



Tool of the Day Archive November 2020

Advocacy Tool # 1 -- Tips and Traps

Problems worthy of attack prove their worth by hitting back. -- Piet Hein, Danish mathematician

Advocacy can be hard. Avoiding common mistakes and taking advice from others who've gone before is the best way to be successful and not waste your time. A couple of tips and mistakes are listed here. There are more in the CT Health Advocacy Toolbox.

Tip: Always be polite, no matter how much it hurts.

This is all about creating relationships – and you don't want people running away when they see you coming next time.

Mistake: Assume you know the system.

Too often, a group of advocates works for a couple of years to get a bill passed, only to find that it doesn't get implemented because there was no money for it in the budget. So they work for another couple of years to get it funded. But it still isn't implemented, because no one talked to the agency that was supposed to do it.

Tip: Get your story straight.

Be prepared. You don't have to do a lot of research, just your story is fine. Think through what you are going to say.

Mistake: Leave without closing the deal.

Too often an advocate makes a case with a policymaker, who says they agree completely, this is a serious problem, Connecticut really needs to address this, etc. The advocate leaves feeling great, having made her point, but later learns that the policymaker didn't support the proposal. Be sure to ask them to vote yes (or no) on the bill.

[Common Advocates' Mistakes](#)
[Tips No Advocate Should Forget](#)

Advocacy Tool #2 – Your questions answered

Do what you can, with what you have, where you are. - Theodore Roosevelt

When we updated the Health Advocacy Toolbox, we collected questions and concerns from people considering advocacy. A couple of their questions with answers from advocacy veterans are below. More questions and answers are in the Toolbox

How can I best support efforts using my skills?

First, use your voice and share your perspective. You are unique, even if yours is a popular issue. If you are comfortable writing for the media, send a letter to the editor or op-ed. If you can get to Hartford, set up a meeting with legislators. If you can't get to Hartford, make a call, submit written testimony on a bill or write a letter to a policymaker. If you have friends, organize a testimony or letter-writing session. Get creative – you have much to contribute. Very few people take the time, so your voice will be important.

Where can I get access to information on what is happening?

This can be a challenge, especially as more news sites are requiring subscriptions. Newsletters are one of the best ways to find out what is happening. [You can join ours here](#). Sign up for your legislators' newsletters [on their websites](#). To find other groups, go to [Coalitions and Collaboration](#). If you [find a bill from a prior year](#) that addresses your issue, check out who testified on it and reach out to them. There are still many free news outlets in Connecticut. [Click here for a resource list](#). There are also national newsletters focused on health – [check Resources](#) for a list.

[More Questions Answered](#)

Advocacy Tool # 3 – Where to Start

What looks large from a distance - up close ain't never that big. -- Bob Dylan

You know the problem you want to change or the idea you have to make things better. But where to begin? Starting in the wrong place is one of the most common advocacy mistakes.

People often start by thinking there needs to be a law. But maybe there already is a law and it's not being enforced. Maybe the program exists already, but it just needs more funding. And maybe a law can't fix the problem.

Our Decision Tree can help. It takes you through eight questions. The answers guide you to the best route and vehicle to address your problem or idea. If you don't know the answers, the Decision Tree has prompts and links to help figure it out.

1. Is your issue government or private?

Even if it's private, government may be able to help.

2. If your issue involves government, is your issue appropriate for federal, state and/or local government?

It helps to advocate with the people who can make the change. The Decision Tree sends you to the right starting place.

3. Is there already a law?

The Tool shows you how to search the statutes. If there isn't a law, it sends you to Tools to make a new one.

4. Is the problem that there's not enough money for an existing program?

If so, the Decision Tree sends you to Budget Tools.

5. Does the law need regulations to be implemented?

If so, the Decision Tree sends you to How Regulations are Made.

6. Is the law not being enforced?

The Decision Tree sends you to the offices that should be enforcing the law.

7. If the program isn't being implemented or implemented well, you need to advocate with the agency responsible.

The Decision Tree gives you tools to advocate with agencies.

8. Maybe your issue is very ambitious and a law won't solve the problem. For example, no law will soften the stigma of accessing mental health services or create universal health care (at least not yet).

The Decision Tree sends you to Tools to Change Public Opinion.

It can seem daunting, but there is help. You can bypass pointless steps, save time, and be more effective.

[Advocacy Decision Tree](#)

Title: Advocacy Tool # 4 – Organize Yourself

Take care of the little things, the big things take care of themselves. -- US Army maxim

You can't ask a legislator to propose a bill the day after the deadline or get back to them with an answer when the legislation has already been drafted and voted on. Advocacy can get complicated quickly – there are more moving parts than you should keep in your head. It may sound boring, but tracking what you are doing, when you should do it, and following up are key to successful advocacy. Getting organized from the beginning saves a lot of time later.

Your advocacy plan may be very simple or complex. Sometimes they start out simple but grow over time. I use a spreadsheet, but a text document or table, and paper planning also work. Use whatever you're comfortable with.

It's critical to keep a log of everything you do, including everything you write, everyone you talk with, what you send and to who, and their responses. It will save a lot of time later and avoids doing things twice.

You also need a plan. Work backwards from the goal, figure out the steps to get there, and set deadlines. If you want to change the law, figure out the steps and when they need to happen (e.g. find a champion to sponsor the bill, testify at a public hearing, organize calls and emails to legislators). Map it out -- estimate how long it will take and work backward to know when to start each piece. Share the plan with anyone you're working with – include a column for who is responsible for each piece.

Put the dates in your calendar. This is critical. The best plan won't work if you never act on it.

As you advocate, you'll likely have to adjust the plan. Things change, new challenges and opportunities arise. Update the plan and the calendar as needed.

Not following up is one of the most common advocacy mistakes. Don't rely on policymakers or staff to follow up with you. Add follow up items to the plan and the calendar. For instance, if you meet with a policymaker and they ask for more information, add to the plan finding the information, sending it to them, confirm they got it, that it was what they needed, and if they have more questions.

A running list of things to remember when the advocacy is over, or re-sets, is helpful. Include people to thank along the way so you don't forget.

[Resources Tool](#)

Advocacy Tool # 5 – Writing for Advocacy

The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug. -- Mark Twain

Successful advocacy hinges on the quality of your communications. Too often, an aspiring advocate sends me a long paper they've written, using jargon that no one outside the field would recognize, asking how to get it to policymakers. There is really no point.

It's not that policymakers and their staff don't do their research or read long papers. They don't have the time.

Like most readers, there is a lot of competition for policymakers' attention. You have to engage readers quickly. Brief is better. Have the most important information at the top. Use a format that policymakers are used to – otherwise they will notice your out-of-the-box format and miss your message.

First -- decide what you are trying to communicate

Two -- decide who you are trying to reach

Three -- frame the message

Four -- choose a few facts and/or a story to make the point

Five -- design your communication

For detail on how to follow the steps and more, go to the Effective Communications Tool

[Effective Communication Tool](#)

Advocacy Tool # 6 – Contacting Policymakers

*What do you get if you put your laundry in the washing machine, but take out the agitator?
Dirty laundry* – Dick Gregory

Policymakers want to hear from you. [In surveys](#), we've found that policymakers, especially elected officials, are very eager to hear real-world voices. You will find advocates among policymakers – both elected officials and staff. They trust you more than professional lobbyists.

As an advocate, you'll need to contact policymakers, especially legislators. There are effective ways to call, write, and visit policymakers that get results.

Calling a policymaker

Calls are easy and one of the best ways to make your voice heard. Public officials expect to get calls from the public -- most have staff dedicated to the task. They rely on calls and letters to help them make the best decisions. [Learn here how to make an effective call](#)

Writing to a policymaker

Public officials expect to receive mail from constituents. They rely on real-world input to help decide how they will vote. It can be hard to write a letter, but there is help. You don't have to be an expert. [Learn how to write an effective letter that gets attention](#)

Visiting with a policymaker

In a face-to-face meeting with a policymaker you can fully explain your concerns and they can ask questions. In a good discussion, they will get a better understanding of the issue and you'll understand their context and the chances of passage. It is also an important part of developing constructive relationships into the future. [Learn how to get a meeting, how to prepare, how to use the time, and how to follow up.](#)

[Click here for Connecticut public officials' contact information](#)

Advocacy Tool # 7 – The importance of legislative staff

Everyone needs help from everyone else. – Ivan Turgenev

Legislative staff are crucial to successful advocacy. Our survey of policymakers and staff across Connecticut state government found staff to be the most trusted source of information, by far.

Legislative staff keep a very complex, messy, but critical process working smoothly. Legislative staff are full time employees; legislators are (technically) part-time. Staff does the research, write bill language, help constituents with problems, move bills through the process, take our calls urging legislators to do what we want, and take the earful when they don't.

Be kind.

Many are underpaid and overworked, especially around deadlines. Some are in school. Many eventually run for office or move to an agency.

Be extra respectful. You may find inside champions who care about your cause among them. They can help your advocacy immensely.

Legislators rely heavily on their staff and they trust them more than any other source. When you send something to a legislator, also send it to their staff. Reach out to staff to ask how you can be helpful.

[The importance of legislative staff](#)

Advocacy Tool # 8 – Persuading a state agency administrator

A leader is a man who has the ability to get other people to do what they don't want to do and like it. -- Harry Truman

Once your bill passes into law, it usually must be implemented by an agency. It is not as easy for advocates to influence agency administrators as legislators. They are not elected by the people; they may be many layers away from an elected official. Many agencies are understaffed and overworked, and you are usually trying to add to their workload.

But it's worth the effort. Many administrators are open to new ideas and care deeply about improving people's health. You may find a champion for your issue among them.

It's best to reach out to the agency that will implement your idea before reaching out to legislators. You may be able to solve the problem without legislation.

Do some research on the agency -- who makes the decisions, are there regulations on your issue, find the agency's history on policies that affect your issue.

You should talk to both the leadership of the agency (Commissioner, Director) if you can, but also find the person in the agency that will implement your idea. They both need to be on board for it to work. If you have a legislative champion or a lobbyist, they can help you get meetings.

The same rules apply with administrators as for other policymakers -- establish relationships, be helpful, and stay informed.

[Administrative Advocacy Tool](#)

Advocacy Tool # 9 – Research and Resources

Truth is the most valuable thing we have. Let us economize it. -- Mark Twain

You don't need to have a lot of numbers and graphs to advocate. In fact, too much can get in the way. But you will need some background, to be sure you are being clear and that the solution you are asking for will really work.

It's not hard and very little of it involves math. There are some important tips that will make your research easier and more effective.

It is critical to remember that you are not trying to convince yourself -- you are already a true believer. You need to move policymakers. Look for information that is relevant to their perspectives.

"Consider the source" is commonly the first advice new legislators get from more senior legislators and staff. Work hard to be a trusted source and cite only trusted sources.

Start by searching state government sources, they are the most trusted by state officials. Look especially for official goals or benchmarks the state has set for themselves.

There is far more in the [Research Tool](#) including links to dozens of federal, state, and nonprofit health policy and data resources.

The [Recommended Reading List](#) includes dozens more resources including reading to help understand complex health issues, helpful newsletter lists, and Connecticut media resources.

Advocacy Tool # 10 – Trusted sources for advocates

Information is the oxygen of democracy. -- attributed to many

It's important to use trustworthy sources of information in advocacy. It's important for yourself that you have the best information on the scope of the problem and the potential solution so your advocacy achieves your goal. No one is any healthier if you advocate, dedicating your time and others', for a policy change – that doesn't help fix the problem. You want to get this right and that depends on having the best information.

How to find the most reliable sources

- The best sources are peer-reviewed journal articles, government data and policy sources such as [MEPS](#), [Census](#), [BLS](#), [CDC](#), [CBO](#)
- If gold-standard sources aren't available, next best are respected nonpartisan organizations, often called [the gray literature](#), such as [RAND](#), [Kaiser Family Foundation](#), [ICER](#), and university research papers published outside journals
- Next are press reports – use respected, mainstream media and check the details as much as possible. You can look online for more information on their sources and reach out to the people they interviewed for more information on how their program might work in Connecticut, or not.
- Next best are books. Many policy books are well-researched, but authors often have an agenda. Follow up on anything you find in a book, even from a respected author.
- Worst are industry-backed and political sources. These sources have a bias; it may be disclosed but it may not. They can provide important clues to ideas and more information but follow through to verify the information directly and seek out contrasting points of view.

Which information to use:

- Use the most up-to-date information available. Things change quickly in health policy. If something was effective in the past, it may not be now.
- Use reputable primary sources whenever possible. Look beneath sources to see if they really did the survey or authored the paper (primary source), or are they characterizing it for you (secondary source). Always click through to the primary source. The secondary source may have over or under-stated the finding or they missed a point that is critical to your proposal. Favor primary sources (e.g. MEPS survey data) over even highly respected secondary sources (e.g. Kaiser Family Foundation State Health Facts —which includes their sources with links at the bottom of each table).
- Never, ever cite Wikipedia.
- Consider the language used in the source document. Objective is better than emotional language. The best sources give you the facts, with citations/links to their sources or data, and let you draw your own conclusions.

- Check the source for plagiarizing. Often you can search online for direct language from the source. Not only is plagiarizing a clue to lax research standards, but it may be covering up information with a bias.
- Check the background of any source. Look for who funds the organization, who the author works for, who is on the Board of Directors, and what were the previous jobs of the staff. [Many patient advocacy groups are funded by drug companies](#), which influences their research and policy positions.

On Monday we'll address sources that policymakers trust. They definitely overlap with your trusted sources, but there are differences. You'll want to feature them in your advocacy.

[Research Tool](#)

Advocacy Tool # 11 – Trusted sources for policymakers

They (insurance industry) always have a bias regarding health policy but it's useful info if the bias is known. I may not have the same goals and values as the insurance industry but I need to know their perspective. – CT state staff survey comment

In Friday's email, we explored how to find reliable, accurate sources of data and information so you can make the best choices about your advocacy goals. All those standards also apply to your communications with policymakers. But you also need to consider policymakers' additional perspectives, especially for elected officials.

In our 2002 [survey of Connecticut state policymakers](#), including legislators, their staff, and agency administrators, trusted sources were largely the same.

Most trusted	Legislative staff – both policymakers and staff trusted their own staff well above other sources
2nd	Tie between state agencies and journals/publications – also a trusted source for advocates, these matter to policymakers
3rd	Tie between federal government sources and national health policy organizations – also trusted sources for advocates
4th	Academic sources
5th	Health advocacy organizations/coalitions

The least trusted sources are also important to avoid in your communications with policymakers and staff.

Least trusted	Insurance industry organizations
2nd	Business organizations
3rd	Media, press
4th	Consultants – however legislators were far more likely than staff to trust consultants
5th	Unions

Tips to build trust with policymakers and staff

- Include staff in your communications. They are the most trusted source across Connecticut state government. If they agree with you, your idea is far more likely to happen.
- Community groups and consultants were far more trusted by legislators than staff
- Elected officials, not surprisingly, pay a great deal of attention to information from community groups and are more likely to trust them
- Legislators, in particular, are very interested in the impact of a policy to their district, their supporters, and voters.
- It's important to acknowledge the potential cost and savings to the state and other stakeholders in your communications.

Advocacy Tool # 12 -- The state budget cycle

Throwing money at a problem has a bad rep - it's like firefighters throwing water on a fire.

-- Congressman Barney Frank

Healthcare is expensive. Your advocacy goals may cost someone money, usually state government. If you want a program to work, or work better, you need to understand the state budget.

Currently a pandemic and the resulting recession is wreaking havoc on Connecticut's healthcare system and on state revenues. Getting new programs or expansions passed this year will be very tough. Facing a historic deficit, the administration is asking agencies to draft serious cuts to their budgets. We have to adjust expectations to fit with reality.

But that doesn't mean you don't work on your issue. Even in good years, an ambitious goal needs time to lay groundwork. There are many tools in the Toolbox to help guide that. When we come out of this pandemic, you'll be in a better place to advocate for your issue.

The state budget's annual cycle can seem impenetrable and hidden, but it's not. It is publicly proposed by the Governor, subject to public hearings, drafted by legislative committees, and codified in a bill. Advocates have opportunities all through the process. And if you aren't successful this year, you can try again next year.

A few tips:

- Be sensitive to what's in Connecticut's news, even if it's not related to healthcare. There's always a crisis – this year it's the pandemic and the deficit, but in the past it's been education, labor issues, child protection, etc. If it relates to your idea, point out how your issue will impact the issue of the day.
- Make your case clearly.
- Have your numbers ready. Stories are important but the numbers matter. How many people will be impacted? How much will it cost? How could it be done? You often can't get numbers but do the best you can.
- Show your math and your sources.
- If other states have implemented your idea or suffered the harm you are warning about, have information on that.
- If there are any savings from your investment, point that out.
- The more detail you have on your idea and how it could work in Connecticut, the better. But be flexible about details that don't matter to your goals. If the obvious agency doesn't want to do it, reach out to another.

Our Budget process tool shows how the budget is structured, how the process works, and how advocates can make a difference.

[Budget Tool](#)

Advocacy Tool # 13 – How to work with a lobbyist

Experience is the worst teacher, it gives the test before presenting the lesson.

-- Vernon Law

Moving healthcare policy in Connecticut is complicated. Experienced lobbyists know the history, where the traps are, who can help, and who is likely to oppose your idea. They will monitor the landscape for problems and opportunities. They can save you a lot of time and significantly increase your chances of success.

If you are lucky enough to have access to a lobbyist -- a few tips on making the relationship work.

- Ask a lot of questions. Then listen to what they are telling you. Sometimes they have to deliver difficult or bad news. Don't blame the messenger. And don't hear what you want to hear.
- Be honest about your goals, what you are flexible on, and what is a non-starter.
- Be responsive. If they hear about a problem or question from a policymaker and need information or calls into their office – do it.
- Fully brief your lobbyist on the issue. They have to have all the information when they are speaking with policymakers. Keep them updated.
- Be reasonable. Avoiding cuts to a program is reasonable. Expecting the state to endow your program with hundreds of millions of scarce tax dollars is ridiculous. (This actually happened in a legislative meeting.)

Your success is your lobbyists' success. Work together and trust them.

[How to Work with A Lobbyist Tool](#)

Advocacy Tool # 14 – Coalitions and Collaboration

If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go with others.

-- African proverb

Working in coalitions can elevate your issue with more policymakers and it can be more efficient. You can also learn from others, share resources, provide mutual support, and have more fun.

But it can also be frustrating if one person drives the agenda and others get ignored, or one person does all the work.

It's important to find a coalition that's a good fit, both for your issue and for you personally.

- Be sure their goals match yours – you don't want to be an add-on.
- Get expectations clear from the beginning, both for you and for the group.
- Find out if the group has a history of success and what their reputation is among policymakers and other advocates.
- Some coalitions are aligned with a political party or movement – be sure you are comfortable with that.
- You can find a lot online, and by asking the people you've already contacted in your advocacy.

If you can't find one, it's easier than you think to create one. Social media offers lots of help in organizing and reaching like-minded people. It might have a short lifespan depending on your issue, and if you are successful, or it may last long into the future.

Coalitions can be powerful but look for a good match.

[Coalitions and Collaboration Tool](#)

Advocacy Tool # 15 – Taskforces, Committees and Councils

The reason a lot of people do not recognize opportunity is because it usually goes around wearing overalls looking like hard work. -- Thomas Edison

When they work, taskforces, committees, and councils are where the rubber meets the road in health policy. Some are ongoing, like the MAPOC which oversees Medicaid, and some are time limited. The time-limited committees can be convened to address an issue in more depth and make recommendations.

Don't join just because someone important asked you to, or you think it's a good way to get your name out there and a good thing to put on your resume. Do it only if you care about the issue and believe you can provide a unique perspective.

The commitment goes beyond attending meetings and reading the slides you are sent. It takes time and effort -- research, both what you are given and what you find on your own, reviewing policy drafts, and checking with independent experts.

Research the issue yourself. Go beyond the administration's communications and look into the issue yourself. Don't expect that your experience as a patient or recipient is the same as everyone else's.

- Search the internet and make calls to find other points of view, other states that have taken a different approach, in Connecticut and beyond.
- Call people who testified on both sides of the bill/issue, or who have been quoted in the media.
- Reach out to the people and groups affected. If you have been appointed to one of these committees, they will be very happy you called.

For more on how to get appointed and how these committees typically work, check out our Tool.

[Policy Committee Tool](#)

Advocacy Tool # 16 – Op-eds and Letters to the Editor

On an occasion of this kind it becomes more than a moral duty to speak one's mind. It becomes a pleasure. -- Oscar Wilde

Op-eds and letters to the editor are short pieces published by newspapers and other media written by members of the public, rather than reporters.

They are an exceptional way to get your message to policymakers, who generally read these religiously. It's also an excellent way to get your message directly to the public, possibly changing public opinion.

It's your message told by you. You can tell your story and explain complex issues in your own words. You have more time to make your points to policymakers than in a rushed conversation at the Capitol.

Even if policymakers don't see it the day they are going to vote, or they have forgotten, you can give them a copy that day to remind them.

Some tips

- Keep it as short as possible.
- Have only one message, and a few points to support it
- Avoid the weeds at all costs
- Use objective, non-emotional statements – give people the facts, let them make up their own minds about how to feel
- It's great to respond to a story they have published
- Don't use jargon – your audience is policymakers, but the paper's audience is their readers
- Give links in the piece, so everyone knows where your information came from

For tips on how to write an op-ed or letter to the editor, and how to get it published, go to our Tool.

[Op-eds and letters to the editor tool](#)

Advocacy Tool # 17 – How to work with a reporter

If you don't like the news, go out and make some of your own. -- Scoop Nisker

Reporters need sources to do their job – they want to hear from you.

It's all about creating relationships. The best way is to become a reliable source of balanced information and/or connections to personal stories. When you have a relationship, you can call them to “pitch” a story.

Some rules of the road:

- Relax.
- Call them back promptly. Ask when their deadline is.
- Respect their time. Before you get on the call, get your details straight and have them handy when you're talking so you can answer questions right away.
- Give them the outlines and let them ask for the weeds if they need it.
- Practice if you need to.
- Match your story to the reporter and their publication's focus. A local New London crime reporter is unlikely to write a story on access to healthcare in Bridgeport. And one of the Capitol news outlets is unlikely to do a story on an unhealthy building in New Haven.
- If you promise to get them some background, do it right away.
- Speak slowly, they will be writing or typing your comments.

For more tips on talking with reporters and for television or radio appearances, go to the Tool

[Talking with a reporter tool](#)

Advocacy Tool # 18 – Fact sheets and alerts

Thunder is good, thunder is impressive, but it is lightening that does the work.

-- Mark Twain

Fact sheets and action alerts translate your advocacy goals into action.

Fact sheets, called leave-behinds at the national level, are usually one-pagers with a few facts and an action step that you leave behind with legislators or give to coalition members.

Alerts are shorter pieces sent to supporters asking directly for action.

- Despite the name, don't load up your fact sheets and alerts with tons of facts. Be Goldilocks – just enough to convince, not enough to overwhelm.
- Use as few words as possible.
- Leave lots of white space.
- Use visuals sparingly and only when they add to the message.

Make it as easy as possible to complete your action step. Give them everything they need.

- For a fact sheet, give the bill number and title and specifically ask for legislators' support.
- For an alert, include the message and email or phone number to call.

Always include links for more information and contact info for you if they have questions.

Click on the Tool for more tips and some examples of effective Fact Sheets and Alerts.

[Fact Sheets and Action Alerts Tool](#)

Advocacy Tool # 19 – Giving thanks

Gratitude is the sign of noble souls. – Aesop

Happy Thanksgiving.

Don't forget to thank the people that you work with, that support your advocacy. Too many advocates forget this step or think they don't have to because it's someone's job. Don't be that advocate.

Sending a thank you has a big impact. People remember it. For years working at the legislature as a staffer, I pinned up every thank you note I received.

Don't overdo it. Flowers or gifts aren't necessary and may place a policymaker or staff person in an awkward position. Gifts over a very small value can trigger ethics issues.

Especially send a thank you if you weren't successful. It's the right thing to do, and you will need your supporters even more next year.

It only takes a few minutes.

You can send a short, handwritten note. I have small cards printed for the purpose.

You can send an email. Especially during the pandemic, when people are working remotely, this will get there faster.

Make a call or add the thank you to a call you are already making.

Who to thank:

- The champion who carried your issue during the session
- Any staff who helped you or gave a heads up
- Active members of the coalition
- Your lobbyist
- Other advocates who supported you
- Agency staff who were helpful

[Tips no advocate should forget](#)

[Common advocates' mistakes](#)

Advocacy Tool #20 – Searching statutes and tracking bills

Even if you're on the right track, you'll still get run over if you just sit there.

-- Will Rogers

At some point you may have to search Connecticut laws to see if there already is a law that addresses your issue.

And if you're successful in getting a bill introduced, you'll want to track its progress.

We have Tools for both.

Searching the statutes

First, the easy but less sure way to search statutes is to have someone else do it for you.

Legislative staff, particularly aides, can search for you and that's often all you need. But they could miss something that relates to your issue. They probably don't know it as well as you, and healthcare is complicated.

To be sure, you can search for yourself. It's not as easy as Google, but easier than a library search.

Searching the statutes is all about choosing the right search terms. It may take a few tries. What things are called in the real world aren't necessarily what they are in law. The Searching Statute Tools has lots of tips to find the right term(s) and a video to walk you through the process.

Tracking a bill

Once you have a bill introduced by a legislator, you will want to track its progress through the byzantine legislative process. Fortunately, tracking a bill on the state legislative website is very easy.

First, create an account. If you have the bill number, it's cake.

You may also want to track bills that relate to your issue/keyword or bills introduced by a specific legislator.

You can enter many bills into your tracker.

You'll get text or email notices, your choice, whenever anything happens to your bill.

The Tracking a Bill Tool walks you through the sign up.

[Searching Statute Tool](#)

[Tracking Bills Tool](#)

Advocacy Tool # 21 – Celebrating

Celebrate what you want to see more of. – Tom Peters

Advocacy is hard work and it can be discouraging at times. Celebrations help keep up the energy and momentum. **There's always something to celebrate.**

Celebrations should be a joy, not a burden. And it doesn't have to be expensive or take a lot of time. Figure out who needs the celebration and plan it around them. Don't try to make a press or political event out of it.

Parties are nice, but there are lots of other good options.

- Handwritten thank you notes go a long way.
- A small gift is nice, especially if it's related to the advocacy. For a celebration 15 years ago, we made prints of a Capitol picture and put them in basic, cheap frames. I still see them hanging on walls in friends' offices.
- A picture-taking session with a VIP costs nothing

Go to the Celebrations Tool for more ideas.

[Celebrations Tool](#)