

12 STEPS TO SUCCESSFUL ADVOCACY



IOWANS
WITH DISABILITIES
IN ACTION

STEP 1 Identify Your Cause

- What do you want? Focus on the solution, not the complaint.
- Define the problem. What do you want fixed?
- Ask for it all, but be willing to compromise.
- See the big picture.
- Is there more than one solution?

STEP 2 Do Your Homework

- Know the issue. How does it affect you and/or your community?
- Gather facts and expert information.
- List the pros and cons of your solution.
- Form a response to the cons.
- Learn the legislative process and track legislation.

STEP 3 Know Your Legislators

- Go online to www.infonetiowa.org, www.legis.iowa.gov or your local library.
- Contact your county auditor or state/local election commissioner.
- Research social media. Most legislators are on Facebook, Twitter and have a website.

STEP 4 Rally the Troops

- Who else supports your cause? Friends, businesses, organizations, community leaders, etc.
- Enlist their support.
- Decide on common themes to maintain message consistency.
- Help your legislator understand why your position is important to their constituents.
- Talk with legislators while they are at home. Do not wait until they go to the Capitol.
- Be prepared to give the legislator information they can use.

STEP 5 Build Support for Your Cause

- Use the media. Call in to radio shows, write letters to the editor, etc.
- Strength is in numbers. Work as a group.
- Consider rallies and other public events to get out your message.

STEP 6 Determine Who Can Help You

- City council, mayor, county officials
- Businesses, civic organizations
- Churches, support groups
- Legislators
- Lobbyists
- Media, news editors
- Friends, family, neighbors

STEP 7 Communicate

- Attend city council and county supervisor meetings and legislative public forums.
- Write letters, emails or make phone calls.
- Set up meetings.
- Invite elected officials to a community event or attend their fundraisers.

STEP 8 Know What to Write or Say

- State the problem.
- State the solution.
- Put the issue into context with a personal story.
- Ask for help.
- Say thank you!
- Follow up.

STEP 9 Keep It Short and Simple

- Be courteous and respectful.
- Be brief, concise and to the point.
- Be informative and truthful.
- Be positive — always make your case without being critical of others.

STEP 10 Support Those Who Support You

- Join organizations sympathetic to your cause.
- Support candidates who support you.
- Do not take traditional friends for granted.
- Never write off a legislator just because of party affiliation.
- Don't make enemies. You might need help in the future.

STEP 11 Remember: It's Not Personal

- Listen to your opponents with the same respect and attention you want.
- Try to understand their position.
- Keep channels of communication open.
- Seek compromise and be diplomatic.

STEP 12 Don't Give Up or Give In

- Remember: Rome wasn't built in a day.
- Be persistent, consistent and patient.
- Aim for consensus rather than victory. Be willing to settle for making progress.
- Stay committed. You have a compelling, energizing reason to keep fighting until you accomplish your goal.

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