



Grassroots Advocacy Toolkit

INFORM – MOBILIZE – ENGAGE



Grassroots Advocacy Toolkit

INFORM – MOBILIZE – ENGAGE

WHAT IS GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY?

Grassroots advocacy is a form of citizen-level activism designed to foster productive engagement between constituents and their lawmakers on a local, state, and federal level. All constituents have the right to meet with their lawmakers, helping them truly understand key issues impacting their communities. Lawmakers rely on input and information from their communities and share those ideas with their colleagues. The Home Care Association of New York State (HCA) encourages its members to build relationships with their lawmakers in all levels of government to bring home care, hospice and managed longer term care (MLTC) services to the forefront of lawmakers' agendas.

HCA's Grassroots Advocacy Toolkit is built on the framework of three important actions: INFORM, MOBILIZE AND ENGAGE. Utilizing this framework will help providers learn how to become effective advocates and helpful resources for lawmakers across the state.

INFORM – MOBILIZE – ENGAGE



The three most important steps to become an effective advocate include:

- **Establish basic familiarity and relationships with your elected officials (local, state and federal) and their staff and inform yourself of the issues and legislative priorities at hand;**
- **Mobilize your community; and**
- **Engage with and educate your elected officials.**

Once providers and their staff become aware and informed of an advocacy initiative, it is time to mobilize and engage with lawmakers. While meeting with lawmakers may be intimidating, providers and their staff are truly the experts on home care and hospice issues and should derive confidence from that awareness. There is strength in numbers. **The more that people discuss an issue, the more it will receive attention from lawmakers.**

INFORM YOURSELF TO EDUCATE OTHERS

Knowledgeable advocates are important and effective resources to the Legislature and state agencies such as the New York State Department of Health. Advocates act as educators to their lawmakers who deal with different constituent issues on a daily basis. There are many issues affecting the home care industry, but there are hundreds of other interest groups vying for the attention of the Legislature and state agencies. Advocates must know and understand the industry's issues in order to effectively and efficiently communicate the importance of an issue and why it should be supported.

An elected representative may be sympathetic to the nature of your cause, but it is the job of the advocate to inform lawmakers of the impact an issue has on the community and, most importantly, on the constituents within a legislative district. Be prepared to communicate the value of your organization. Discuss how many individuals your organization serves, scope of the services you provide that help constituents, how many full and part time employees your organization employs and how much your organization contributes to the local economy. These numbers provide a valuable fiscal picture of your organization within the community. This impact is meaningful to lawmakers as they consider ways to support you and your organization.



EDUCATE LAWMAKERS ON THESE TOPICS

- Your specific organization services
- Value of home and community-based care
- Reimbursement
- Workforce
- Innovations/Collaboration
- Unfunded Mandates

STAY INVOLVED WITH HCA'S ADVOCACY EVENTS THROUGHOUT THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION

- **Advocacy 101** – a members-only webinar that outlines the information in this Toolkit and provides a background on the political and policy-making processes;
- **Budget Updates** – members-only calls and webinars on the budget process;
- **Advocacy Day** – a day of lobbying in Albany on budget proposals affecting the home care, hospice and MLTC industry; and
- **Virtual Lobby Days** – days throughout the legislative session for members to engage with lawmakers online by sending emails, texts and utilizing Social Media.

MOBILIZE YOUR COMMUNITY

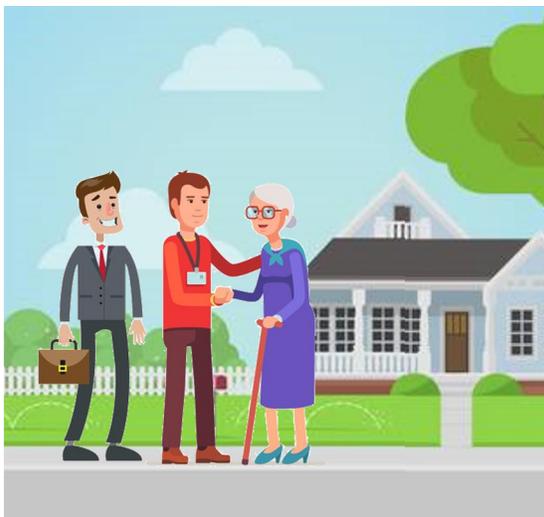
There is strength in numbers. Providers should educate their staff and community supporters (e.g. patients, family, boards, leaders, etc.) about your organization's advocacy initiatives and encourage their participation. The more frequently lawmakers hear from individuals on a particular issue, the more likely that issue will be discussed by the Legislature, and a resolution sought.

To access information about HCA's key budgetary and legislative priorities, and to learn how you can engage with lawmakers, visit HCA's Legislative Action Center at hca-nys.org/advocacy-pac/state.



ENGAGE AND EDUCATE YOUR LAWMAKERS

There are multiple ways to engage with lawmakers throughout the span of the Legislative Session. However, the best time to start is now, today, with basic connection to your legislative offices in their district offices. Inform them of your presence as constituents, your services to the community, and offer your resources to assist anytime with their local constituent needs. During the legislative session, the best platform to engage with lawmakers may depend on the time of year. For example, prior to release of the final state budget, HCA may request that providers meet with lawmakers face-to-face in district offices to discuss how budget proposals will impact their agencies and communities. HCA may also request that members call their lawmakers to support or oppose a budget proposal given the tight deadline and quick turnaround time of budget negotiations.



Following adjournment of the Legislature in June, HCA encourages providers to invite lawmakers to visit their organizations, meet their employees and even attend home visits with aides, nurses or other direct-care staff. **Provider visits give unparalleled insight to lawmakers, so they can understand the work that goes into providing quality home care, hospice and MLTC services.**

METHODS of ENGAGEMENT

Throughout the year, HCA will ask members to ENGAGE with lawmakers using the following methods:

FACE-to-FACE MEETINGS WITH LAWMAKERS

Meeting with your lawmakers at the local level is a vital part of maintaining your relationship with them, and keeping issues affecting the home care industry at the top of their priority list. Be sure to let your lawmakers know the number of individuals your organization serves; the services you provide; the number of staff your organization employs; and the economic value your agency generates for the community. These details will depict how vital your organization is to your community. Be sure to bring materials about your agency and stay clear on your message and ask.

Don't be surprised if you meet with staff – staff are typically the gateway to the lawmakers and will often have more time to meet with you. Staff will also educate the lawmakers about ongoing issues faced by your organization and constituents receiving services in the district.

HCA is happy to schedule a legislative meeting for your organization, and will attend if you would like support!

HOSTING AND PARTICIPATING IN LEGISLATIVE EVENTS

HCA highly encourages members to invite lawmakers to their organizations and/or to attend in-home visits. By attending, lawmakers will have a sense of the services being provided in their district and the integral role your organization plays in keeping their constituents at home.

HCA also suggests participating and attending legislative events, such as Town Halls, to engage with lawmakers at the local level, or to use your organization as a meeting place for lawmakers looking to host events.



EMAIL/LETTER WRITING CAMPAIGNS

HCA will often begin advocacy efforts with an email campaign. HCA will develop a pre-written message to lawmakers – in some instances, these letters may be editable by the sender – and the sender will simply need to fill in the appropriate fields such as name and address, and hit send. Participating in email/letter writing campaigns takes less than 90 seconds!



METHODS of ENGAGEMENT

MOBILE-RESPONSIVENESS

HCA's grassroots advocacy initiatives are now online! Did you know that 95% of Americans now own a cell phone, while 74% of Americans ages 50+ own a smartphone? **In less than 90 seconds, you can text, tweet or Facebook message your lawmakers!** Currently, 99% of the State Legislature and 100% of Congress use social media in order to communicate with their constituents. HCA's advocacy tools will ensure that the advocacy messaging is succinct and understandable for all involved.



ENGAGE the MEDIA

Depending on the issue and time of year, engaging the press is vital to educating the public and lawmakers about the impacts of legislative proposals on your organization. By writing an op-ed or letter to the editor, the advocate increases public awareness of his or her business, as well as his or her position on an issue. Don't be intimidated. It's welcomed and it works; and it's needed!

HCA has the ability to create op-eds and letters to the editor and, in some instances, may suggest that organizations write to their own local news sources. Members are always welcome to reach out to HCA Public Policy and Communications staff to discuss engaging the media. HCA is pleased to highlight members' press on the HCA website and in meetings with lawmakers and state agencies.



HCA as a Resource

To assist advocates with their grassroots advocacy initiatives, HCA has developed the following tools that may be adopted to suit your organization's needs:

- **Legislator Look-up Tool:** Simply fill in your address to connect with your lawmakers from all levels of government.
- **About the NYS Legislative Session:** Learn about the state budget and legislative process.
- **HCA Advocacy Calendar:** Learn important legislative dates and engage with lawmakers at the right time and in the right location.
- **Advocacy 101:** Access HCA's PowerPoint presentation that reviews how to effectively engage with lawmakers throughout the legislative session (a simplified version is also available).
- **Lobbying 101:** Learn tips and tricks when visiting lawmakers in Albany and in the district office.
- **Phone-2-Action Email Campaigns:** Choose the issue and send an email to your lawmakers about issues affecting home care, hospice and MLTC services.
- **Phone Scripts:** Use HCA's phone scripts when scheduling a meeting or advocating for a cause.
- **Op-eds & Letters to the Editor:** Learn how to write an op-ed or letter to the editor.
- **Engage on Social Media:** Use Twitter and Facebook to communicate with lawmakers. Follow HCA on Facebook and Twitter @HCANYS.



HCA's Policy and Communications Staff Contact Information

Alyssa Lovelace

Director for Policy and Advocacy
alovelace@hcanys.org

Al Cardillo

President and CEO
acardillo@hcanys.org

Rebecca Fuller Gray

Executive Vice President
for Clinical and Program Affairs
rgray@hcanys.org

Roger L. Noyes

Director of Communications,
Editor of *The Situation Report*
rnoyes@hcanys.org

Patrick Conole

Vice President, Finance & Management
pconole@hcanys.org

Andrew Koski

Vice President, Program, Policy & Services
akoski@hcanys.org

Lauren Ford

Director of Program Research, Development
and Policy
lford@hcanys.org



388 BROADWAY
FOURTH FLOOR
ALBANY, NEW YORK 122070
PH (518) 426 8764 WEB WWW.HCA-NYS.ORG