

Government Relations and Advocacy for After-School

Presented by
Rachel Sabella
Government Relations Manager

Regional After-School Advocacy Days

- Successes/Challenges from 2009
- New training format
- Plans for 2010

Government Relations Topics

- Lobbying VS Advocacy
- Election Dos and Don'ts
- State Discretionary Awards
- Testimony
- Building Advocacy Capacity

Lobbying vs. Advocacy

As a non-profit organization
you CAN and SHOULD be
engaged in advocacy
activities!

Advocacy is...

- Educating
- Informing
- Telling the story
- Bringing about change

Lobbying is NOT...

- Sending an email to the after-school community with an update on or summary of legislation;
- Making the results of an independent and objective nonpartisan analysis, study, or research on a legislative issue available to the public;
- Responding to verbal or written requests from a legislative body, committee, or subcommittee for technical advice on pending legislation;
- Meeting with your Member of Congress to discuss your program, as well as the general need for and benefits of after-school programs in your community/their district;
- Planning and hosting a briefing on the unique needs of rural communities when it comes to after-school programs.

Election Dos and Don'ts for Non-Profits

2010 NYS Elections: Who's Up...

- All State-Wide Offices: Governor, Comptroller, Attorney General
- Both US Senators*
- All Members of the US House
- All Members of the NYS Senate and Assembly

* Due to mid-term appointment of Sen. Gillibrand

Election Do's for 501(c)3s

- Sponsor appearances by a candidate or public official.
- Sponsor a debate between candidates as long as you invite all qualified candidates and an independent panel prepares the questions.
- Try to persuade candidates to agree with you on issues and to take a public stand—but that is as far as you can go.
- Work to get your positions included on a political party's platform by delivering testimony to both parties' platform committees and including a disclaimer in both oral and written testimony that the testimony is being offered for educational purposes only.
- Operate a nonpartisan voter registration or get-out-the-vote drive.

Election Don'ts for 501(c)3s

- Support specific candidates or parties in races for elected office.
- Endorse a candidate or contribute to a campaign with money or time (members can, of course, donate or volunteer on their own time).
- Contribute any cash or in-kind support.
- Send partisan political communications to their members or employees telling them how to vote.
- Sponsor joint fundraising events or solicitations with candidates or political group.
- Directly approach candidates and ask them to endorse your organization's agenda.

For More Information on Lobbying and Election Rules...

- Alliance for Justice – www.afj.org
- Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest – www.clpi.org
- Lawyers Alliance for New York - <http://www.lawyersalliance.org/>
- League of Women Voters of New York State - <http://www.lwvny.org/>

New York State Discretionary Awards/Legislative Grants

State Discretionary Awards Background

- Awards available from individual members or delegations to support organizations in the district
- Member Awards: \$1,000-\$10,000
(larger if from the majority party)
- Delegation Awards: \$10,000-\$75,000

State Discretionary Awards Process

- Send a letter with your discretionary award ask to elected officials in January
- Confirm with office if letter should be sent to district or legislative office (everyone has a different process)
- Office will most likely ask you to fill out additional financial forms – return as soon as possible
- Awards will be listed in state budget – should also receive an award letter from Elected Official
- If you do receive an award, there will be significant additional paperwork to be completed

State Discretionary Awards Letter Components

- **Introductory paragraph** – Identify specific ask, CBO, school and overall goal of what funding will do.
- **Brief Description and History of Organization** – What is your program/CBO's strength? How do you help the communities in the elected official's district?
- **Description of what funding will accomplish** – How will this funding help your program? Will you hire staff? Does it support a training enhancement? Purchase Equipment?
- **Closing Paragraph** – Remember to thank them, ask for support and make clear who elected official/staff should contact with additional questions.

Legislative Testimony

Legislative Testimony: Background

- Held by all levels of government, at various times throughout the year
- Sometimes in Capital building, sometimes satellite events held in different regions
- Opportunity to speak publicly about your organization and impact of government actions
- Can be presented written or orally – may limit pages or speaking time

Legislative Testimony: Components

- **Introduction:** Brief overview of your organization – history, background, community you serve
- **Why Am I Here:** What impact will the proposed budget have on your organization? Make it Personal
- **What Do I Want:** Be very clear on what you want accomplished. Add research findings.
- **Closing:** Thank committee/legislative body for the opportunity to speak. Ask them to support families and communities.

Legislative Testimony: Tricks of the Trade

- **Keep it Simple!** Does not need to be 10 pages – a 1 page testimony is sufficient.
- **Recycle!** You can use the same testimony “shell” each time – only the “Why Am I Here/What Do I Want” needs to change.
- **Share!** If this is new to you, ask what another organization has submitted – use their testimony to guide your work. The research exists – NYSAN, TASC, Afterschool Alliance – use that in your work.

Building Advocacy Capacity

How Do We Engage Elected Officials in After-School Issues?

How Do We Engage and Keep Community Members Involved in After-School Advocacy Efforts?

Engaging Elected Officials

- Maintaining a year-round relationship with elected officials is key to advocacy success
- Don't just contact when you need money – invite and inform
- Do a little research – Do they have a connection to after-school? Background in sports?
- Bring the kids – no one can engage elected officials more than children
- Remind them of your program – send newsletters, program attire

Engaging Elected Officials: Staff Members

- Don't be disappointed if you meet/speak with staff – staff has ear of member
- Staff may be young but engaged and professional
- Invite staff to visit your program – make this a personal cause for them

Engaging After-School Advocates

**The Key to Long-Term
Advocacy Success...**

Different Types of Advocates...

- Some advocates will be **leaders**—people who provide vision and keep the advocacy effort on track.
- Some advocates will be **advisors**—people who are willing to share their special expertise with advocates and the policymakers that advocates are trying to influence.
- Some advocates will be **researchers**—people who can collect data and synthesize research reports into issue briefs and background papers.
- Some advocates will be “**contributors**”—those people who are willing to roll up their sleeves and participate in the nuts-and-bolts work of advocacy, from making phone calls to stuffing letters or marching in front of the state capitol.
- Some advocates will be **friends**—people who do not have the time or resources to participate in every aspect of the planning and implementation of advocacy, yet who care and can always be counted on to help when a push is needed.

Time for Albany!

Tips for Preparing Your Region for
After-School Advocacy Day

Key After-School Messages

Importance/Value of After-School

- Increases Student Achievement
- Reduces the high school dropout rate
- After-school programs help keep kids safe and reduce risky behaviors
- After-school programs often provide kids with opportunities not available during the school day

Key After-School Messages

Impact on the economy

- After-School programs are cost-effective
- Programs provide much needed employment opportunities for community members, who reinvest funds in the communities where they live

Key After-School Messages

Why After-School is Critical to Families

- After-school programs are a necessary workforce support that parents count on to keep their kids safe and supervised while parents are at work or searching for work
- After-school programs are a cost-effective child care solution for families
- After-school programs help families feel more connected to the school and community

Personalizing the Key After-School Message

- **After-School Staff:** Which funding stream supports your program? How many staff members do you employ? Students? Program Highlights?
- **Parents:** How has after-school helped YOUR child? How does it affect your ability to work?
- **Students:** What have you learned in after-school? If you weren't in after-school, what would you be doing?

Leave Behinds for Legislative Visits

- Program information packets
- Letters/postcards from supporters at home
- Books/letters/pictures from after-school participants
- Program t-shirt/DVD/hat
- Bring a camera!

Remind the elected officials that you represent many more constituents from their district and community.

Involving Youth Advocates

- Never underestimate the power of youth voices
- Ask students what issues are important to them; work to develop an advocacy plan
- Benefits for kids – Understanding of government, learning about new careers, potential for jobs/internships, gather information on college scholarships

Most Important to Remember in Advocacy....

- Be comfortable
- Be yourself
- Be passionate – tell the personal stories
- You don't need to be the expert!

Questions???

A desire to be more involved in advocacy?

Rachel Sabella

Government Relations Manager

646-943-8727

rsabella@tascorp.org