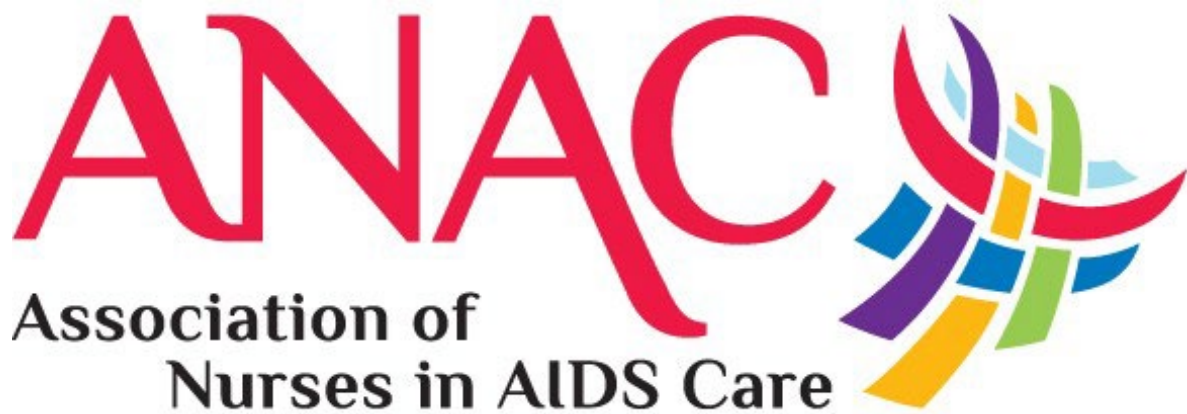


# Association of Nurses in AIDS Care Advocacy Toolkit



## **Advocacy & Lobbying**

Advocacy is any action that speaks in favor of, recommends, argues for a cause, supports or defends, or pleads on behalf of others. It includes public education, regulatory work, litigation, and work before administrative bodies, nonpartisan voter registration, nonpartisan voter education or lobbying.

Lobbying is communicating with decision makers (elected officials and staff; voters on ballot measures) about existing or potential legislation and urging a vote for or against. All three components of this definition of lobbying are required: decision makers, actual legislation AND asking for a vote.

Lobbying can be a part of advocacy, but advocacy does not need to include lobbying.

Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3), is confusing and has led to some organizations prohibiting any lobbying and unfortunately confusing advocacy as lobbying. However, that section of the law states that tax-exempt status is contingent upon no substantial part of the activities of which is carrying on propaganda, or otherwise attempting, to influence legislation. The challenge is what is substantial? Indeed, the IRS has this to say in summarizing the law: "A 501(c)(3) organization may engage in some lobbying, but too much lobbying activity risks loss of tax-exempt status."

INDIVIDUALS CAN LOBBY- but it may need to occur on time off from your 501(c)(3) employer. ORGANIZATIONS (and individuals employed by those organizations to do so) can lobby- but it is limited to a % (10%?) of the organizations overall budget. Lobbying is one action that can be part of advocacy. But there are many other allowable parts and actions to advocacy that do not threaten 501(c)(3) status and are allowable for organizations and individuals on "company" time.

Example of advocacy: Communicating with your elected officials about the importance of Ryan White programs or PrEP services in your area and why they must be fully funded.

Examples of lobbying: Asking a legislator to vote for a specific appropriations (funding) bill that will increase Ryan White funding or a specific bill to increase CDC funding for PrEP services.

Examples of advocacy: Communicating with your elected officials about the impact of HIV criminalization statutes on stigma and the contradictions to proven science.

Examples of lobbying: Asking a legislator to vote for or against a specific bill (with the bill number) that changes HIV criminalization law in your state.

Example of advocacy: Communicating with your elected officials about the dangers of anti-LGBT legislation on the mental health of gay kids and their families.

Examples of lobbying: Asking a legislator to vote against a specific bill (with the bill number) that prohibits education in elementary schools on same sex relationships.

## **Types of Advocacy**

Individual advocacy involves speaking up and advocating on behalf of or for others (a client, an individual, or a group) to advance their goals, including navigating systems on behalf of an individual or small group to access support or to connect to resources. Individual advocates can take the form of informal or professional support, a role inherent in nursing.

A grassroots movement is one where people in a community come together for political or social change. Grassroot movements build and expand public support for an issue or should lead to advocacy campaigns that target a specific issue or tactic to achieve or contribute to the political or social change.

An advocacy campaign is a set of activities designed to target specific issues, whether they be local or affect an entire region, state or nation to change policy, rules or laws on an issue. The campaigns are often spearheaded by a small group of leaders who organize a larger group of supporters. The activities associated with an advocacy campaign may include holding rallies, contacting public officials, circulating petitions, fundraising, marketing and lobbying.

Whether related to individual advocacy, a grassroots movement or a specific advocacy campaign, the voices of constituents are important to legislators and other key decision makers. Tactics, such as in-person and virtual visits, social media, phone calls, email, sign-on letters, letters to editors in local papers, radio talk shows and blogs are influential in the debates on major issues.

### **Targets of Advocacy**

Key decision makers include:

- Administrators such as leadership at HRSA, CDC, state and local Health Departments, hospital or health system executives.
- National, state or local elected legislators such as city council or county commissioners.
- Appointed bodies such as school boards, state Boards of Nursing, hospital committees

Every day, key decisions are made that affect health care and nursing. Decisions at the elected legislative level get the most media attention, but decisions made by administrators and local boards and committees may have more impact on the daily lives of people. It is important that nurses and other healthcare providers be aware of and participate at these different levels. The people affected by these decisions are constituents. While constituents are historically thought to be people elected officials represent, constituents are also the people that appointed people serve and their/our interests must be part of deliberations and decisions.

Most decision makers do care about how issues affect their constituents. At the same time, they are trying to be experts on numerous issues, and they are hearing the opinions of many other groups who may not share your opinions and viewpoints on an issue. Legislatively, when your legislator goes to vote on proposed legislation, they want to know how many folks back home called or wrote for and against an issue. Organizationally, when a local official goes to institute a new program or mandate, they want to know how many community members support or oppose the initiative.

### **Approaches to Advocacy**

Build a relationship. Use these tools often and repeatedly. Individual actions as constituents matter. Membership organizations can amplify and add to them to reach other constituents, the public and decision makers. Social media is an important tool. Membership or advocacy organizations can originate or amplify advocacy messages. Individual members can contribute to and amplify the messages through content, likes and retweeting or sharing. Organizations working in coalitions are effective in achieving public policy, ideally converting a “special interest” to a “public interest” posture.

**From the Florida Nurses Association:  
Top 11 Most Effective Methods for Contacting Legislators**

- Face-to-face individual visits
- Interaction on social media
- Face-to-face group visit
- Virtual meetings
- Telephone call
- Handwritten letters
- Emails
- Resolution passed by an organization
- Petition
- News report of group/individual position
- Form (sign-on) letters

**Meeting with legislators or other key decision makers**

- Be flexible in the times you are available to see the legislator, scheduling as far ahead as possible. Be prepared to suggest or accept alternative appointments, including meetings with a key staffer.
- Be on time and prepared. The legislator or staff member has many time commitments and a packed calendar. Expect a short meeting.
- Know who you are talking to. Learn something about each legislator before you meet him or her.
- Understand the legislative process. Understand how a bill becomes a law.
- Never underestimate the power of a legislative aide. Due to their contacts with constituents, the aides can advise a legislator on constituency interest on a project or bill and, therefore, can advocate your position if you meet with them. Enlist their help. Always be courteous to them.
- Appoint a single, articulate and organized spokesperson. If you are in a group, appoint a spokesperson and be sure to introduce all members of the group and their interest in the project. Make BRIEF introductions.
- Prepare your case and be clear. Be clear about what result you want from the meeting. Know your special category project and be specific about the project's benefits to your community.
- Never lie, never lie, never lie. If you don't know the answer, there is no shame in admitting it. Promise to get back with the information and then be sure to follow through.
- If you don't know, say so! Don't feel as if you must know everything. Don't create an answer. Let your legislator know you will research information and respond.
- Acknowledge the existence and arguments of opposing sides on a controversial issue. Be prepared with facts of your own that refute your opponents' arguments.
- Ask for support. Before leaving, try to summarize the major points of your discussion and ask for the legislator's support on your issues. Try to frame your request in a maximum of three critical issues.
- Thank the lawmaker/staff for their time and concern. Leave your business card or some memento of your special category project.
- Follow up with a thank you note. When you return home, send a thank you note to all legislators and aides with whom you met to remind them of your project and interests.

### **Storytelling- An important part of advocacy.**

Craft your story that illustrates a policy point. Tell the real life of an individual or composite story of a few people. Make it brief, but heartfelt, with enough details to make it memorable. You may not know deep health policy tactics that are backed up with charts and figures, but you do know the lived experiences of your colleagues, patients and community members. Leverage that and link it to a policy point.

### **Social Media**

- Use your nursing credentials in your profile or handle
- Follow key legislators and decision makers on social media
- Comment on their posts, reply and retweet their posts
- Always insert that you are a nurse and the impact the issue will have on the nursing profession or the community you serve
- Invite others to join a page that promotes your issue
- Use the #nursetwitter

### **Calling legislators or other key decision makers**

- Your goal is to provide the key pieces of information they need:
  - Your name, your city and county (let the office know that you are a constituent)
  - Your occupation as a nurse
  - The reason for your call (stated in a few words), and your position on the issue.
  - If lobbying - bill number or title

Staff assistants answer calls to a legislator's office. Call back or try a different time of day if the line is busy. It's Ok to leave a message with the same points as above. When your call is answered, ask to speak with the person who handles health care legislation for the legislator. If that person is not available, leave your message with whomever can speak with you. Organize the points you want to cover and be brief.

### **Sample Call to Legislator**

*Hello, this is (INSERT YOUR NAME HERE) and I am a registered nurse in (INSERT YOUR CITY HERE). May I please speak with the person who handles healthcare issues?  
I am calling because I want to let Senator (INSERT SENATOR NAME HERE) know that I am very concerned about (INSERT ISSUE HERE detailing how the issue or bill will affect your role in healthcare).  
It is critical that the Senator (SUPPORT or OPPOSE) the issue. Give one to three very brief reasons, such as "We can all save money without sacrificing the quality of healthcare if the provision passes" or "We as nurses are already trained to provide this service." Many of my nursing colleagues share my concern regarding this.  
My name, address, phone number, and/or email address are (INSERT HERE). Please make sure that the Senator knows that I (support/oppose issue name). Thank you for your time.*

## Letters to Legislators & Decision makers (from Florida Nurses Association)

They take note of all letters from their constituents, but many say they devote the most attention to letters that are original and thoughtful (not forms or letters that are mass produced). It is important to clearly identify your subject matter and viewpoint, perhaps by making a key statement in a single paragraph or using bold or underline for emphasis. Letters provide the opportunity to say more than you might be able to say during a brief telephone call, but you do not want your message to become lost because you are raising too many topics in the letter.

Therefore, please create your own letter using the ideas suggested to you in a form letter or request but personalize it! Letters and other correspondences that have been “localized” carry much greater weight with legislators than a standard form letter.

- Always include your nursing credentials and identify yourself as a nurse.
- Use their names. Do not send letters addressed to “Senator” or “Representative from District XX.”
- Use proper form of address and salutation on the letter and envelope (i.e., Honorable Jane Doe, or Honorable Senator Jane Doe).
- Clearly identify the issue or the bill you are writing about by its title and bill number to avoid any confusion.
- Make the letter accurate and sincere. Relate your concern as a personal one and give reasons for your position, and tell how the bill or issue will impact you and others.
- Ask for specific assistance or support of your position.
- Keep it short and double check the letter to make sure it is legible, professional, and well-written.
- Always include your mailing address, telephone number, and email address for a response. Make sure your return address is on the envelope.

Sample Letter to Legislator:

Jane Doe, RN  
321 Sunny Lane  
Orlando, FL 32828  
January 12, 2020

The Honorable Mary Smith  
100 Capitol Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32301

Dear Representative Smith:

As a Registered Nurse and parent living in your district, I see every day how important the children’s health provision in the Health Care Reorganization Act, HB 1234, would be in making sure that children receive preventive healthcare. Nurses and other healthcare providers spend great amounts of time caring for sick children who might not be sick if they had preventive healthcare. Children are brought to the emergency rooms at the last minute because they did not receive regular or preventive care. These emergency room visits cost society an inordinate amount of money. This money could be spent on other important things if children have adequate preventive healthcare!

I urge you to support the children’s health provision in HB 1234.

Thank you for your help with this important legislation. Florida’s nurses are working hard to support responsible healthcare policies.

Sincerely,  
Jane Doe, RN

### **Emailing Legislator or Key decision maker:**

If you use e-mail to communicate with your legislator, you should do so in the context of an ongoing relationship in which you use other methods as the foundation of your communication.

To construct an e-mail with impact, follow these steps:

#### **1. State that you are a constituent in the subject line.**

For example – Subject: Message from a constituent on xyz issue. Most legislators have their staff sort and respond to their e-mail, and this strategy will increase the likelihood that your message is read.

#### **2. Always include your nursing credentials and identify yourself as a nurse.**

#### **3. State your request concisely.**

View your message as different from a traditional letter. E-mail is less formal and much briefer than written communication. Construct your message accordingly – keep it concise and short.

#### **3. Provide personal examples and local context.**

Use similar principles as those in letter writing, but in a more concise format. If you are sending a generic e-mail written by a group of which you are a part, insert personal examples in the message.

**4. Persuade a like-minded friend, family member, or colleague to send an e-mail as well.** Quantity is critical. Legislators pay attention to issues when they believe that many of their constituents' care about an issue. One e-mail is not convincing.

#### **5. Communicate more than once.**

As with all other forms of communicating, view your e-mail as part of an ongoing relationship. Keep in touch with your legislator and their position on the issue.

**Being part of an advocacy organization or coalition helps to track where a piece of legislation is in the process. They may issue Action Alerts – asking members/the public to contact decision makers. Here's the order you may be asked to contact decision makers/officials on issues.**

#### **1. Contact Elected Officials from your District**

Your voter registration card will show your districts for county, state, and federal offices. For state bills, your local state representative and local senator need to be contacted early and often. Individual and small group actions are useful here.

#### **2. Contact Committee Members**

As a bill moves through the process (national, state or local) it is heard by different committees. Advocacy organizations are often tracking where a specific bill is in committee and may organize activities at this level.

#### **3. Contact Newly Elected Members**

A focus on the newly elected members who may not be as well informed as experienced legislators on issues is critical. General education visits are important, recommendations on what caucus or interest group to join are useful. Identify the hospital or clinic or CBO in the newly elected officials district and tie your education and message to that.

#### **4. Contact Governor, Senate President, and House Speaker**

These three positions are the most powerful in the state. The Senate President and House Speaker are not only the leaders of their chambers, they are also the lead person of their party. They have the power to direct issues that they want promoted or killed. The Governor is the one to either sign or veto a bill which has passed both chambers. Don't forget to contact these individuals as part of your advocacy efforts by a simple email or call or social media post.

### **Other strategies:**

**Media presence:** We obtain a lot of our information from the media – newspapers, magazines, television, radio, and the internet. What the public knows about something is usually based on what people receive from the media. The media influence the political process directly. The primary goal is to enable nurses to take an activist role on issues that affect our profession and the communities we serve. Media involvement will help us accomplish that goal by:

- **Making sure that our messages are heard by people who influence policy.**
- **Enhancing the image of nurses as the single largest profession within the health care delivery system.**
- **Helping the public become better informed about the critical roles that nurses play in health care delivery, especially in preventive and primary care.**

You are not expected to become a media expert. But with a basic understanding of how the media works and how you can work with the media, you can significantly influence public opinion in your community.

As a nurse, you are an expert in the eyes of your local media in understanding how the healthcare delivery system works and what can be done to make it function better for patients.

### **Become active in social medial and other forms of media**

**Podcasts:** An effective communications strategy is necessary for successful advocacy that leads to change in policy. Along with in-person visits, emails, events, and social media, podcasting introduces a new way to reach others- supporters and the uninformed. People are craving human connections, and they need to hear the reasons and opinions of varying perspectives in an unthreatening way. To reach people and encourage them to wholeheartedly involve themselves in your advocacy efforts, you need to establish that one-on-one care about an issue, and podcasts are an intimate yet virtual way to do so. Listen to podcasts. Get familiar with popular podcasts that focus on healthcare. Consider participating in podcasts to represent a nursing perspective on policy issues. On-line resources provide ways to start your own podcast.

**Social Media:** The impact of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter has exponentially influenced communications, including opportunities to expand advocacy efforts. Tips on developing a social media presence from Eric Roach/EveryoneSocial:

**1. Develop a strong, passionate voice on social media:** It's easy to share, like and retweet, but the secret to success as an advocate for your issue is to add your own original writing to the conversation.

**2. Practice writing clearly and with sophistication:** The caliber of the people you attract on social media will be directly proportional to the clarity and sophistication that you bring to the social media content you share.

**3. Become a thought leader:** Advocates who become subject-matter experts about an issue not only gain a loyal following on social media but also can leverage that following to advocate more effectively for larger causes. To become a thought leader, you'll want to start by researching what other thought leaders are writing-follow them

**4. Promote social media activity among your peers:** Social media is all about building connections – and not just with an outside audience. You also want to build a strong social network of fellow nurses and advocates, who, when working together, collectively strengthen the advocacy effort.



## **Read and view the traditional media**

Make a list of all the media in your area that, in your view, are influential. This will include newspapers, television stations and radio stations. National talk shows are certainly influential, but so are local talk shows in your area. These shows frequently address important national and local issues such as health access and financing healthcare. Policymakers are greatly influenced by the debate emanating from these shows. Nurses should have a presence in these local settings. Some tips to get started:

- Be aware of the radio and TV talk shows in your area that deal with health or political issues.
- View and listen to these shows when you can.
- Identify reporters who cover health and social justice issues.
- Respond to the talk show when a nursing or public health issue is being discussed. Identify yourself as a nurse and communicate your views.
- Do this on a regular basis and become known to the show producers or reporters on the health beat.

## **Write Letters to the Editor**

Every newspaper has a “letters to the editor” section on the editorial page. This page provides an opportunity to express your point of view on stories that appear in the newspaper or on issues of the day. Legislators and decision makers pay attention to Letters to the Editor as one way to keep tabs on opinions and concerns among their constituents. The editors of the newspaper will be especially interested in your reaction to their editorials and may be more likely to print those submissions.

Letters should be short (no more than 350 words- look up the word limit) and should state, in the first sentence, what the letter is responding to. For example, you may say,

“In your editorial on December 15 on ‘Healthcare Access,’ you said...” or

“In your news article, ‘The Governor pushes Health Care Reform (Page A7, December 14, 2022),

You would then go on to react to the statement and express your point of view. Local newspapers and even big ones, like the local angle. If you can use local examples of how a policy will affect patients in your community, it will increase the chances of your letter being published.

## **Conclusion**

This handbook provides a very basic overview of advocacy strategies and tactics. Key to all of them is the role of nurses and other healthcare providers in advocacy for sound public policies that enhance health, well-being, equality and social justice. This aligns with a key part of the mission of ANAC -advocacy for the rights of people living with and affected by HIV around the world. This is amplified in a core Ideology of ANAC: Public policy must be grounded in patient advocacy, human rights, compassion, and social justice. We promote the inclusion of the nursing perspective in promoting the health, welfare and rights of all individuals affected by HIV and its comorbidities. This core ideology is shaped by two fundamental beliefs:

- Nurses can have an influential and powerful voice as public policy advocates
- Nurses have expertise related to health care and human rights.

Advocacy can take many forms: A Letter to the Editor, a social media presence, testifying at a local school board, meeting with an elected official and many other examples. Try one or two. See what works for you. And always start with “I am a Nurse...”