

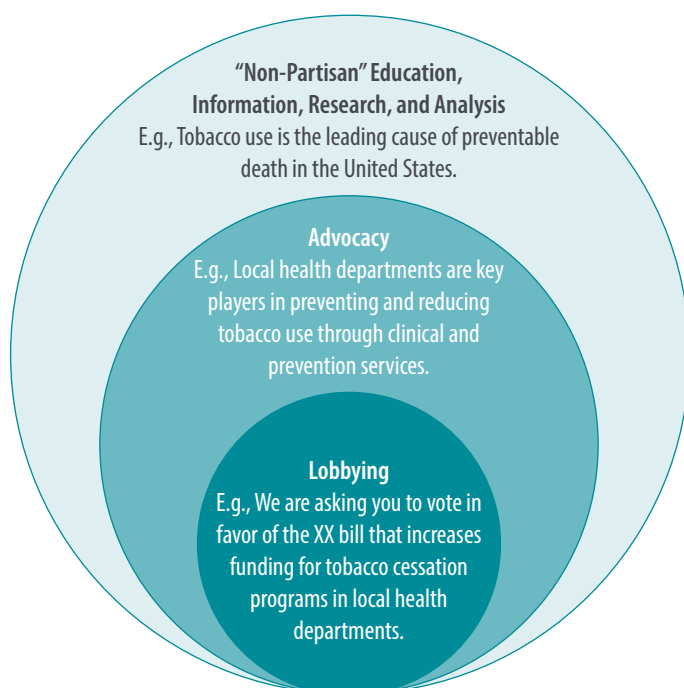
Building Your Advocacy Toolbox: Advocacy vs. Lobbying

Why is advocacy important to public health?

Advocacy is a central tenet of public health. Without advocacy, we wouldn't have seatbelt laws, safe drinking water, and nutrition labeling. It is vital in advancing public health to keep our communities healthy and safe. If public health stakeholders don't speak up and advocate for important public health issues, opposing sides will.

All lobbying contains some form of advocacy but not all advocacy is lobbying. You can communicate in multiple ways with your policymakers about health topics. Local health department leaders and staff should be able to differentiate between advocacy and lobbying because federal funds cannot be used to lobby the federal government.

ADVOCACY VS. LOBBYING



What is the difference between advocacy and lobbying?

Health advocacy—“The processes by which the actions of individuals or groups attempt to bring about social and/or organization change on behalf of a particular health goal, program, interest, or population.”¹ Health advocacy includes educating policymakers and the public about evidence-based policy.

Lobbying—“Attempts to influence a legislative body through communication with a member or employee of a legislative body, or with a government official who participates in formulating legislation.”² Lobbying can include written and oral communication for or against specific legislation.

Grassroots lobbying– Attempting to influence legislation by encouraging the public to contact legislators about legislation.²

Five Advocacy Tips

At the basic level advocacy is building relationships. The goal is to become a valuable resource for policymakers. No matter who the audience is, you should keep in mind the following:

1. Be confident.
2. Frame your message to answer the question, “So what?”
3. Plan and practice your message.
4. Present a clear and compelling message; less is more.
5. Offer yourself as an expert resource and provide examples from your community; stories are more compelling than statistics.

EXAMPLES OF ADVOCACY VS. LOBBYING ACTIVITIES

Advocacy	Lobbying
Meeting with a Member of Congress to educate them about the importance of Zika funding for your community.	Meeting with a member of Congress to urge them to vote for a bill to provide emergency Zika funding for your health department.
Preparing educational materials that depict success stories from your local health department programs.	Preparing materials that include information on health programs at your local health department and contain messaging for or against specific legislation.
Tweeting statistics about diabetes and descriptions of how local health departments are helping reduce diabetes rates.	Tweeting a message urging Congress to vote against cuts for diabetes prevention programs in local health departments.
Sending a weekly e-newsletter discussing factual information on opioid abuse and outlining programmatic efforts that are proven to reduce this health issue.	E-mailing a “call to action” to members of your organization to encourage them to contact their legislator in favor of opioid prevention legislation.



Types of Congressional Outreach

1. Meet with Members of Congress and staff in Washington, DC, or in their home district
2. Invite them to visit a facility or attend an event
3. Write them a letter or e-mail
4. Make a phone call to their office
5. Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper or magazine
6. Harness social media
7. Attend a townhall meeting

References

1. 2000 Joint Committee on Health Education and Promotion Terminology. (2002). Report of the 2000 Joint Committee on health education and promotion terminology. *Journal of School Health, 72*, 3-7.
2. The IRS. (2016). Direct and grass roots lobbying defined. Retrieved from <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/direct-and-grass-roots-lobbying-defined>

Disclaimer: This document is intended as an educational supplement to help further understand the difference between advocacy and lobbying. No federal funds can be used for lobbying activities. It is your responsibility to check the rules in your jurisdiction regarding advocacy and lobbying activities.

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