



Social Drivers of Infant Mortality

Advocacy worksheet

This tool is a part of the ***Social Drivers of Infant Mortality: Recommendations for Action and Accountability in Ohio series.***

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

Anyone can advocate for state and local policy changes that lay the foundation for healthy births and families, such as support for the recommendations in the Action and Accountability 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 to develop 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 policy goal(s) and recommendation(s) you prioritized in the **Recommendations Worksheet**? Where can advocacy lead to a change in policies, allocation of resources and/or public perception?

Example: **Source of income protections** in your local community.

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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: 15% of local families spend more than half of their monthly income on housing costs. People with young children, people of color and people with low incomes are most likely to be affected. But many local landlords won't accept Section 8 housing vouchers as payment.

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

Example: Local city councils and county commissioners can pass ordinances prohibiting source of income discrimination (such as the [City of Reynoldsburg](#)).

- 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 the drivers of infant mortality in your community. You can gather feedback on their needs and highlight their experiences in your communications.

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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).

Define what you need to do to bring about the change you want. How can you make it happen?

Example: Meet with your city council members to educate them about the housing needs of your community and the ties between housing and infant mortality.

Other useful resources

- **Ohio Policymaking Basics**, a free online, self-study course, The Ohio State University College of Public Health and Health Policy Institute of Ohio
- **Choosing an Advocacy Campaign Goal**, M+R Strategic Services
- **Getting Started with Policy Change Action Learning Guide**, County Health Rankings and Roadmaps
- **NACCHO Advocacy Toolkit**, National Association of County and City Health Officials
- **Advocacy Guide**, American Academy of Pediatrics
- **Everyday Advocacy**, National Council of Nonprofits
- **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-gBhD0ARIsAJiDsaUfdgpgG8YYWBkaG4ExUXuNWT6HY_2zR0Ua-m6m72pNxliImkhAEylaAh0CEALw_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.