

Advocacy 201: After Your Visit, Will They Remember Your Message?

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Objectives

- 1) discuss key factors in forming the relationship
- 2) identify at least 3 strategies to strengthen your relationship with policymakers and staff
- 3) apply components of the school health example to your legislative and policy advocacy efforts





Directors of Health Promotion and Education (DHPE) Mission

To Strengthen, Promote, and Enhance the Professional Practice of Health Promotion and Education across the Nation with a *sharpened* focus toward health policy and health equity



The Major Health Problems of Our Time

....Will not be solved solely by individual actions and health choices, but by individuals coming together to make our society one in which healthy choices are easy, fun, and popular. Communities in which policies and environments focus on the latter approach will be healthier and more satisfying places to live, work, and play.

- James S. Marks, MD MPH, *Policy and Environmental Change: New Directions for Public Health, 2001*

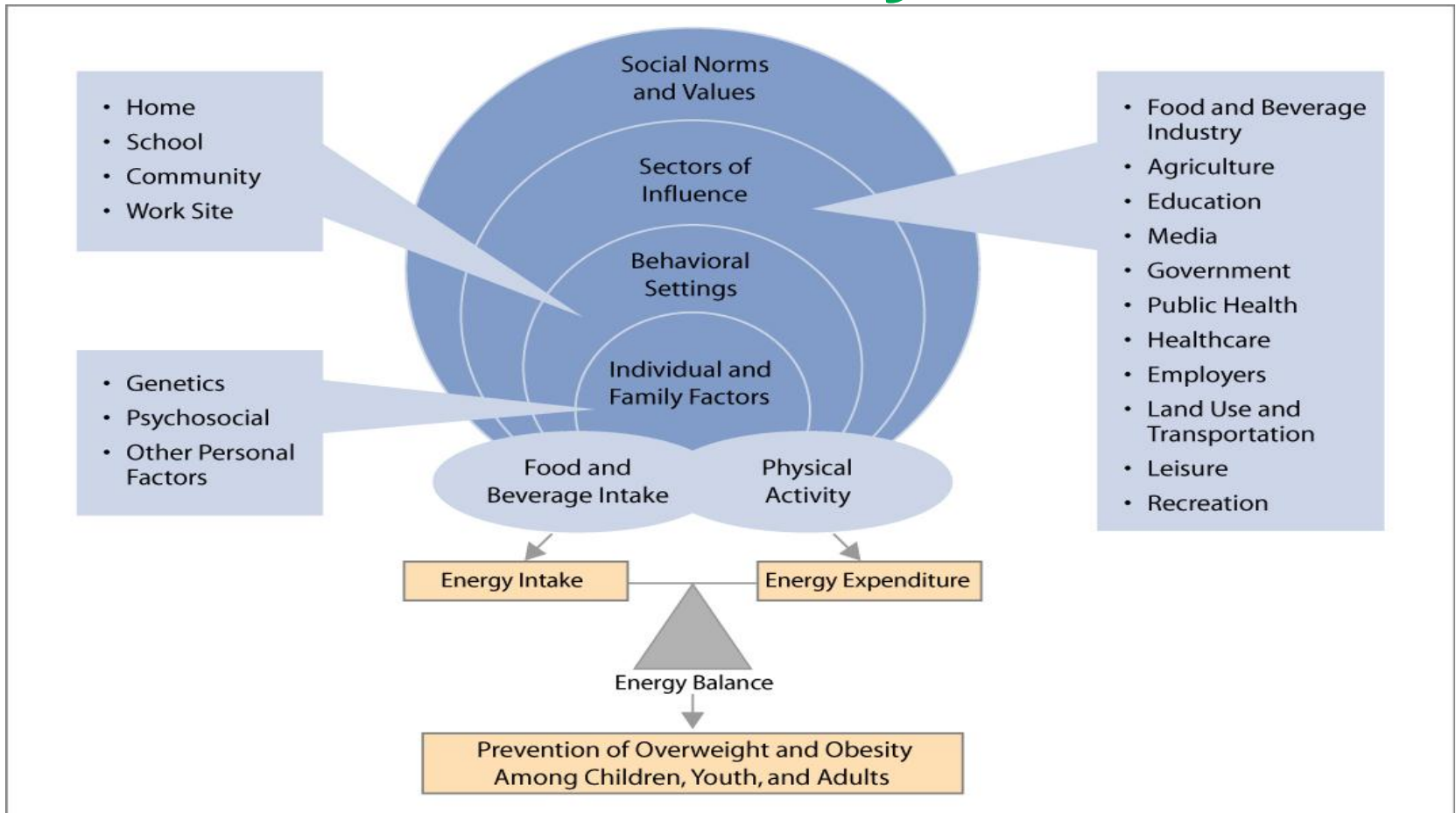
Public Health Issues Are Everyday Headlines

- **New OECD report finds US continues to have highest obesity rates in the world.**
- OECD , 2/27/12
- **Among young people obesity rates have tripled over the past four decades with nearly 1/3 of American children and adolescents either overweight or obese. This puts our kids at increased risk for heart disease, arthritis, stroke, high blood pressure, asthma, cancer, and type 2 diabetes**
-JAMA, 2008
- **Community Health Centers Hit Hard by Washington Deficit Cuts**
- Washington Post, 10/6/2011

Social-Ecological Model



Framework for Addressing Obesity





Making the Case for Policy, Environmental & Systems Change

- **Traditional Health Promotion Paradigm**
 - Focus on individual behavior change
 - Strategies include: Education for individuals and Awareness Programs
- **Need Paradigm Shift**
 - Focus on creating a supportive infrastructure for health
 - Strategies include changing: public policies, built environments and systems



Shifting the Paradigm

Population-based Strategies

- **Public Policies**
- **Organizational Policies**
- **Built Environments**
- **Social Environments**

Policy Driven Society

- **Since the 1950's America's landscape has been shaped by public policy**
- **While successes, a lot of work remains**
- **Brown vs. Board of Education, 1954 (ended segregation in public education)**
- **Civil Rights Act, 1964**
- **Voting Rights Act, 1965**
- **Medicaid/Medicare Act, 1965 (America's social safety net provided healthcare for the elderly and poor)**
- **Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity and Reconciliation Act, 1996 (welfare to work – move from government assistance after 5 years)**
- **Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, 2010 (health reform that provides coverage to more than 30 million formerly uninsured) - Phase In Approach**

Communication Basics

- **Goal is to establish a relationship**
 - **Importance of your work to the district/state**
 - **How you or your organization can be a resource to the Congressional office on a wide range of public health issues**





Relationships and Communication

**Remember this Principle: Any
successful venture or relationship
begins with communication and
CONTINUES with persistent and
timely follow-up!**

Start By Being Distinctive

- **Be memorable; send video files**
- **Keep constituents uppermost in mind**
 - Put a face on prevention and your community/state
 - Tell good stories
- **Speak from a broader base of support**
 - Give numbers; \$ spent and saved; people impacted; number of organizations and members behind this effort
 - Serve as a resource



Before You Leave the Member's Office

If you have promised any information and/or if you have been asked for anything,

- **review it at the end of the visit**
- **give an estimated timeframe to the staff regarding when you will be back in touch**
- **Make sure you get a business card from the Member's staff**



Immediately After Your Visit

- **Send a thank you note**
- **Invite them for a visit to your health agency or special event**
- **Look for opportunities to recognize and publicly acknowledge their efforts**



Follow-Up Strategies

- **Visit the Congressional Member in His/Her District**
- **Attend Town Hall Meetings and Ask Questions or Provide Comments**
- **Drop off News, Publications, and Stories from Back Home when you are in Washington, DC**
- **Follow-Up with Letters, Calls and Emails**



Actions Back Home in the State

- **Invite Members of Congress/staff to visit programs and participate in community events**
- **Involve partners to show a broad base of local support**
- **Generate local media coverage of your activities (news/press release, letters to the editor, op-ed, media events/interviews, etc.)**



Tips on Serving As A Resource

- **Stay current on funding (appropriations) and legislative issues that impact both at home and at the national level**
- **Find out how Congressional members are voting on issues**
- **Know where to find info on current Congressional climate and actions; in other words, what are the most important issues of the time and impact on health**
- **Provide credible and timely “news” from back home**

A Word About Written Communication

- 1. Good Does Not Mean Long**
 - One to Two Pages for Letters at the Most
- 2. Write More than One Letter**
 - Not Identical
- 3. If you personally know the Member or Staff say so;
it will capture their attention**
- 4. Be relevant and specific to Member concerns,
assignments and interests**
- 5. Ask for a response; make sure you provide your
contact information.**



A Word About Effective Coalition Advocacy

- **Cause or issue is “right”**
- **Advocates represent power in numbers**
- **Issues, opposition & climate of opinion about issue is well researched**
- **Advocates are skilled in using advocacy tools (including media)**
- **Effective strategies/tactics are chosen**

Effective Coalition Advocacy works when...cont.

- **You can define advocacy objectives early**
- **Internal and external processes work**
- **You can share resources**
- **Planning and evaluation are key components**
- **Roles are clearly defined**
- **Focus is on ACTION**

The Winning Equation

Education + Action = Advocacy



A Word About Building Your Army

- **Start with the easy ones**
- **Later broaden the membership**
 - **Be sure the core group is strong**
 - **Be strategic – what need is fulfilled?**
 - **Prepare your invitation**
 - **What do you want?**
 - **What must they commit?**



Members: Strategic Recruitment

- **Recruit the necessary skills and interests**
 - Researching the issue and evidence
 - Writing and designing materials
 - Recruiting and coordinating volunteers
 - Media relationships
 - Resource identification, Fund raising
 - Tasks (mailings, petitions)



Example: The School Health Army

- Recruit from the “power spectrum”
 - Parents
 - Administrators
 - Food Vendors
 - Students
 - Who else ?

Broadening Membership

- **Recruit from all sides of the problem**
 - Affected groups and service providers
 - Competitors of any perpetrators
- **Recruit outside your discipline**
 - Expand scope of problem
- **Recruit past opponents (if appropriate)**
 - Unexpected and powerful
 - Can be temporary alliance





Communications

- What's wrong, why it matters, what should be done
 - Focus on the last 2
- Use “consumer math”
- Use new media
- Maintain regular communications with your army !

Back in the States – School Employee Wellness

- Members/staff invited to walkathons, health fairs
- Special interest stories in local media
- Document and share successes



Key Advocacy Targets

- **Decision makers**
 - Agency administrators
 - Policy makers
 - Business leaders
 - Civic leaders
- **Pressure groups who influence the decision**
 - Constituents
 - Internal advocates
 - Lobbyists
 - Influential organizations (professional associations)

Ingredients for Success

- **Advocacy coalition**
 - Affected constituent groups
 - Can make strategic decisions
 - Can manage an educational campaign
- **Staff to coordinate action**
- **Grassroots network of volunteers**
 - “Face” of the problem to policymakers
 - Can articulate solution
- **“Hero opportunity” for decision-makers**

Principles and Concepts

- **Health is MORE than the absence of Disease.**
 - Make the Healthier Choice the Easier Choice
- **Health is Everyone's Business.**
 - Look for the Health Agenda in Everything We Do
- **Policy Change is Incremental.**
 - Know how decisions are made and who makes them
 - Understand what influences decisions
- **Best practices and evidence-based policies are critical to success.**
 - Impact the entire population through proven strategies



Key Points

- **We can not do it without each other**
- **Get involved early in the process**
- **Make the Case - use data, public health success stories, human interest angle, media, etc**
- **Advocacy is about building long-term relationships**
- **Say Thank You to ALL**





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