



10 Advocacy: Engaging the Public

What is Lobbying? What is Advocacy?

What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is educating and creating awareness among legislators and the general public of issues facing the community and the importance of aligning public policy to address the need. Advocacy does not endorse or oppose specific legislation, but rather informs the community at large how public policy decisions impact service provision. The following activities are considered advocacy, **not** lobbying:

- Providing technical assistance or advice to a legislative body or committee in response to a written request;
- Making available nonpartisan analysis, study or research;
- Providing examinations and discussions of broad, social, economic and similar problems;
- Communicating with a legislative body regarding matters which might affect the existence of the organization, its powers and duties, its tax-exempt status, or the deduction of contributions to the organization (the "self-defense" exception); and
- Updating the members of your own organization on the status of legislation, without a call to action.

Advocacy activities are not restricted for non-profits and are a great way to engage policy makers in discussions of issues facing their constituents.



What is Lobbying?

Lobbying is attempting to influence legislators to support or oppose a particular issue or piece of legislation and is allowed for non-profits within certain parameters.

Direct lobbying is defined as communication with a legislator, legislative staff or legislative body, or any covered executive branch or other government employee who may participate in the formulation of legislation. The communication refers to a specific piece of legislation and expresses a view on that legislation.

Grassroots Lobbying is defined as an attempt to influence specific legislation by encouraging the public to contact legislators about that legislation. A communication constitutes grassroots lobbying if it refers to specific legislation, reflects a view on that specific legislation and encourages the recipient of the communication to take lobbying action. This type of communication is known as a call to action.