



Webinar Materials

"Yes You Can: How Parents and Advocates Can and Do make Positive Change"

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presented by
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The Advocate Academy is a project of



*A not-for-profit organization dedicated to services and projects
that work to improve the lives of children, youth and adults with disabilities.*

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Yes, You Can!

How Parents and Advocates
Can and Do make Positive Change





What is our history? Our story?



The journey

The things we need

The things we don't need

The barriers

The big wins in our lives

The losses



- The things we have learned along the way
- What part of our story do we share with others?



Historically the life story for persons with disabilities:

- Exclusion
- Segregation
- Automatic referral to disability "systems" rather than community.



Denial of services and supports that would make a quality life in the community possible for millions of individuals with disabilities



“people with disabilities spend a lifetime overcoming not what God wrought but what man imposed by custom and law”

*Senator Lowell Weicker
1989 Congressional Testimony*

Public Policies enacted between the 1970s and 1990



- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
- DD Act (Developmental Disabilities)
- SSI and SSDI fiscal supports
- Fair Housing Amendments of 1988
- Americans with Disabilities Act



- Equality of opportunity (individualization, inclusion, meaningful opportunity).
- Full participation (empowerment, self-determination, informed choice at individual and systems level).



- Independent living (skills, services, and supports).
- Economic self-sufficiency (training, education, assistance and supports).
- Educational Equity (Access to high quality curriculum and high expectations for achievement, the Higher Education Act)

Policy change and improvement is a three step process:



1. First - Understand what we want to change

2. And – Learn about the current policy or program and its strengths and weaknesses.

3. Identify your hopes and dreams



And then the work begins!





Find out whether the policy is supported by both sides

or just one side.

Who are the "key players" and what are their roles?

Is this change going to be very controversial?





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How strong are the people who **don't** want this change?

Are there other folks who will support the same goals and changes?



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Don't go alone!

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Why do we need an organized coalition?

What is the coalition role in exercising power over the policymaking process?

Why coalitions?



- policy makers demand it, source of power, and helps provide support to policy makers and their staff
- It provides a comprehensive point-of-view (cross-disability, consumers and providers), and nontraditional groups (reaching beyond the disability community).
- Keeps the disability community together



- Synergy :-> using each other's energy, ideas and strength!
- Skilled individuals performing varied tasks working together.
- Leadership – selling the policy to others and staying focused
- Responsibility (carrying out agreed on tasks).

Make a Plan!



- Strategies
- Actions
- Have pre-meetings





Reality Check big issues, past advocacy efforts and why change now possible, barriers to success, how strong is the coalition and are we strong enough to make change? How strong is the opposition?



Identify the prize (focus on principles and major issues & concerns, not positions).

Decide on overall strategy and determine how particular tactic (such as meeting with a leader or policy maker or demonstrating) fits in.




Understand That Who Delivers the Message is as Important and Often More Important Than the Message

Strategically select the spokespersons who will have maximum influence over policymakers.

Ensure that message is presented in manner that take into account the needs of the policy maker and staff.

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Understand the Power of Personal Stories Tied to:



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Policy Objectives!

Need to decide how to frame the issue and then tie personal story to policy objectives and policy options.

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Telling personal stories to each other *doesn't work.*

Best personal stories show how the change in policy has a positive impact:
Before it was bad and now it is good.
 ..

Make Relationships





*Coming together is a beginning.
Keeping together is progress.
Working together is success.*

--- Henry Ford



The Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation has an introductory guide to how policy, focused on people with disabilities, is made at the national level. It is available free to all.

Follow this link

<http://www.jpkf.org/IPKF-Policy-Guide/index.htm>

The Advocacy Institute has a number of publications that provide clear and concise descriptions and explanations of education policies that affect students with disabilities, their teachers and their families. You will find them at www.advocacyinstitute.org

Your state government website is an authoritative source for data, regulations and state statutes that affect the lives of individuals with disabilities. Most information can be reached by simply typing your state and then a "dot" gov.
