

Taking action to prevent Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in Ohio

Advocacy worksheet

Advocacy is a broad term that encompasses many activities, including educating state and local policymakers, building coalitions to support a cause and lobbying for policy change. Lobbying involves communicating a position for or against a specific public policy (such as a piece of legislation).

Anyone can advocate for state and local policy changes that lay the foundation for healthy families and communities, such as support for the strategies in the [Taking action to prevent ACEs in Ohio](#) report. There are, however, regulations related to lobbying. Federal law sets parameters for advocacy and lobbying by nonprofit organizations.¹ State law also requires reporting of certain types of lobbying activities.² It is a good idea for nonprofit and government organizations to check with legal counsel and/or other experts before engaging in lobbying, and to review funding agreements for any other restrictions.

Steps to create an advocacy campaign

Complete the three steps in this worksheet to begin developing a strategy to guide your advocacy activities:

1. Define your message

Start by answering these questions³ to define your advocacy goals and frame your message:

- ▶ **What change do you want?** What will advance the strategies you prioritized in the [Choosing ACEs prevention strategies worksheet](#)? Where can advocacy lead to a change in policies, allocation of resources and/or public perception?

Example: Making the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) refundable in Ohio

- ▶ **Why do you want this change?** What data and stories do you have that explain the problem and support your solution? Who is most affected?

Example: In 2022, 17.7% of Ohio children lived in households with incomes below the federal poverty level (FPL).⁴ People with lower incomes are more likely to be exposed to ACEs and experience poor health outcomes.⁵

- **Who can make this change happen?** Who has the power and resources to help you achieve your goals?

Example: The Ohio General Assembly can pass laws related to the EITC. It would then need to be signed by the governor.

2. Mobilize your partners

Coalitions can multiply the effects of your advocacy campaign and spread your message. Use the [Coalition-Building worksheet](#) to identify partners that can or already advocate for the issues you prioritized. This is also an opportunity to elevate community partners by engaging with families affected by ACEs in your community. You can gather feedback on their needs and highlight their experiences in your communications.

3. Design and implement your approach

Map out which education, advocacy and/or lobbying activities are necessary to achieve your goals (see page 4 of [this advocacy toolkit](#) for examples). Consider both high-touch activities (e.g., meeting with policymakers or testifying before the state legislature) and low-touch activities (e.g., raising awareness on social media).

4. Define what you need to do to bring about the change you want

How can you make it happen?

Example: Meet with your state representative and state senator to educate them about poverty in Ohio and ties between income and ACEs.

Other useful resources

- [Choosing an Advocacy Campaign Goal](#), M+R Strategic Services
- [NAACHO Advocacy Toolkit](#), National Association of County and City Health Officials
- [Advocacy Guide](#), American Academy of Pediatrics
- [Everyday Advocacy](#), National Council of Nonprofits
- [From Pilot to Policy: Tools for program staff, philanthropy and other stakeholders](#), Health Policy Institute of Ohio
- [Policymakers as partners in prevention](#), Health Policy Institute of Ohio

Notes

1. "Everyday Advocacy," National Council of Nonprofits. https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/everyday-advocacy?gclid=Cj0KCQjw8e-gBhD0ARisAJIDsaUfdgpgG8YYWBkaG4ExUXuNWT6_HY_2zR0Ua-m6m72pNxllimkhAEYlAAh0CEALw_wcB
2. "Ohio Lobbying Handbook." Joint Legislative Ethics Committee, Office of the Legislative Inspector General. 2014. <http://www.jlec-olig.state.oh.us/PDFs/Lobbying/Ohio%20Lobbying%20Handbook.pdf>
3. Modified from "Answering the Three Key Questions for Advocacy Campaigns." M+R Strategic Services. 2013.
4. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 1-year estimates, as reported in the 2024 Health Value Dashboard. Health Policy Institute of Ohio. April 2024.
5. Data snapshot: Adverse childhood experiences in Ohio. Health Policy Institute of Ohio. Oct. 2022