution
* Use public meetings to get coverage

BE CIVIL, TRUTHFUL & REALISTIC

When you meet an official or key person – The DO’s and DON’Ts

DO:

* Be prompt
* Be gracious if asked to wait
* Tell the truth and ask only for ethical actions
* Be realistic
* Be respectful
* Be positive
* Be brief

DON’T:

* Don’t argue
* Don’t threaten
* Don’t’ be sarcastic

Don’t preach

Don’t wander

During the meeting

* Observe body language
* Anticipate opposing arguments
* Have a suggested solution

Following the meeting

* Say thank you
* Thank any staff assistant who helped
* Follow through on anything you have promised

FOLLOW UP AND KEEP AT IT!

One-shot efforts usually don’t work

* Meet with officials or key persons regularly
* Invite them to your meetings
* Serve on advisory boards
* Put members on boards and commissions

Continue to educate

* Speak to groups and clubs
* Participate in fairs and events
* Support the officials or key person who support you

References:

1) Ruth Huber, H. Wayne Nelson, F. Ellen Netting and Kevin W. Borders (2007) Elder Advocacy: Essential knowledge and skills across settings. Brooks-Cole.

2) I am an advocate packet, retrieved from <http://www.ncoa.org/get-involved/i-am-an-advocate.html>

**3)** Lustig, John. (2012) Advocacy Strategies for Health and Mental Health Professionals: From Patients to Policies. Springer Publishing**.**