



## ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

# CADCA'S GUIDE TO EDUCATING LEGISLATORS

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## Introduction

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Advocacy is a key part of the public policy process. Numerous policy issues constantly compete for attention at the local, state and national levels. Legislators are generalists and rely on subject matter experts to guide their decision making. Therefore, it is critical to understand how to be an effective advocate for your cause and get your issue on legislators' policy radar screens. Advocacy can take many forms, from meeting with a legislator in Washington, DC, to attending a town hall in your local community, to sending an email to a legislative staffer. Everyone who wants to participate in advocacy can do so regardless of experience level or time constraints. Learn to get your issue on the policy radar screen so that you can make a difference in your community.

This guide will teach you how to engage in advocacy for substance use prevention, but the principles covered can be applied to any advocacy effort at any level of government. The guide explains how to be a vocal, visible and valuable advocate and gives an overview of the difference between education and lobbying. It provides guidance for developing an effective advocacy strategy. It explains the federal legislative process and will help you prepare to meet with your legislators. This guide will help you maximize your meetings with legislators to ensure that you make an impact for your policy concerns. Even if you are unable to travel to Washington, DC or to your state capitol, the guide offers information on other types of advocacy activities.

## The Case for Prevention

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Decades of research have proven that substance use and misuse are preventable and treatable. It is vital that prevention is heavily emphasized because substance use disorders are developmental diseases that begin in adolescence, sometimes as early as childhood<sup>1</sup>, and increasing the age of initiation is critical to ensuring fewer youth become addicted. For example, 9 percent of marijuana users will become addicted to the drug, but this number increases to 17 percent among users who start in adolescence.<sup>2</sup> People who have previously used marijuana are also 2.76 times more likely to initiate opioid use and 2.52 times more likely to misuse or become dependent upon opioids.<sup>3</sup> Preventing people from beginning substance use early in life will decrease their chances of misusing drugs later in life and will help prevent them from becoming another casualty of the opioid epidemic.

Preliminary data from the CDC suggests that in the 12-month period ending in April 2021, over 100,000 Americans died of a drug overdose. This is the highest number of overdose deaths ever recorded in a 12-month period.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the opioid epidemic costs the United States \$78.5 billion a year in healthcare, lost productivity, addiction treatment and criminal justice involvement.<sup>5</sup>

Prevention is a cost-effective tool in the fight against the opioid, stimulant and polydrug epidemics sweeping the nation. Every dollar invested in primary prevention to stop use before it ever starts saves communities between \$2 and \$20.<sup>6</sup> Further, investments in prevention programs would save states and local governments \$1.3 billion, including \$1.05 billion in educational costs within two years.<sup>7</sup> Greater investments in prevention programs would reduce costs related to substance use (e.g., medical care, lost productivity) by \$33.5 billion and would preserve quality of life over a lifetime valued at \$65 billion.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Quote by Dr. Nora Volkow, Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

<sup>2</sup> Budney AJ, Vandrey RG, Hughes JR, Thostenson JD, Bursac Z. 2008. "Comparison of cannabis and tobacco withdrawal: Severity and contribution to relapse." *J Subst Abuse Treat*, e-publication ahead of print

<sup>3</sup> Wilson, J., Mills, K., Freeman, T.P., Sunderland, M., Visontay, R., Marel, C. (2021 May 12). Weeding out the truth: A systematic review and meta-analysis on the transition from cannabis use to opioid use and opioid use disorders, abuse or dependence. *Addiction*. doi: 10.1111/add.15581

<sup>4</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2021 November 7). 12 Month-ending Provisional Number of Drug Overdose Deaths. CDC. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/vsrr/drug-overdoe-data.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Florence CS, Zhou C, Luo F, Xu L. The Economic Burden of Prescription Opioid Overdose, Abuse, and Dependence in the United States, 2013. *Med Care*. 2016;54(10):901-906. doi:10.1097/MLR.0000000000000625.

<sup>6</sup> Swisher, J.D., Scherer, J.M. Yin, R.K. (2004 October). Cost-benefit estimates in prevention research. *The Journal of Primary Prevention*, Vol. 25(2). pp. 137-148.

<sup>7</sup> Miller, T. and Hendrie, D. (2008). Substance abuse prevention dollars and cents: A cost-benefit analysis, DHHS Pub. No. (SMA) 07-4298. Rockville, MD: Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Available: <http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA07-4298/SMA07-4298.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Butterfoss, F.D. (2007). *Coalitions and partnerships for community health*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

Despite this cost effectiveness, prevention funding at the federal level has been cut by 33.74% between fiscal year 2009 and fiscal year 2021.

Without a nationwide foundation in place for **all states and communities** to be able to effectively address drug issues through effective prevention strategies, substance misuse and its consequences will surely escalate. Every state and community must have at least some funding to enable them to develop and sustain the proper infrastructure for explicit substance use prevention.

The necessary infrastructure that must be in place to achieve population level changes in substance use and misuse requires states and communities to engage in the following evidence-based practices:

1. Assess their prevention needs based on epidemiological data.<sup>9</sup>
2. Build their prevention capacity.<sup>10</sup>
3. Develop a strategic plan.<sup>11</sup>
4. Implement effective community prevention programs, policies and practices.<sup>12</sup>
5. Evaluate their efforts for outcomes.<sup>13</sup>

As substance use prevention professionals, it is important to educate legislators about substance use issues in your community and how your coalition is working to address them. It is important for legislators to understand the effectiveness and benefits of prevention on a national scale, but it is even more critical that your legislators understand how prevention programs have helped your community. Use facts (data) and anecdotes (stories) to successfully make the case for substance use prevention in your community.

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<sup>9</sup> Butterfoss, F.D. (2007). *Coalitions and partnerships for community health*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Collie-Akers VL, Fawcett SB, Schultz JA, Carson V, Cyprus J, Pierle JE. (July 2007). Analyzing a community-based coalition's efforts to reduce health disparities and the risk for chronic disease in Kansas City, Missouri. *Preventing Chronic Disease* [serial online]. 2007 Jul. Available from

[http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2007/jul/06\\_0101.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2007/jul/06_0101.htm). Hays, C.E., Hays, S.P., DeVille, J.O., & Mulhall, P.F. (2000). Capacity for effectiveness: The relationship between coalition structure and community impact. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 23, 373-379.

<sup>12</sup> Foster-Fishman, P.G., Berkowitz, S.L., Lounsbury, D.W., Jacobson, S., & Allen, N.A. (2001). Building collaborative capacity in community coalitions: A review and integrative framework. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 29(2), 241-261.

<sup>13</sup> KU Work Group for Community Health and Development. (2007). *Use Promising Approaches: Implementing Best Processes for Community Change and Improvement*. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas. Retrieved November 12, 2008, from the World Wide Web: <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/promisingapproach/>. Roussos, S.T. & Fawcett, S.B. (2000). A review of collaborative partnerships as a strategy for improving community health. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 21, 369-402.

## Facts + Anecdotes=Policy Success

Successful policy change is accomplished through effectively using both facts and anecdotes. Facts include data, such as statistics, research studies and evidence-based recommendations. Facts are essential, but anecdotes, or stories, bring an issue to life by putting a face on the data and helping legislators understand why a policy change matters (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Use facts and anecdotes to get legislators to change policy at the local, state and federal levels.**

Advocates for policy change must be willing to use the 3 Vs to put their issue at the top of an elected official's agenda. Advocates for change need to:

- ❖ BE VOCAL – speak up
- ❖ BE VISIBLE – show up; and
- ❖ BE VALUABLE – show results, successes, needed policy changes and the costs and benefits of prevention.

Legislators are generalists, not experts. They rely on subject matter experts and people who have first-hand experience to educate them and bring issues to their attention.

### Get on the Policy Radar Screen

It is important to get the issue that you care about on legislators' policy radar screens. You and the issue you care about are competing with every other issue and their advocates for attention. If you are not on the policy radar screen, your issues will be overlooked and ignored. To get on the policy radar screen, you need to be vocal, visible and valuable. You must be forceful enough to do what it takes to put your issue on the top of legislators' agendas.

### What Does It Mean to be Vocal, Visible and Valuable?

Below are some examples of how you can be vocal, visible and valuable.

**Table 1: How to be Vocal, Visible and Valuable**

<b>Be Vocal</b>	<b>Be Visible</b>	<b>Be Valuable</b>
<b>Call and write your legislators.</b>	<b>Attend a substance use prevention rally in DC.</b>	<b>Be a resource to legislators - share new data with them.</b>
<b>Leave messages with legislators' staff.</b>	<b>Be interviewed about prevention on radio or TV.</b>	<b>Invite legislators to coalition meetings or events such as a drug take back day.</b>
<b>Engage with media (print, radio, TV, social)</b>	<b>Hold a coalition event and invite legislators and their staff.</b>	<b>Recognize legislators who have been helpful by giving them awards and public recognition.</b>
<b>Write an op-ed or letter to the editor.</b>	<b>Get supporters to attend committee hearings.</b>	<b>Offer your expertise on substance use issues to legislators on an ongoing basis - even when you don't need something.</b>
<b>Ask prevention-related questions at candidate events or town halls.</b>	<b>Promote coalition meetings/events on social media.</b>	
	<b>Run an ad in your local paper.</b>	



# Advocacy, Education and Lobbying

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## Overview of Advocacy

Advocacy is actively raising awareness about an issue and how to generally address it. Advocacy is a broad term, but all coalitions can engage in it. Coalitions can do general advocacy around issues with elected officials at any level of government about:

- ❖ What federal funding you receive and how that has made a difference (your outcomes)
- ❖ Effects of specific drugs; and
- ❖ Effects of specific policies

Coalitions can also:

- ❖ Advocate for increased funding for programs that fund their work.
- ❖ Advocate for “private or voluntary policies” (e.g., alcohol purchase restrictions).
- ❖ Advocate for better enforcement of existing laws; and
- ❖ Conduct public education campaigns.

Advocating for increased funding for programs that fund your work is critical and should be done on an ongoing basis. For example, many substance use prevention coalitions rely on federal grants such as the Drug-Free Communities (DFC) program as well as funding in federal agencies such as the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Congress appropriates money for these programs annually. Coalitions benefit from increased funding for these programs and should engage in advocacy accordingly. A program that is funded at a record level in one fiscal year may be cut the following year.

One example of advocacy for a “private or voluntary policy” would be for coalition leaders to work with local alcohol retailers to make sure that products with packaging that could appeal to children are placed out of sight. An example of a public education campaign would be to work with local schools to help them develop a curriculum about the dangers of prescription drug misuse and the benefits of a drug-free lifestyle. An example of advocacy for better enforcement of existing laws would be to work with law enforcement officials to encourage them to enforce existing laws and ordinances.

Advocacy involves making the case for a cause and building support for the issue among stakeholders, including various community sectors (such as parents, businesses, media, law enforcement, youth serving organizations, etc.). Advocacy is providing a voice for the community by educating and influencing people about policy topics to drive change.

Advocacy can take place at the state and local levels as well as the federal level. Even federal level advocacy can be done at the state and local level because members of Congress have offices across their

districts or states. Legislators want to hear from their constituents. They value the views of people in their districts and states more than they care about the views of outside interest groups.

When engaging in advocacy, it is important to consider your timing. If a bill or ballot initiative has been introduced that pertains to your topic and you are engaging in advocacy too close to the time during which the bill or ballot initiative will be voted on, your efforts could be considered lobbying. For ballot initiatives, the public becomes the legislature and coalitions should not be using federal funds to influence how they vote.

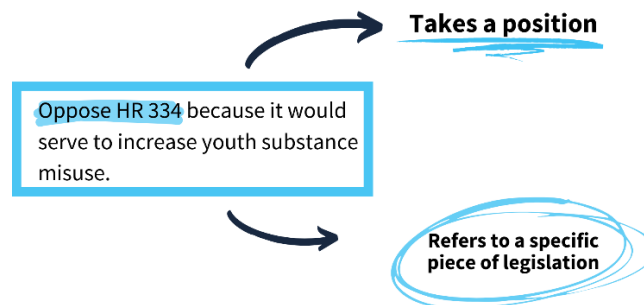
One of the best and most widely used ways to engage in advocacy is through education. **All coalitions, regardless of funding source, can educate all of their elected officials at every level of government.** Education is simply informing legislators, their staff and the public about the issues your community is facing and how to address them **as long as you are not mentioning or taking specific positions on specific bills.**

## The Difference Between Education and Lobbying

Education is not lobbying. **Lobbying is taking a specific position on a specific piece of legislation or ballot proposition/initiative.** The two types of lobbying are direct lobbying and grassroots lobbying. Direct lobbying occurs any time someone takes a specific position for or against a specific piece of legislation with legislators or their staff. Grassroots lobbying is communications that meet any of the following criteria:

- ❖ Refers to specific legislation
- ❖ Reflects a view on such legislation; **and**
- ❖ Encourages the recipient of the communication to act with respect to such legislation.<sup>14</sup>

An example of direct lobbying, which takes a specific position on a specific piece of legislation is below (see Figure 2):



**Figure 2: An example of lobbying**

<sup>14</sup> Treas. Reg. Section 65.4911(b)(2)

Examples of lobbying language include:

- ❖ Support
- ❖ Do not support
- ❖ Oppose
- ❖ Do not pass
- ❖ Vote no
- ❖ Vote for
- ❖ Vote against

Examples of non-lobbying phrases include:

- ❖ We appreciate your work on...
- ❖ We thank you for...
- ❖ We are concerned/have concerns with...
- ❖ We want you to understand/you need to know...
- ❖ We want to bring your attention to...
- ❖ There are the following issues regarding...
- ❖ We want to make you aware of...
- ❖ We know from X that X would be a positive development/would be a problem regarding...

You can use facts to educate, as seen in the example below.

*Hello Congressman. I wanted to share some information with you that you might not be aware of:*

*States that have legalized marijuana are clustered at the top of the list in terms of marijuana use among 12-17-year-olds. Additionally, a NIDA-funded study shows that early persistent use of marijuana causes a permanent drop in IQ of 8 points. **If I can provide you with any additional information, please let me know.***

These same facts can be used to lobby. See the example below:

*Hello Congressman. I know you are considering legislation to legalize marijuana. It is critical that you know some key facts about this issue.*

*States that have legalized marijuana are clustered at the top of the list in terms of marijuana use among 12-17-year-olds. Additionally, a NIDA-funded study shows that early persistent use of marijuana causes a permanent drop in IQ of 8 points. **Lurge you to vote against HR 334, a bill to legalize marijuana.***

Below is a list of activities that are **not** considered lobbying:

- ❖ Tracking activities of legislators, including votes, positions taken, contributions accepted, etc.
- ❖ Tracking bills and informing the public about their progress through the legislature
- ❖ Producing and disseminating research reports or studies that provide nonpartisan analysis on policy issues, including specific legislative issues
- ❖ Meeting with the executive branch (except to sign or veto a bill)
- ❖ Meeting with regulatory agencies at all levels (e.g., Drug Enforcement Administration, Food and Drug Administration, state health departments, etc.)
- ❖ Advocating for better enforcement of existing laws, e.g., those that control alcohol sales to minors
- ❖ Advocating for the enactment and enforcement of private or voluntary policies, e.g., alcohol purchase restrictions in stadiums
- ❖ Examinations and discussions of broad social, economic and similar problems
- ❖ Conducting public education campaigns to affect the opinions of the general public, e.g., a mass media educational campaign about the importance of not providing alcohol to minors
- ❖ Meeting with a legislator to talk about a social problem **without mentioning a specific legislative proposal**
- ❖ Providing a legislator with educational materials about a specific piece of legislation, **without calling for specific action on the legislation**
- ❖ Responding to a **written request** from a legislative committee or subcommittee for information about a specific piece of legislation
- ❖ Using self-defense communications, i.e., taking a position on legislation that would threaten your organization's existence, powers, duties, tax-exempt status, or deductibility of contributions made to the organization. For example, if a nonprofit receives funding from the state government and there is proposed legislation to eliminate this funding stream, the nonprofit can spend money on direct communications with legislators and their staffs, **but only about this specific issue.**
- ❖ A newsletter to your own membership providing information about a specific piece of legislation, your organization's position on the legislation and the names of legislators who support and oppose the legislation, **but not a specific call to action (e.g., a request to call or write legislators about a specific bill)**
- ❖ Talking to the media about specific legislative proposals
- ❖ Attending workshops on lobbying

- ❖ Inviting legislators or staff to visit your program to learn about your work or discuss legislative efforts

Certain coalitions can lobby, but there are stringent rules and IRS forms. If your coalition is a 501(c)3 organization that receives a mixture of federal *and* non-federal, non-restricted funds, your coalition can use up to 20% of its first \$500 thousand in tax-exempt expenditures to lobby. Your coalition **cannot** use any of its federal funds to lobby. Limitations on lobbying apply to organizations but **not** to individuals acting on their own time.

If your coalition is federally funded, you cannot use **any** federal or state dollars to support or oppose specific legislation or ballot initiatives/propositions. However, you can use non-restricted funds from non-governmental sources that you keep track of. Additionally, if you are off duty from your position and are acting as a private citizen, you are allowed to lobby/take positions on legislation and propositions. You can use coalition board members or volunteers to cross the line into lobbying as long as **NO** federal funds or matching funds are used.

If your coalition chooses to engage in lobbying, it should file with the IRS. The IRS has more information about lobbying rules for nonprofits at <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/lobbying>. If you have additional questions about the differences between education and lobbying, you can consult CADCA's Public Policy Department at [publicpolicy@cadca.org](mailto:publicpolicy@cadca.org).

## Develop a Communications Strategy

Clear, consistent communication is critical to effective advocacy. You should be aware of, and use, all available methods of communication. This includes:

- ❖ Peer-to-peer communication – talking to people in community settings including faith-based groups, schools, parks, local events, etc.
- ❖ Print media – newspapers, magazines, scientific journals, etc.
- ❖ Internet – blogs, email, social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)
- ❖ Television
- ❖ Radio

Consider the goals of your advocacy campaign. Make them specific with specific measurements. For example, a good goal statement could be, “My coalition’s goal is to reduce underage alcohol consumption in my community by 10% within 5 years.” Your communications strategy should center around your goal statement.

You must also consider the audiences for your messages. This will affect the types of communications you use. For example, if you want to target parents and their teenagers, you will likely use different types of communication to target each group by putting messages where they are most likely to see them.

# Educating Legislators Is Key

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## How Do You Educate Legislators?

You share data and information with them that is easy to understand and reduced to one-pagers. Even if your organization is funded solely on federal or state funds, you can educate legislators at any level of government. You should make sure they know:

- ❖ Who you are
- ❖ What you do in your community
- ❖ Who you work with in the community
- ❖ What your local data shows
- ❖ The specific issues impacting your community
- ❖ What you are doing to address these issues
- ❖ What funding you receive, from whom you receive it and what it is used for
- ❖ What more can be done to address the issues facing your community; and
- ❖ YOUR OUTCOMES AND SUCCESSES.

When you are educating legislators, you can:

- ❖ Set up briefings and meetings with them
- ❖ Send them data and important information
- ❖ Conduct public education campaigns
- ❖ Push for better enforcement of existing laws.

Education can also include talking about the effects of specific drugs and the effects of specific policies. Your coalition can use the following strategies:

1. Educate the general public about the science of alcohol, tobacco and other drug (ATOD) use/misuse to raise awareness.
2. Partner with local newspapers to do a series about the science related to youth brain development and ATOD use.
3. Share data and information about the effects in other states or jurisdictions of policy changes being considered in your jurisdiction.
4. Provide educational workshops for various sectors and audiences.
5. Provide toolkits.
6. Do focus groups on youth/parent attitudes.
7. Implement strategies to change community norms.
8. Convene a forum or town hall meeting to educate key leaders and legislators about the effects of specific ATOD issues and policies.

# Strategy: Building Relationships and the FRAME Method

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## Building Relationships with Legislators

It is important to take the time to plan your approach when building and sustaining relationships with legislators. Your process should include identifying current and needed relationships, so that you can build new relationships as well as build on and continue to cultivate existing ones. Remember the following general guidelines:

- ❖ Identify relationships you have and ones you need.
- ❖ Build relationships with staff.
- ❖ Connect with legislators.
- ❖ Be a resource.

Before you begin your advocacy efforts, research who your legislators are so that you can begin to develop a relationship with them. At the federal level, learn who your two senators are and who your member of the House of Representatives is. Learn which members of Congress sit on the committees which have jurisdiction over your issue. Look within your coalition and community to see if anyone has a preexisting relationship with these legislators. These people can facilitate introductions between your coalition and legislators and can be powerful allies in your advocacy effort. Research their priority issues and the positions they have taken on issues related to our field.

Even if no one in your coalition has a preexisting relationship with a legislator, you can still develop a new relationship. This often starts by reaching out to legislative staff.

## Develop Relationships with Legislative Staff

Legislative staff members are critical to effective advocacy. They attend meetings with their legislators and, in many cases, will meet with you when the legislator is not available. Staffers who handle health policy issues will likely know much more about substance use prevention and related programs than will the legislator themselves. Their knowledge will make conversations with them more productive and beneficial. Staffers will brief their bosses after meeting with you, so it is essential that you give them the information that most effectively makes your case.

Staffers also do much of the hands-on work, such as writing legislation and report language or working with constituents. They will also have relationships with potential allies for your cause and may have connections with other legislators and their staffs who can assist you. Developing a strong relationship with them will pay dividends when you work with legislators in the future.

It is easy to develop relationships with legislative staff. When you meet with them for the first time, make sure to exchange contact information. Invite them to coalition events or meetings. Meet with them when they travel back to your state or district. Be a resource for them and provide new data, outcomes or news

about your coalition when it is available. Make sure that you reach out to staffers often, instead of only when you need something. Staff are often the gatekeepers for the legislator. By having a good relationship with them, you will be better able to connect with, and be a resource for, your legislator.

## The FRAME Method: Meeting with Legislators

The best advocacy efforts use both data (facts) and anecdotes to influence legislators and inspire change. Use data to show how devastating various substance use epidemics are and to show the impact of substances (e.g., prescription opioids, heroin, synthetic opioids, stimulants, vaping, THC, etc.), trends over time and/or differences by demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, race, ethnicity). Factual data can be used to reinforce anecdotes and to counter misinformation used by your opponents.

A successful meeting with a legislator requires both strong facts and moving anecdotes to put a face on the data. It is helpful to use the FRAME method when preparing for a meeting with your legislator.

- ❖ F=FACTS
- ❖ R=REDUCE TO 1 PAGE
- ❖ A= ANECDOTES/STORIES
- ❖ M=MAP OUT STRATEGY
- ❖ E=EVALUATE YOUR RESULTS

### F=Facts

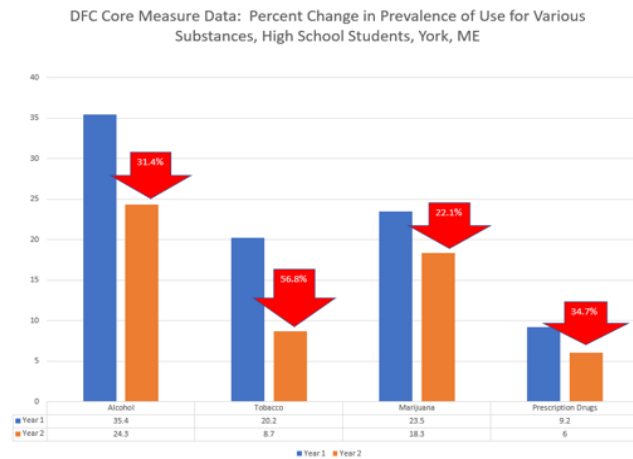
Government agencies are an excellent source of national and even state-level information. Federal agencies such as the National Institutes of Health (and its many component agencies, such as the National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA] and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism [NIAAA]), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) have a wealth of data on substance use and other public health-related issues. Many of these government agencies also publish surveys and studies, like SAMHSA's National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH). Government agencies like NIDA also partner with leading universities to conduct research studies, such as the University of Michigan's Monitoring the Future Study.

Academic journals, such as the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, *The Lancet* or the *New England Journal of Medicine* are also great sources of facts. Studies in these journals are peer-reviewed and are written by leading academics. These studies often have a deep level of analysis and can draw profound conclusions. When you use academic studies, be sure that you understand what the study is saying. The academic language can be difficult to understand, but most studies have an abstract that will explain the findings of the study in more plain language. Also be sure to understand that correlation does not imply causation. For example, increases in ice cream sales are correlated with increases in shark attacks. However, increased ice cream sales do not cause increased shark attacks. Misrepresenting data can cause you to lose credibility and will damage your advocacy efforts.

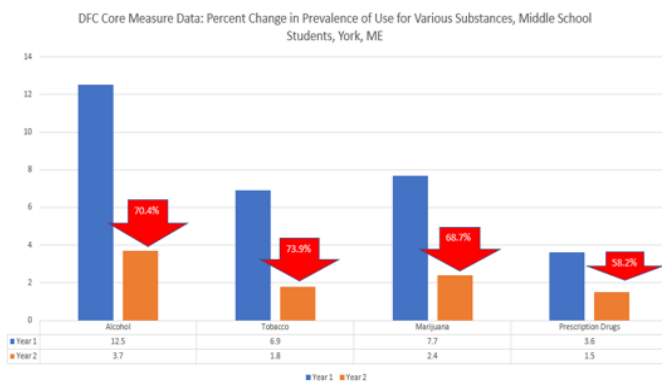


Just as misrepresenting data can cause you to lose credibility, so will using incorrect information. Make sure that the sources you are pulling facts from are reliable and be sure to **cite everything**. Use caution when pulling information from the internet or social media, as these platforms are rife with misinformation. Similarly, use caution when getting information from nonprofit fact sheets. ALWAYS check the original source. If the fact sheet contains information that is not cited, do not use it.

**NEVER** pull your facts from Wikipedia or any unsourced websites.



*\*\*For Alcohol, Tobacco and Marijuana, Year 1 is 2009 and Year 2 is 2017. \*\*For Prescription Drugs, Year 1 is 2011 and Year 2 is 2017.*



*\*\*For Alcohol, Tobacco and Marijuana, Year 1 is 2009 and Year 2 is 2017. \*\*For Prescription Drugs, Year 1 is 2011 and Year 2 is 2017.*

**Figure 3: Data in a One-Pager**

successful because it presents key data in a way that can be easily understood by busy legislators and their staffs.

R=Reduce to One Page  
Legislators and their staffs are busy and do not have time to read lengthy reports or research articles. Instead, you should create a one-pager (which can be double sided) that should include coalition outcomes as well as how they were achieved. Graphs are especially useful for presenting outcome data. You should also include contact information for your coalition. An example of a good way to present data is in Figure 3.

In the figure on the left, the graphs show declines in substance use for middle and high school students across four substances (alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and prescription drugs). The red arrows indicate the percent change from the base year to the most recent year. This one-pager is

This one-pager also explains how the coalition achieved its outcomes. It lists activities that the coalition did in alignment with CADCA's 7 Strategies for Community Change. See Figure 4 below.

#### **Strategies Used by CTBH to Decrease Youth Substance Use**

Choose To Be Healthy is a multisector coalition serving nine communities in southern York County, Maine.

1. **Providing Information**
  - **Website** that receives thousands of visitors on weekly basis, [ctbh.org](http://ctbh.org)
  - **Social media** (Facebook, twitter and Instagram) reaches over 500 on a regular basis, 1000's of people through shares of multiple posts every week
  - A bi monthly **electronic newsletter** to 1000+ subscribers
  - **Monthly learning opportunities**, now via zoom, on the latest prevention and public health information
  - **Mailer** of biannual media campaigns on parenting skills with info and resources on marijuana harm, underage drinking and Rx misuse via postcards sent to all parents
2. **Building Skills**
  - Scholarships to webinars and conferences for coalition members. Annual attendance at **CADCA conference** for staff and members.
  - Financial support and coordination for school-based **prevention curriculum** training and materials including Project Northland, Prime for Life, Search Institute and All Stars.
  - Skill trainings for law enforcement, schools, health care providers and youth include: **implementing youth alcohol and drug screenings, motivational interviewing, trauma and Drug Identification Trainings.**
  - Monthly **Parent Check-In Series** on mental health and substance use reaching 100 people each year.
  - **Scholarships for youth** to attend annual state youth leadership conference and **annual CTBH regional conference for youth.**
3. **Providing Support**
  - Support to **local youth groups** on youth led projects and "sober friends" healthy alternative activities.
  - Coordination of area community health needs assessment as part of public health district.
  - Coordination of local food and gift drive for families in need at holidays.
4. **Enhancing Access/Reducing Barriers**
  - Creation and coordination of **Regional Law Enforcement Workgroup**, a **marijuana workgroup for town administrations**, and a **Regional School**
5. **Changing Consequences (Incentives/Disincentives)**
  - **Group** that address issues of restricting or reducing access to alcohol, Rx drugs and marijuana.
  - CTBH also helps convene a weekly internal multidisciplinary team at York Hospital to improve **access to prevention, treatment and recovery.**
5. **Changing Consequences (Incentives/Disincentives)**
  - CTBH **publicizes and promotes businesses** that do not sell vape products, have done well with compliance checks for alcohol and that have sent their staff to be trained in responsible alcohol seller/server training.
  - **Responsible Seller Server training** provided to numerous restaurants and hotels with up to 50 participants per annual session.
  - Free expertise and tools to workplaces on **supportive drug free workplace policies** to help prevent underage and over drinking and resources for young people in recovery.
6. **Change Physical Design**
  - Collaboration with a local library to create a **Young Adult Reading room** with activities geared for teens who were previously hanging out in the library parking, vaping.
  - **Youth led assessment** of the promotion, placement and sales of tobacco and vaping products in stores and best practice recommendations to our towns.
  - Supported **placement of signage** at local beaches and parks to help restrict tobacco, alcohol and marijuana use.
7. **Modify and Change Policies**
  - **Youth leaders spoke at the state legislature** on prevention policy
  - **Technical assistance and policy** templates for local businesses to be tobacco, alcohol and marijuana free.
  - **Education of healthcare providers** on importance of implementation of an annual screening process for youth at our hospital.
  - CTBH facilitates a **student intervention and reintegration program (SIRP)** two-day education and discussion as an alternative to suspension for alcohol, tobacco or drug use at four of our five school districts.

**Figure 4: Coalition Activities in a One-Pager**

The coalition's use of all 7 Strategies for Community Change and its efforts to promote youth engagement and involvement have made it incredibly successful in reducing youth substance use. The coalition recognized the fact that youth are often the most powerful advocates. Youth have a unique understanding of substance use issues and are able to share their stories and experiences with legislators in ways adult

advocates simply cannot. Further, the coalition's use of all 7 Strategies shows that it has adopted a strategy that offers a wide variety of activities and solutions to discourage youth substance use.

### A=Anecdotes/Stories

In addition to your written one-pager you should bring someone to your meeting with a legislator to provide an anecdote. Anecdotes help put a face on your data and outcomes. Anyone can provide an anecdote, including:

- ❖ Youth who have firsthand knowledge of what substances their peers are using, how they are obtaining them, and the consequences associated with use.
- ❖ A business owner whose family member was impacted by substance misuse.
- ❖ A police officer who has witnessed the negative consequences of underage drinking.
- ❖ A youth who has made the choice not to use substances because of the coalition.
- ❖ Parents who have lost a child to substance use.

One example of an anecdote might be a youth who joined your coalition because their best friend became addicted to vaping. The youth would use their personal experience to tell the story of how they became a leader in the coalition and helped identify and change community conditions that promoted vaping among their peers.

Anecdotes tell your story in a way that data alone cannot. Anecdotes humanize data and connect decision makers to why what you are asking for is important to people in the community. This can be useful in helping the legislator understand your ask as well as make the case for substance use prevention legislation to their colleagues.

### M=Map Out Strategy

Successful advocacy requires a coherent strategy. You need to make the legislator care about what you have to say. Determine the legislator's top priorities and tie your message to those. Use your expertise in your issue area to connect the dots for them and help them understand the issue. In preparing for a meeting, it is helpful to ask yourself:

- ❖ What major issues do legislators care about?
- ❖ What would it take to make the legislators care?
  - Connect the dots for them to tie the issues they care about to your issue.
- ❖ What would it take to make them act?

### Power Analysis

A power analysis is an advocacy tool that explores how decisions are made in your community on a specific issue. Conduct a power analysis to help your coalition understand:

- ❖ The objectives for change

- ❖ The target of change; and
- ❖ The benefits of exercising the power and influence the coalition and its members have.

A power analysis will help your coalition put advocacy into action. To do a successful power analysis, you should consider:

- ❖ What do you want to change?
  - Laws?
  - Regulations?
  - Policies?
  - Funding levels?
- ❖ Why do you want to make the change?
  - What is the extent of the problem?
  - Do the facts support the change you want to make?
    - Make sure to ALWAYS cite your sources!
  - Do you have anecdotes to put a face on your data?
- ❖ Who has the power to make the change?
  - The people with the power to make changes are different depending on what you want to change and the level of government to which you are advocating.
    - Federal level
      - Congress and/or the President
      - Federal agencies
    - State level
      - State legislatures or agencies
      - State governors
    - Local level
      - City council/County
      - Commission/Mayor
      - School board
      - Zoning Board
- ❖ Who might your allies be?
  - What is their shared interest?
  - How will you convince them to join you?
- ❖ Do you have champions in the system?
  - Who will you ask to help you recruit champions?
  - If someone in your coalition or community knows a legislator, other elected official or their staffers personally, ask them to set up a meeting.

- ❖ Who will your opponents be?
  - How will they try to defeat you?
- ❖ Can you win?
- ❖ Can you afford to lose?
- ❖ Can you afford not to try?

## Social Math

It is also a good idea to use “social math” to help the legislator understand the issue in clear terms. For example, if you want to talk about preventing underage drinking, you should break down numbers in a way that is relatable and easy to understand. Consider the following examples:

- ❖ Break down numbers by time:
  - 4,300 children under 16 start drinking every day.
- ❖ Break down numbers by place:
  - This is the equivalent of 143 classrooms per day of new underage drinkers.
- ❖ Provide comparisons with familiar things:
  - Alcohol is cheaper than milk or orange juice.
- ❖ Provide ironic comparisons:
  - There are more places to buy alcohol in our community than to buy school supplies.
- ❖ Personalize the number
  - The average youth saw 366 alcohol-related ads on TV this year.

## Cultivate Champions

Champions are people in your coalition or community that can help you build and maintain relationships with legislators and can help you make your case to them. Identify these people in your coalition and elsewhere. These can be people such as:

- ❖ Government/other elected officials
- ❖ Business leaders
- ❖ Religious leaders
- ❖ Foundations/non-governmental organizations
- ❖ People who have a personal relationship with the legislator (e.g., people who know the legislator from college, go to the same place of worship as the legislator, etc.)

To maximize your use of champions, set up meetings between them and legislators and present your data, anecdotes and messages. Always follow up with and thank your champions.

## E=Evaluate Your Results

Once your coalition has completed its advocacy campaign, you should evaluate the effectiveness of both the campaign itself and your overall advocacy tactics. When evaluating the campaign itself, you should consider:

- ❖ Did the policy you advocated for get adopted?
- ❖ How will it be implemented and enforced?
- ❖ Do you have momentum for future policy efforts?
- ❖ Have community norms changed because of your policy proposal?
- ❖ What follow up work do you need to do?

When evaluating your overall tactics, you should consider:

- ❖ Did you achieve your objectives?
  - If so, how? Why? What worked?
  - If not, why not? How close did you come to achieving your goals?
    - Should you try again? If so, when?
    - What would you do differently?

## Keys to Effective Advocacy

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To advocate effectively, you must be vocal, visible and valuable to legislators. Make sure your issue gets on their radar, and make sure your timing is right. Generally, the earlier you make the case, the better. Keep the 13 Cs in mind when planning your advocacy efforts.

### The 13 Cs

Effective advocates must consider the 13 C's:

1. Be credible – make sure any facts or data come from reputable sources.
2. Be convincing – tailor your message to the legislator's interests or priorities and tell them how a proposed policy change will affect their district or state.
3. Be clear – refrain from using acronyms or jargon the legislator may not understand.
4. Be concise – elected officials and their staff are very busy, and meetings are short. Practice what you are going to say and leave time for questions at the end.
5. Be consistent – stay on message when you advocate.
6. Be creative – take advantage of all types of communication (emails, letters, phone calls, social media, etc.)
7. Be committed – convey your passion for prevention and follow up with new information when appropriate.
8. Be connected – leverage relationships that others in your community or coalition may have with legislators or their staffs.
9. Build coalitions – find non-traditional allies in the community who are not necessarily already members of your coalition and engage them in your advocacy efforts.
10. Celebrate victories – thank legislators and your allies when you achieve any of your advocacy goals.
11. Cultivate champions – build and use relationships with legislators to make them into leaders for your cause by inviting them and their staff members to coalition meetings.
12. Credit others – give legislators and their staff credit and awards when they help you.
13. Know when to compromise – you cannot always get everything you want – know what you can settle for.

### Understanding the Legislative Process in More Detail

Effective advocacy requires an understanding of the legislative process. The United States Congress is divided into the House of Representatives and the Senate. Each state has two senators (for a total of 100), and each state has at least one representative in the House. Additional representatives are allocated based on a state's population (for a total of 435 members of the House).

Anyone can write a bill, but only members of Congress can introduce a bill. If you are writing a bill for a member of Congress to introduce, it is best to have a simple bill. Legislators are bombarded by hundreds of pieces of proposed legislation. If they do not understand the bill that you support, they will kill it. If you oppose a bill and they do not understand why, they may vote in favor of the bill. You must help the legislator understand the legislation. This can include finding sample legislation from other jurisdictions that is similar to the legislation you want to have introduced.

After a bill is introduced, it is referred to the appropriate committee for review. It is important to understand which committee or committees will have jurisdiction over your bill, so that you can get champions in those committees to work with you and sponsor the legislation that you support. In the Senate, there are 17 committees, with 70 subcommittees. The House has 23 committees and 104 subcommittees. Each committee oversees a specific policy area and subcommittees handle more specialized policy areas. For example, the House Committee on Appropriations is responsible for appropriating funding for most of the functions of the federal government. It has various subcommittees that have more specific responsibilities. The Financial Services and General Government (FSGG) Subcommittee is one such example. It has jurisdiction over many areas, such as the Department of the Treasury, the Judiciary and the Executive Office of the President (which includes agencies such as the Office of National Drug Control Policy and the Office of Management and Budget). Other subcommittees, such as Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies have jurisdiction over areas such as the Department of Health and Human Services (including the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).

A bill is first considered in a subcommittee. Members of the subcommittee may accept, reject or amend the bill. Subcommittee members may hold hearings to investigate and better understand the issues addressed by the bill or the positives and negatives of the bill. At hearings, experts, proponents and opponents of the bill provide testimony. If the subcommittee decides to vote favorably on a bill, it is advanced to the full committee, where more hearings can be held. If the full committee votes favorably on the bill, it is brought to the floor of the House or Senate. Party leadership then places the bill on the calendar for consideration.

The debate processes in the House and Senate are very different. In the House, each member who wants to speak, may do so for a few minutes and amendments to bills are limited. In the Senate, debate is unlimited, and any amendment can be introduced. Unlimited debate allows senators to filibuster bills, which delays voting. A supermajority of 60 senators can break a filibuster by invoking cloture to end debate. Once debate ends, a simple majority passes the bill.

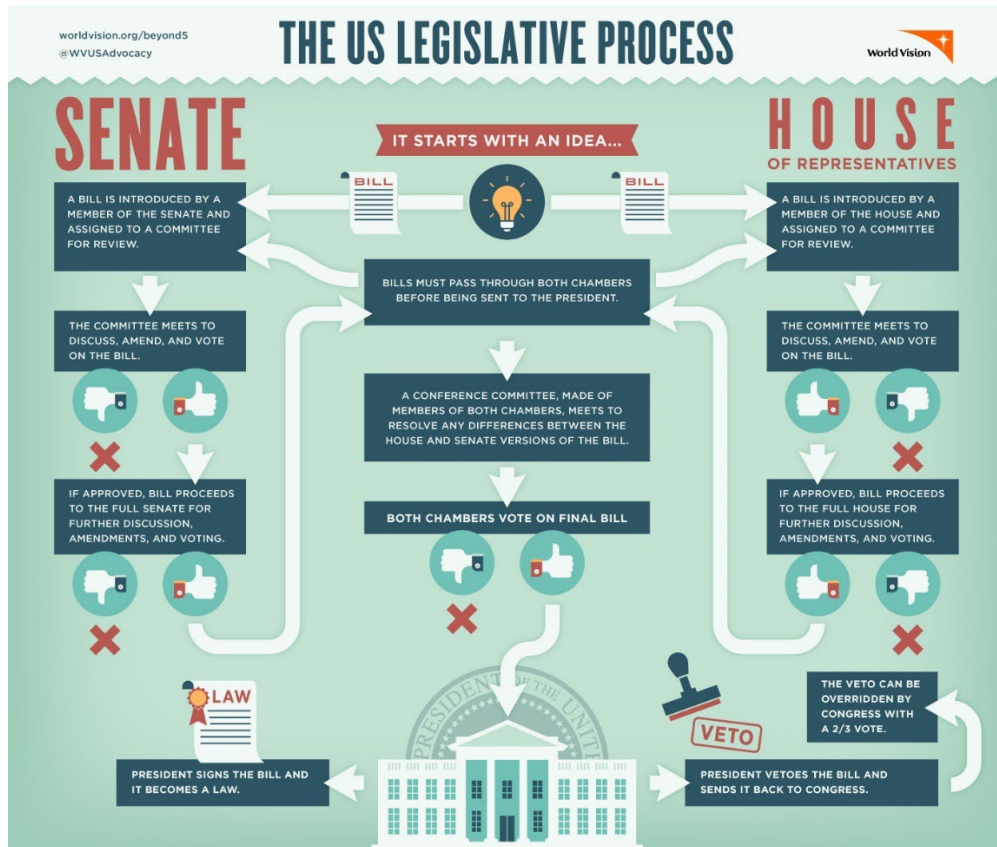
A bill must pass both chambers of Congress before it goes to the President for consideration. Usually, the House and Senate versions of a bill will have different wording. When this happens, a Conference Committee, consisting of members from both chambers, is convened to resolve differences in wording. The Conference Committee writes a conference report, which is the final version of the bill. Each chamber



votes on the conference report and the bill is enrolled by either the Clerk of the House (for bills that originated in the House) or the Secretary of the Senate (for bills that originated in the Senate). The bill is then sent to the President.

If the President agrees with the bill, he or she may sign it into law. If the President disagrees with the bill, he or she can veto it, sending it back to Congress. Congress can override presidential vetoes by a two-thirds vote in each chamber. If Congress overrides a veto, the bill becomes law.

Figure 5 below is a visual overview of the federal legislative process.



**Figure 5: The federal legislative process**

State legislative processes are very similar to the federal process. More information about your state’s legislative process can be found online.

### Crafting Your Ask

The ask is at the heart of a meeting with a legislator. The power analysis discussed above is critical to crafting your ask. You must consider what it is you want to change and how the legislator can help you change it. Legislators can help facilitate change by:

- ❖ Writing, sponsoring or co-sponsoring a bill
- ❖ Leading or signing onto a letter in support of increased funding for prevention programs
  - Letters asking members of Congress to support various programs across all issue areas are constantly circulating around Capitol Hill. By maximizing the number of Congressional members who sign onto a letter, you are showing that your cause or program has strong support. Being able to get support from both Democrats and Republicans also shows that your program or issue area has strong bipartisan support.

## Know Before You Go: Do Your Homework

Before you meet with your legislators, you should learn about:

- ❖ Their personal history – to see if you have anything in common (e.g., a family member with a substance use disorder, membership in civic organizations, similar hobbies and interests, belonging to the same faith community, neighbors, children on same sports teams, etc.) on which to build a relationship
- ❖ Their electoral history – to know if they are facing an election soon
- ❖ The committees, subcommittees and caucuses they are on – to see what their priorities are and better understand where they exert influence
  - Committees and caucuses that are relevant to the substance use prevention field include:
    - The House and Senate Appropriations Committees (especially the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee, the Financial Services and General Government Subcommittee and the State, Foreign Operations and Related Agencies Subcommittee)
    - The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee
    - The Senate Finance Committee (especially the Health Care Subcommittee)
    - The House and Senate Judiciary Committees
    - The House Committee on Energy and Commerce (especially the Health Subcommittee)
    - The Senate Drug Caucus
    - The House Freshmen Working Group on Addiction
- ❖ Their leadership assignments – if they chair or serve as ranking member on a committee, subcommittee, or caucus, or if they have another leadership role in the House or Senate
- ❖ Their relationship with and support for or opposition to various substance use issues.

- ❖ Their other areas of interest – are they fiscally conservative or socially liberal; do they prioritize public welfare programs, education, etc.
  - Connect your issue with their issues and show them how they can benefit by helping your issue (e.g., by being a “hero” for your issue, gaining favor with constituents, etc.)
    - Appeal to their sense of collective responsibility (e.g., “we all have an obligation to do everything we can to ensure a safe environment for our kids” coupled with a message of the harmful effects of youth substance use).

If you do not have a relationship with a legislator, you can still ask for a meeting with them. If the legislator is new, you can meet with them to help develop their agenda and convince them to make substance use prevention a priority.

### Maximizing Your Meetings

Once you have a meeting with your legislators, it is important to make the most of it. Keep the following do’s and don’ts in mind (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Do’s and Don’ts of Meetings with Legislators**

DO	DON'T
<b>Be brief</b>	<b>Overwhelm your legislators with too much information</b>
<b>Share your expertise and insights</b>	<b>Use jargon or acronyms when describing your work</b>
<b>Highlight important facts and outcomes</b>	<b>Back them in a corner or ask the impossible</b>
<b>Thank legislators</b>	

It is also important to do the following:

1. Designate one person to be the primary spokesperson for the meeting.
2. Be brief with your introductions.
3. Discuss the major accomplishments of your coalition – highlight outcomes, activities and key groups involved in the coalition.
4. Ask how you can foster a continuing relationship with the legislator and their staff.
5. Invite youth to attend and participate in the meeting by talking about their experiences.
6. Ask the legislator and their staff the best way to provide follow up materials to them.

Make sure that your meeting has a clear “ask”. This is a clear request (i.e., vote a certain way on a bill, introduce or cosponsor a bill, etc.) for the legislator to take action. Congressional staff like clear asks because they can guide their work and help them help you more effectively. Leave behind a one-pager or handout that summarizes and provides data about your issue and reiterates your ask. Providing legislators and their staff with a summary can help them keep your issue in mind and offer a refresher to inform their future actions.

At the end of the meeting, make sure to thank your legislators. When you get home, email or send a letter to the legislator thanking them for meeting with you. Reiterate what you have discussed and remind them that you are happy to be a resource for them. If you discussed any data or resources in your meeting, provide those as well. In the weeks after the meeting, follow up on any requests you have made of the legislator or their staff.

Keep in touch with the legislator and their staff even if you do not need anything. Continue to offer yourself as a resource to them and follow up with new data or outcomes your coalition has accomplished. Invite the legislator or their staff to coalition meetings or events. You might also consider giving your legislator an award if they have been particularly helpful to you. The key to successfully meeting with legislators is to be pleasantly persistent and to make sure you maintain a strong, mutually beneficial relationship.

## How to Get Legislation Passed

If you know that a bill your coalition should weigh in on is going to be introduced and considered in the next legislative session, you should plan an advocacy campaign. This process should begin even before the legislative session starts. During this period, you should set up meetings with legislators to show them your data and outcomes. You might also invite them to a coalition meeting.

After the bill is introduced and assigned to a committee, if you can lobby, you should call, email and write letters to the legislators who are on the committee that the bill has been referred to. You should leave messages with legislative staff and get your members to attend committee hearings.

Before and during the period in which a bill is being considered, you should keep the following four steps in mind if your coalition can legally lobby.

1. Do the work for them – provide legislators with data, talking points and any information to help make your case.
2. Ensure your written and oral input is clear, concise and understandable – it should not contain acronyms or technical jargon. Legislators are bombarded with input and comments. They will ignore your input if they cannot understand it.
3. Get good, powerful sponsors and co-sponsors – other legislators who can support the bill.
  - a. Being on the right committee is important.
  - b. Be bipartisan – get both Republicans and Democrats.
  - c. Get as many co-sponsors as possible.
  - d. Work with your allies (other coalitions, influential individuals, activists, etc.) to increase support and gain additional co-sponsors in the legislature.
  - e. If you have champions – legislators who you have worked with before and who support your issues – use them to gain additional co-sponsors.
4. Get your bill in early – many good bills are introduced at the end of a legislative session. These bills die when the session ends. Get your bill in early during the legislative session to avoid this.

It is always a good idea to get strong grassroots support for your legislation. Email your supporters to have them contact their legislators as well. Set up meetings between legislators and their constituents. This should be done before, during and even after the legislative session. By showing legislators how vocal and visible your supporters are, your cause will always be high on the list of legislators' priorities.

Just as you will have allies in your advocacy efforts, you will have foes. It is critical to understand who your foes are and what their objections and arguments may be. Highlight the extremes of your most vocal opposition and work to prevent more mellow opponents from becoming more active. If there are people on the fence, develop effective advocacy strategies to engage them and sway their opinions.

## Participating in Advocacy Efforts

### Levels of Engagement

Anyone can engage in advocacy, no matter how much experience or time they have. Table 3 below shows different options for engaging in advocacy and the time commitment.

**Table 3: Different Types of Advocacy Actions**

Low Lift	Medium Lift	High Lift
Post on social media	Write a letter to the editor or op-ed	Attend a meeting with your member of Congress and/or their staff
Participate in a CADCA legislative alert	Call your member of Congress	Ask a question at a debate between candidates
	Write, email or fax your member of Congress	Give testimony to Congress

### CADCA’s Capitol Hill Day

CADCA’s Capitol Hill Day during our National Leadership Forum represents one of the best opportunities to engage in advocacy with members of Congress. During Capitol Hill Day, Forum attendees have the opportunity to attend meetings with their members of Congress to educate them on the importance of substance use prevention. These meetings are your opportunity to talk about:

- ❖ Who the sector members of your coalition are
- ❖ The successes and outcomes your coalition has achieved
- ❖ The critical role that your coalition plays in your community
- ❖ The Federal programs that fund your coalition; and,
- ❖ Getting substance use/misuse prevention on the national agenda.

Even a single meeting with a legislator can make a huge difference! Past Forum/Capitol Hill Day attendees have used their meetings to turn their members of Congress (2 Senators and 1 member of the House of Representatives) into national champions for our field. CADCA’s Capitol Hill Day meetings emphasize the power and importance of the substance use prevention movement and are critical in building relationships with members of Congress and their staffs. These meetings hold true to the adage that “all politics is

local”. As a constituent, *you* are important to your members of Congress, and *you* have important information to provide as a substance use prevention expert.

CADCA’s Public Policy Team schedules Capitol Hill Day meetings for you. Registration for these meetings begins in late August or early September each year and runs through mid-January. Meetings can take place either in person or virtually, depending on Congressional office policies and the number of attendees requesting a meeting with the Congressperson or Senator.

To help Capitol Hill Day attendees prepare for their meetings, CADCA’s Public Policy Team hosts webinars in the weeks leading up to the National Leadership Forum. We also publish a book of “leave behinds” with information and asks about substance use prevention. Additionally, CADCA holds state meetings the night before Capitol Hill Day to allow meeting attendees to network and strategize with each other before meeting with their Congressional leaders the next day.

CADCA’s Capitol Hill Day is a fantastic way to educate legislators about the importance of substance use prevention. However, you can and should meet with members of Congress outside of Capitol Hill Day as well. All members of the House and Senate have regional or state offices at which you can also schedule a meeting. Due to COVID-19, many offices are also doing virtual meetings and/or conference calls. Members of Congress also frequently hold town halls or other events in their state or district.

## Town Halls

During congressional recesses, many members of Congress will return to their districts and host town hall meetings. Town halls provide an open forum for legislators to provide updates and to answer questions from their constituents. This is an excellent opportunity to introduce yourself and your organization and advocate for your cause. Be sure to arrive at the town hall early and connect with legislative staff at the event. Developing a good relationship with congressional staff is critical, as these individuals can serve as gatekeepers to the legislator and can advocate on your behalf.

Bring talking points with you to the town hall event. These will provide consistency to your message and help you stay on track when asking your questions. Talking points that include data and anecdotes lend credibility to your cause and put a human face on your issue. You can also leave talking points behind with legislative staff for them to refer to later.

Lastly, be sure to bring a group of your supporters. By bringing a group, more people who support your cause will be able to ask questions. Articulating the same message in the same place commands attention and will have a strong impact.

Town halls are a great place to ask legislators and candidates for political office questions related to substance use prevention. Sample questions you should consider asking are:

1. Do you support programs to explicitly address the problems of underage drinking, drug use/misuse including misuse of prescription and over-the-counter drugs in all of our nation's schools and communities?
2. If elected, how do you intend to ensure that Congress continues to fund and explicitly focus on substance use and misuse prevention?
3. Community anti-drug coalitions are effective in reducing drug use and underage drinking in this community and in many others across the country. If elected, would you support increased funding for community coalitions through the Drug-Free Communities Act and other programs?
4. Since coalitions have done a great job uniting the community to effectively deal with drug use/misuse and underage drinking, how will you ensure that the resources are available so that we can continue to do this?
5. If elected, how will you ensure that our youth are getting the drug prevention education they need?

Information on town halls and other candidate events can be found online. If your coalition publishes a newsletter, you may qualify for press credentials at these events. If this is the case, try to attend events as part of the press corps.

## Using the Media to Make Your Case

The media is a powerful ally in interacting with legislators and making the case for prevention. If a candidate answers your questions at a town hall or other event, publicize the answers through your coalition's newsletter, letters to the editor, editorials, etc.

Brief your local press corps (print, TV, radio). Try to get them interested in raising questions about the candidates' positions on drug and alcohol issues. Schedule an editorial board meeting to discuss these issues. Writing an op-ed piece or letter to the editor will also draw attention to alcohol and drug issues in your local newspaper.

Anyone can submit an op-ed or letter to the editor to their local paper. Op-eds are generally about current issues, while letters to the editor are in response to a specific article recently published by the paper. Op-eds and letters to the editor are some of the best ways to disseminate your message through the media because you have complete control over content. The following are a few items to keep in mind in preparing your op-ed or letter to the editor.

- ❖ Contact the newspaper you are targeting to determine proper protocol for submission.
  - Op-eds are usually 500-650 words or less and letters to the editor are usually 200 words or less.
  - Some newspapers have online submission features, but others will require you to email your content.



- If you are emailing a letter, paste it in the body of an email rather than attaching it as a separate file. Many reporters will not open attachments.
- ❖ Have one clear message or opinion to convey and stick to it.
- ❖ Open with a strong, attention-grabbing narrative.
- ❖ Tailor the message to your community.
- ❖ Make the piece self-contained by giving readers whatever background they need to get your point within the column.
- ❖ Provide strong evidence in support of your opinion, e.g., statistics, a story, research results, without being too technical or straying off-message.
- ❖ Close with a specific call to action that emphasizes the importance of the issue and names the decision makers responsible.
- ❖ Include an authorship line that gives your name and a brief description of what qualifies you as an expert on the subject discussed in the column; and
- ❖ If you get published, distribute a copy of the piece to your membership and use in promotional packets for your coalition.

## Phone Calls

Phone calls to legislators and/or staff can be especially important when a bill is nearing consideration or a vote. They are more difficult to ignore than emails and are therefore a more effective way to get your message across to legislators.

When you call a legislator's office, you will not be speaking with the legislator directly. If possible, ask to speak to or leave a message with the staffer who handles health and drug issues. Be prepared with talking points that explain why the issue is important to you and make a clear ask. It is a good idea to take notes on your conversation and follow up in writing.

Phone numbers for Congressional members' DC and state/district offices are available on their websites or through the US Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121. Switchboard operators will connect you directly with the House or Senate office you request.

## Letters

### Letters from Constituents

Letters are a fantastic way to communicate with legislators. Just as legislators may receive hundreds of phone calls a day, they can also be inundated with letters. It is important to keep the following in mind when writing letters.

- ❖ Keep it short.
- ❖ Refer to a specific bill or issue.
- ❖ Make a specific ask.
- ❖ Personalize with your story or local context.
- ❖ Thank the legislator.

## CADCA Legislative Alerts

Periodically, CADCA’s Public Policy Team sends out legislative alerts asking members to send a pre-written message to their members of Congress (2 Senators and 1 member of the House of Representatives). These legislative alerts contain background information about a piece of legislation or a policy issue and explain how you can contact your members of Congress to send them a prewritten message through CADCA’s VoterVoice system. Figure 6 is an example of a legislative alert.

The image shows a screenshot of an email from CADCA. At the top left is the CADCA logo with the tagline "Building drug-free communities." To the right of the logo is a dark blue bar with the text "Call to Action" in white. Below this bar, the main heading of the alert is "Oppose the SAFE Banking Act".

The email content is organized into several sections:

- ISSUE BACKGROUND**: A paragraph explaining that on April 19, 2021, the House passed the Secure and Fair Enforcement (SAFE) Banking Act (H.R. 1996) by a vote of 321-101. A companion bill (S. 910) is under consideration in the Senate. These bills allow banks to accept the federally illegal proceeds from the sale of marijuana. This will set a precedent to allow other federally illegal industries to gain access to the banking system. Additionally, granting marijuana businesses access to the banking system will make it easier for them to do business, exacerbating the negative consequences of marijuana proliferation, including increased traffic fatalities, youth use rates, ER visits and hospitalizations.
- WHAT YOU CAN DO**: A short paragraph asking the recipient to send the sample letter below to their Senators raising concerns about the SAFE Banking Act and urging them to vote against this legislation.
- HOW TO DO IT**: A short paragraph with a link: "Click [here](#) to send letters to your 2 Senators asking them to vote 'No' on the SAFE Banking Act."
- SAMPLE LETTER**: A longer paragraph starting with "I am writing today to urge you to oppose the SAFE Banking Act of 2021 (S. 910). This legislation seeks to legitimize marijuana business operations that remain illegal under federal law. Granting marijuana businesses access to the banking system will vastly increase the access and availability of marijuana and high potency tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) products that have serious public health and safety consequences. The SAFE Banking Act would result in international drug cartels gaining an even stronger foothold in being able to launder money from other illegal activities. The SAFE Banking Act is an ill-advised measure as our nation grapples with COVID-19 and the opioid, stimulant and vaping crises." This is followed by another paragraph: "The negative consequences associated with the growth of the marijuana industry, including increased traffic fatalities, youth use rates, ER visits and hospitalizations would only be further exacerbated by this legislation. Please vote 'No' on the SAFE Banking Act."

At the bottom of the email, there is contact information for the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America: 625 Slaters Lane Suite 300 Alexandria, VA 22314, 800-54-CADCA. There is also a link: "Click [here](#) to unsubscribe from this mailing list."

**Figure 6: Example of a CADCA Legislative Alert**

CADCA urges its members to participate in responding to our legislative alerts. Letters sent through CADCA's system are important because they tie the message to the national substance use prevention movement and show massive support for the legislation critical to our field. CADCA's legislative alerts are sent using your name and home address, so you are responding as a constituent, not as a coalition leader. Everyone can do this regardless of their funding sources.

Letters can also be sent to legislators through the communication forms on their websites or through email addresses provided on their websites. If you know the staffer who works on health or drug policy issues, you can email the letter to them directly.

Remember to always be professional and respectful in your written and oral communications to legislators.

## Sign-On Letters

Members of Congress will often write letters to House or Senate committees asking them to support or oppose legislation or funding or to help draw attention to an issue. Every year, CADCA works with our champions in the House and Senate to gather support for a letter in support of increased funding for the Drug Free Communities (DFC) program in the upcoming fiscal year. CADCA is proud to have strong bipartisan, bicameral support for increased DFC program funding every fiscal year. See Figure 7 on the next page for an example of a sign-on letter.

United States Senate

June 22, 2021

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Financial Services  
110 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Cindy Hyde-Smith  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Financial Services  
702 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Van Hollen and Ranking Member Hyde-Smith:

We write in strong support of funding the Drug-Free Communities (DFC) Program, most recently reauthorized by section 8203 of Subtitle K of the SUPPORT Act (P.L. 115-271), and the training and technical assistance authorized by section 8204 of the Act from within the appropriated amount for this program at the highest possible level in Fiscal Year (FY) 2022. For FY 2021, these programs were funded at \$102 million and \$2.5 million.

In the midst of the devastating drug overdose epidemic, the DFC Program warrants the highest possible funding level because it has proven effective in reducing youth substance use. According to independent research in communities where DFC coalitions exist, rates of past thirty-day use among middle school students for alcohol, tobacco and marijuana declined by twelve, thirty-six, and eight percent, respectively. Among high school students, rates for alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and prescription drugs declined by twenty-four, thirty-nine, seven, and thirty percent, respectively. (ICF International, National Evaluation of the Drug-Free Communities Support Program, March 2021 Report)

DFC coalitions exist in 733 communities across the nation and provide support to 2.4 million middle school students and 3.4 million high school students. The program requires a community to demonstrate local commitment before it is eligible to receive federal funds, which means that at least twelve sectors within the community must come together to plan and implement evidence-based programs that will meet the community's unique needs in reducing drug use. All grantees are required to provide a dollar-for-dollar match in non-federal funds up to the maximum grant amount of \$125,000 per year. The required emphasis on local data collection, community buy-in, and participation among multiple sectors is central to the DFC coalitions' success and allows grantees to respond effectively to emerging drug trends.

For these reasons, we urge you to fund the DFC Program at the highest possible level in FY 2022. This will ensure that the maximum number of communities are equipped to effectively reduce all types of youth drug use and have the evaluation results to prove it.

Sincerely,

Figure 7: The Senate DFC sign-on letter for fiscal year 2022

Social Media

Email, phone conversations and in-person visits are more traditional ways of communicating your organization's policy priorities with legislators, but social media can be a helpful tool as well. Legislators use sites like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to monitor their public image and interact with constituents. Be sure to follow your legislators on social media for more information on their interest areas, positions, priorities and upcoming events. You can and should also comment on their posts. Timely comments are a great way to get an office's attention on an issue. Encourage other people in your organization to comment as well. The timeliness and quantity of your comments will increase the chance that a legislator or their staff will respond.

If your organization posts on social media, be sure to tag your legislators. You can also participate in online events hosted by your legislator, such as virtual town halls or Twitter chats. Anyone can participate in such events by using a common hashtag.


Too often, conversations on social media can be disrespectful or confrontational. As an advocate, it is in your best interest and the best interest of our cause to be respectful and polite at all times.

  
Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator

  
Charles E. Grassley  
United States Senator

  
John Cornyn  
United States Senator

  
Roger Marshall M.D.  
United States Senator


  
Bill Cassidy, M.D.  
United States Senator

  
Rob Portman  
United States Senator

  
Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator

  
Thom Tillis  
United States Senator

  
Joe Tester  
United States Senator

  
Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator

## Conclusion

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Effective advocacy takes preparation, patience and persistence. Use facts and anecdotes to make your case and leverage connections in your coalition and your community to build relationships with legislators. Do your homework to make sure you understand which legislators to engage with and how best to make them care about your issue. Map out your advocacy strategy and use one-pagers to provide legislators with information to support your efforts. Have a communications strategy in place so that you can reach supporters and minimize the impact of your opponents. Engage with legislators wherever and whenever possible and be confident in your ability to be an advocate for your issue.

Community coalition leaders across the country can engage in advocacy to help legislators understand the importance of bona fide substance use prevention to stop drug use before it starts. As the nation deals with the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing opioid and stimulant epidemics, advocacy for substance use prevention is needed now more than ever. Together, we can help make communities across America safe, healthy and drug-free.

# Appendix

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## Prevention Programs

### The Drug-Free Communities Program

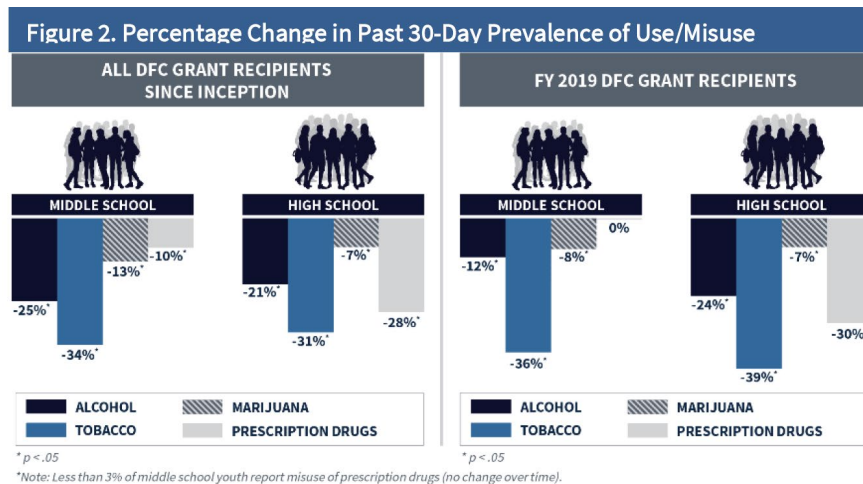
The Drug-Free Communities (DFC) program, housed in the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) has been a central, bipartisan component of our nation’s demand reduction strategy since its passage in 1998. In FY 2022, the DFC program was funded at a record level of \$106 million. Recognizing that the issue of substance misuse must be dealt with in every community throughout America, the DFC program provides the funding necessary for multi-sector community coalitions to identify and respond to local drug, nicotine and underage drinking problems. DFC coalitions are singularly situated to deal with all drug trends, such as methamphetamine, opioids, other prescription drug misuse and synthetic drugs, because they have the necessary infrastructure in place to effectively address all drug related issues in their communities. A local DFC coalition must have community wide involvement, to include:

- ❖ Youth
- ❖ Parents
- ❖ Businesses
- ❖ Media
- ❖ Schools
- ❖ Youth-serving organizations
- ❖ Religious or fraternal organizations
- ❖ Law enforcement
- ❖ Civic and volunteer groups
- ❖ Health care professionals
- ❖ State, local or tribal agencies
- ❖ Other organizations involved in reducing substance use

The most recent update of the national, independent evaluation of the DFC program (March 2021), conducted by ICF International, proves the program is effective. From first report to most recent report for the FY 2019 grant recipients, rates of substance use for all grantees have declined significantly in DFC communities: among high school students, past 30-day use rates for alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and prescription drugs have declined by 24%, 39%, 7% and 30% respectively<sup>15</sup> (see Figure 8).

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<sup>15</sup> ICF International, the Drug-Free Communities Support Program National Evaluation Team. “National Evaluation of the Drug-Free Communities Support Program Key Findings from the Forthcoming (2021) Report. March 2021. Page 1.



**Figure 8: The effectiveness of the DFC Program**

Despite this effectiveness and the growth of the program from \$10 million in 1998 to \$106 million in 2022, there has only been enough money to fund 36.8% of those who have applied for funds.

### Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA) Enhancement Grants

The CARA Section 103 Enhancement Grant Program provides enhancement grants of \$50,000 a year for 3 years to current and former DFC program grantees to prevent the misuse of prescription drugs and methamphetamine among 12-to-17-year-olds. CARA enhancement grants are critical because they give DFC grantees extra resources to target specific drug issues with more intentionality, while continuing to cover the host of other substance use issues they are already working on in their community.

### Sober Truth on Preventing Underage Drinking (STOP) Act Enhancement Grants

The Sober Truth on Preventing Underage Drinking (STOP) Act is a comprehensive, national response to the public health crisis of underage drinking in the United States. STOP Act programs include community-based coalition enhancement grants to allow current and former DFC grantees to enhance their underage drinking prevention efforts. STOP Act grantees are effective in reducing alcohol use and misuse rates to lower than the national average.

### Center for Substance Abuse Prevention

The Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) works with federal, state, public and private organizations to develop comprehensive prevention systems to stop drug use before it starts by:

- ❖ Providing national leadership in the development of policies, programs and services to prevent the onset of illegal drug use, prescription drug and opioid misuse, alcohol misuse and underage alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and illegal drug use.

- ❖ Promoting effective substance misuse prevention practices that enable states, communities, and other organizations to utilize and implement evidence-based prevention, knowledge and strategies effectively.

CSAP's Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF) program is the backbone of comprehensive state and community-based substance use prevention based on state epidemiologic data to determine both what substance use issues are most prevalent as well as where to target funding, so that areas of highest need receive resources. The program is the basis of effective prevention, planning, coordination and implementation of primary prevention resources in states and substate communities and has been effective in reducing underage drinking and drug use among 12-20-year-olds in funded states.

### 20% Set-Aside in Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant

The backbone of funding in each state's prevention system is the 20% prevention set-aside in the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment (SAPT) Block Grant, which totaled \$381.6 million in fiscal year 2022. This comprises 68% of primary substance use prevention funding in U.S states, territories and the District of Columbia. By statute, the SAPT Block Grant prevention set-aside must be spent on primary prevention services for individuals who have not been identified as needing treatment. In addition to general primary prevention efforts, states can use SAPT Block Grant set-aside funds to target specific populations that may be at increased risk for developing a substance use disorder. States have the flexibility to decide how to use this funding based on their unique needs. Categories include:

- ❖ Information dissemination
- ❖ Education
- ❖ Alternatives
- ❖ Problem identification
- ❖ Community-based processes
- ❖ Environmental

### More Funding for Drug Prevention Infrastructure Is Needed

Given the effectiveness of current substance use prevention programs, additional funding for prevention is a sound investment. Every state and community must have funding to enable them to develop and sustain the infrastructure necessary for effective drug prevention. States and communities must engage in evidence-based processes to assess their needs, build capacity, develop a strategic plan, implement effective prevention programs, policies and practices and evaluate their efforts for outcomes.