

# Grassroots Advocacy

- What motivates you to speak up about an issue?

# Grassroots Advocacy – What is it?

definition:

- local areas where individuals live (and vote) and groups operate
- The act of an individual constituent communicating ideas and opinions to government officials

# Why Practitioners need to participate in Grassroots Advocacy?

- Policymakers listen to constituents
- Your job depends on it
- Clear policies prevent encroachment
- Appropriate policies = Consumer protection

# Grassroots Advocacy – TO DOs

- Communicate with your legislator
- Establish an ongoing relationship with your legislator
- Network with other local organizations - become active in local chambers, associations etc.

# Communicating with your Legislator

- Set up a meeting
- Send a letter
- Send an email
- Communicate by phone
- Invite to an event

# Meeting with your Legislator

- Request a meeting in writing and fax or mail to the legislator
- Follow-up with a phone call to his/her scheduler
- Set time with scheduler
- Invite others to attend

# The Meeting

- Come with written information to leave with the Legislator
- Decide in advance exactly what you want to talk about
- Narrow your discussion to 3 issues or points
- Coordinate in advance with a group

# Capitol Meeting

- Discussion should stay to three issues
- Keep to legislation or budget
- Tell the legislator or staff what you want
- Have your card handy
- Reference information provided

# Post-Meeting

- Establish yourself as a resource
- Leave information about your issue or your organization behind
- Send a follow-up letter to the Legislator

# Send a letter

- Send a letter that is no more than two pagers
- On letterhead
- 3 points
- Always polite

# Send an email

- Email should be with a letter on letterhead attached if possible
- Should clearly state who you are and your organization etc.
- Be Polite

# Make a phone call

- State why you are calling
- Ask to talk to staff handling the issue or bill
- State clearly your position
- Send a follow-up letter if possible

# Invite your legislator to an event

- Best idea to expose your legislator to your organization
- Office visit might be required first
- Invite them to an opening, program commencement etc.
- Involve your clients and employees
- Thank them or recognize them

# Have you got what it takes?

- Have you ever disagreed with a rule or policy?
- Are you willing to take a risk for change?
- Do you believe actions speak louder than words?
- Do you vent frustrations to co-workers?
- Do you frequently explain your profession to others?

# Keys to become a successful advocate

- Establish the relationship
- Establish yourself as an expert
- Communicate with your legislator
- Attend a fundraiser
- Send articles info. on your industry

# Network with other organizations

- Become active in local chambers, Elks, business associations
- Keep informed of local politics
- Attend local political/charitable events
- Read newsletters and publications on local politics

# Your participation is important

- You are the expert
- Don't be shy
- Legislators welcome your expertise and experience

# Practical Examples of Advocacy

- Become a member of your national and state associations.
- Use the AOTA Legislative Action Center Help your state association's legislative committee advocate.
- Participate in Capitol Hill Day in Washington, DC.
- Visit your members of Congress when they are in your district.
- Provide testimony on issues relevant to your areas of practice.
- Write letters to your state and federal legislators about health care and OT concerns.
- Use AOTA resources documenting OT's role in health care.
- Invite elected officials to visit your facility to provide a first-hand experience.
- Vote in every election.
- Participate in political action committees.

# Advocacy Do's

- Establish an on-going relationship and reputation for reliability
- Treat the person as a friend / intelligent person
- Be specific and know your facts
- Provide a brief, clearly written summary of position
- Request specific action
- Thank you's

# Advocacy Don'ts

- Try to talk with someone when they are obviously in a hurry
- Be argumentative or abrasive
- Overload them with written material
- Assume they are familiar with your issues
- Bluff if you don't know the answer
- Talk about too many issues at once
- Be late
- Threaten a legislator with votes

# Things to Remember

- We are one of many special interest groups lobbying for issues
- Define success
  - Victories can be small and incremental
  - “View every meeting as an opportunity to strengthen relationships, deepen understanding, and broaden support.

# Legislative Meetings

- Meetings with key Legislative Staff
- Peter Hansel & Roger Dunston, Senate Health and Human Services
- Rosielyn Pulmano, Senate Business and Professions Committee
- Jack Hailey, Senate Human Services Committee
- Ross Warren, Assembly Business and Professions Committee

# Discussion Points

- What is Occupational Therapy?
  - History of OTs & OTAs in California
  - Types of services
  - Benefits to Patients
  - Payors
  - Scope of Practice
  - Educational and Licensure Requirements

# Discussion Points

- Top Concerns for Occupational Therapy
  - Payment Issues
  - Scope of Practice
  - Licensure and continuing education
  - Health care reform
  - Persons with disabilities
    - Developmental, rehabilitative, mental

# Discussion Points

## ■ Specific Committee Issues

### ■ Health Committee

- Health care reform
- Medi-Cal

### ■ Business and Professions Committee

- Licensure
- Scope of practice

### ■ Human Services Committee

- Developmental disabilities