**Quick Tips on Advocacy: Mobilizing your Community**

***Below are a series of quick tips on advocacy strategies that you can use in your org, community, or in helping to mobilize others.***

**Developing Your Core Message *(adapted from M+R tool, www.powerprism.org)***

Before crafting your message, consider and answer the 5 questions below.

* Who is the **audience** for this particular message? (i.e. a lawmaker, advocate, reporter, etc.)
* What might appeal to their direct **self-interest**? (What’s in it for them? Why should they care?)
* What do you want your audience to **think** or understand about your issue?
* How do you want them to **feel** about what you have said?
* What do you want your listener to **do** after they hear your message?

Now, craft a message that is short and to the point: no more than 3 sentences. Use this as the basis for your social media, your calls to action, your meetings with elected officials, your letters to the editor, etc.

# **Meeting with Elected Officials or their Staff**

Meeting with Staff is just as good as meeting with the elected official – make use of any opportunity.

Set up meetings by calling their office or emailing their staff. If you don’t know who their staff are, call the office and ask. Meeting in the district (as opposed to in Washington or at the State House) is always a great option that many elected prefer.

* Thank him/her for taking the time to meet with you; even if it’s a staff person, its always important to thank him/her.
* Who are you? (Your name, where do you live, work/volunteer)
* What do you and your agency do? (What the name of your agency, who do you serve, and share any numbers that you know (#clients, etc.)
* What issue do you want to talk about? (Is there a piece of legislation, a budget item, or something more general that you’d like to talk about?)
* Illustrate your need with a compelling, succinct, client story.
* What do you want the elected official to do? (This is “the ask”. Always have one).
* Thank him/her. Let them know how and when you will follow-up. (And then make sure you do!)

# **Social Media Basics for Advocacy**

* Where are the people you want to reach? Twitter? Facebook? Instagram? Snapchat? Think about both your targets (legislators) and advocates. It could be multiple places.
* “Friend” or “follow” elected officials at all levels, from local to federal.
* Tag the people you really want to see your posts – target specific elected officials or appointed officials.
* Use relevant hashtags. For MA politics a popular one is #mapoli. For hunger #endhungernow or #SaveSNAP. Do some quick searching to find what is popular in your state, community, or issue.
* Use pictures and create super simple graphics (try [www.canvaa.com](http://www.canvaa.com)). Get photos of meetings with elected officials or at events. Make selfie signs and use them at events and meetings to get your message out there.

# **Letters to the Editor**

Letters to the Editor are the original social media. Don’t discount them; a segment of the population (usually an engaged and voting segment!) read them, and they can be shared online. It’s a great action that volunteers, board members, staff, clients, and just about anyone can engage in!

* Letters can be submitted online through email, a specific form the newspaper will have on its site, or via mail. Look on your newspapers site to find out what the process is (or call and ask).
* Letters often need to be 250 words or less. In your first sentence, make your issue and stance known.
* Make sure the letter has a call to action for the broader community to engage in the issue: “I urge your readers to contact their City Council representative and…”.

# **Sharing a Story of Personal Experience**

Sharing a story of personal experience is a powerful way to remind us that this work isn’t just about pounds of food, dollars in the state budget, or a faceless piece of legislation. It’s about people, families, children, the elderly, and people living with disabilities; real people with very real struggles. Our elected officials need to know facts and figures, but they also need to ***feel*** the impact. Sharing a true story about a **real person** is the best way to make that connection for a legislator. The most powerful is for a person to share his/her own personal experience, and this can be empowering (yet also very difficult). If that isn’t possible, ask someone if he/she is okay with you sharing his/her story with elected officials in order to highlight the issue of hunger. You can always change a name or use only a first name in order to protect privacy. Follow this simple guide to help you craft your story.

* What is his/her first name? (Real or changed)
* When did you first meet him/her?
* What are some of the details of his/her situation that brought him/her to your agency?
* What is something unique about this person?
* How does this person’s story relate to what you want to ask the elected official to do?