

Advocacy Workshop

Presenters:

- Gary Passmore, Vice President, Congress of California Seniors
- Albert Chin, Social Action Coordinator, St. Barnabas Senior Services
- Christina Griffith, Senior Advocacy Coordinator, Senior Community Centers of San Diego
- Marvin Schachter, Executive Council Member, AARP California and member LA County Commission for Older Adults
- Rigo Saborio, President & CEO, St. Barnabas Senior Services

Rigo Saborio:

Advocacy is part of service delivery model

Use of strategic tools

Gary Passmore:

California is youth oriented. For example, three years ago MediCal services such as dental, eye, therapy, chiropractic services were free. Today eye, podiatry, chiropractic and therapy are not available to seniors but are still available for children. Now there are co-pays and fees for seniors, but not for children. We are seeing the politics of ageism and we have seen program erosion over the last 5 years.

Advocacy:

- Learn to see yourselves as lifetime advocates. You can call, write letters and attend meetings. The timing and audience are important, but you know how to advocate.
- 501(c)3 funds can't be used to lobby for legislative items but you can do advocacy-education about challenges, or ask the board of directors to speak to someone. If your organization is a municipal organization you may need to do advocacy as an individual.
- Good Advocacy:
 - Clear message, three or four key messages for listener
 - Coalition collaboration is the best advocacy
 - Message has a clear "ask." Don't whine; suggest change
 - Stories are critical to make the issues resonate

Albert Chin:

The old model of advocacy -- just push for legislation

Now advocacy is used to preserve, strengthen, and find new partners

- Techniques:

- Phone, FAX, visit—group is finite
- Social network
 - 8 million were following one twitter conversation
- Anticipate proactive and reactive advocacy
- Work with all levels of government

Rigo Saborio:

The Los Angeles Aging Advocacy Coalition stopped the LA City Department of Aging from being swallowed up by a larger agency by advocating with local leaders about the need for this department to stand alone.

Christina Griffith:

Successful advocacy:

- Engaging seniors to become advocates
- Building coalitions
- Assessing the environment
 - Key issues
 - existing relationships
 - mission, values
- Advocacy Strategy
 - Target
 - Who you need to build relationships with
 - Tactics
 - Development, issues, communication plan, timeline
 - Identify Needs
- Operational Framework
- Executing the plan
- Reporting
 - Make the connection-service/dollars/outcome
- Personalize—like courting potential mate!
 - Use stories

Set your organization up for success:

- Office/logo/database/website/social media
- Launch-media/community events/meet legislators & staff and seniors
- Imagine you are throwing a party and the biggest party wins

Organizing tactics-coordinate message

Get seniors to be advocates

- Senior Advocacy Workshops
- Use all means to communicate with seniors as some are homebound, not mobile or not using technology

Remember to appeal to the sandwich generation

We had seniors make a video to advocate with legislators

Share victories, update material, Use social media and report to stakeholders, use individual email accounts

Marvin Schachter:

Find a platform for talking about issues

- Ask the city council to learn about legislative issues and speak out about issues
- Tax code for 501(c)3 does allow for limited expenditure (5-15% of total budget) to be used for lobbying
- Some cities have lobbyist—do they know about senior issues?-Older Americans Act?
- Talk to public radio and news editors
- Do you know who local leaders are? Do they know you?
- Write news articles/letters to the editor

The crucial nature of this period means we have to be part of the conversation about things that affect seniors

- Getting out the senior vote is crucial
- Host non-partisan forums for candidates
- Individuals are always allowed to advocate

Gary Passmore:

Use the publication “Guide to Citizen Advocacy” published by the Congress of California Seniors. You may copy the content and distribute it to members of your organization.