Legislative Advocacy 101

How to Speak Up at the Statehouse & Make Your Voice heard.

By Nicole LeBlanc
Advocacy - What is it?
What will you ADVOCATE for?
Elevator Speeches with politicians

**TALKING POINTS**
What to say on the phone, in person and in writing

1) **WHO** you are
   - Tell them that you have a disability and say, “I speak for myself!”
   - Tell them that you vote!

2) **WHERE** you live
   - Let them know if you’re in their voting district
   - Let them know if you voted for them

3) **Tell them WHY** you’re contacting them
   - Keep it very simple and short
   - Speak from your heart
   - Give them a copy of the Legislative Alert
   - Say we need more money in the budget for Developmental Services.
Example

For next year, we need money for **HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES**.

Ask them, “Do you know how many students with disabilities are graduating this year?” There are 96 students who will need services. Many will lose their jobs without support. For 96 people we need **$1,074,000 General Fund**.
Testimony Tips: Remember K.I.S.S.S.S.S.S.S

Keep
It
Short – two minutes at most
Sincere – speak from the heart
Simple – use a group’s whole name – no initials
Stick to the facts – don’t make things up

FOLLOW UP with something in writing!!
Another example

- My name is Nicole LeBlanc and I live in Montpelier.

Most people getting services live with their families and many parents are getting older and can’t have their son or daughter live with them anymore.

For next year, we need EMERGENCY CASELOAD money to pay for the new services they will need.
Activity - Write your elevator speech

If you work or volunteer say...

1. My name is ____________________

2. I live in ____________________

3. I get developmental services.
   - Talk about your job or how you volunteer.
   - Say what you do.
   - How it makes you feel to work or help others.
   - Tell them what staff do to help you.
   - Speak from your heart!
Connecting with your legislators
How do I find my Legislators?

http://www.capitol.tn.gov/legislators
How to set up appointments with Legislators

• Email or call them directly through the Sargent At Arms.
• Lunch is usually a good time to meet when you are at the statehouse.
• Write the appointment on your calendar
Presenting Yourself

• Look your best
• Dress to impress
• Introduce yourself
• Handshake

• Focus
• Thank you
Calling and Emailing Legislators Tips

• Don’t call on the weekend

• It is best to call or email only people in your district. Regardless of what committee they are on.

• Legislators often get annoyed when you email people out of your district.

• Make it short and sweet and to the point!
What is a Testimony?

• Spoken or Written
• Prepared ahead of time

• Official- it goes on the Legislative record
• Public- You speak in front of a group
How to Get a Bill Passed

- Idea
- Find Sponsors
- Draft
Continued-Bill gets passed
How to Write Testimony

• Know your audience
• Start by saying your name and who you work for, what town you live in.
• Speak From the Heart
• Talk about the Good, Bad and the Ugly
• Inform them of the impact it has on your services and your life.
• Speak to the value of the services
• End by saying “Thank You for listening to my testimony!”
• Bring copies or email ahead of time
SAMPLE State House TESTIMONEY
Governor has announced he is reducing Supported Employment and Medicaid Waiver supports for people with disabilities due to a $37,000,000 dollar shortfall.
Your Story

• Use pictures of yourself
• Talk about your support people
• Talk about your struggles
• Talk about Self-Advocacy and Speaking Up
THANK YOU