

MODULE #2: Advocacy Model

Objectives

- Students will explore and become more acquainted with their community, and the issues affecting it.
- Students will be provided with practical advocacy experience through media advocacy and coalition building

Context



Advocacy means working toward a solution to a public problem. Our nation's political process follows an Advocacy model which allows for presenting information in a manner that recognizes differing viewpoints. For example, political candidates are expected to take stands on controversial issues. Our nation's political elections overall are determined by how convincing the candidate is in communicating their viewpoint and how these views reflect the positions of voters.

Handouts & Resources Needed:

Handout 2.1: Issues impacting Youth
Handout 2.2: Developing a Letter to the Editor
Handout 2.3: Coalition Building
Sheet of paper – one for each participant
Pens/pencils
Journals
Flit chart/blackboard
Computers with access to the Internet
Newspapers with editorial sections

Activity #1: Identification of Community issues (55 min)

Procedure:

- Icebreaker
- Divide students into groups of 4 per group and appoint a recorder
- Each student should be provided with Handout 2.1 (Issues Impacting Youth)
- Each group should be provided with newsprint
- Ask students to write down five issues in their community impacting youth
- Have each student share their responses with their group
- Have each group brainstorm on the major issues impacting youth in their communities
- Have them identify different strategies they can use to advocate for change
- Have each group report back to the larger group
- Debriefing

- Explain that the next class will focus on advocacy through print media and that for the next class ask students to bring in a newspaper that includes an editorial page

Activity #2: Media Advocacy Part 1 (55 min)

Context



Media has a strong influence on public opinion. This activity is designed to assist you in developing an understanding of how youth can use media to influence public opinion through the use of newspaper editorials. Editorials are generally printed either on the Editorial page of a newspaper or in a clearly marked-off column, and is also labeled as editorials. They often address current events or public controversial issue. Generally, editorials provide opinions and comments and generally fall into four broad types: news, policy, social, and special.

Procedure:

- Note to facilitator: For this activity the facilitator should have copies of newspapers on hand just in case students did not bring them in. Each group should have at least one paper with editorial section.
- Icebreaker
- Explain that Letters to the Editor are letters in a newspaper or other periodical presenting the opinion of an individual. Editorials are also a form of Advocacy. They often comment on current issues being debated by a policy making body at the local regional or national level. Frequently the writer will urge elected officials to make their decision based on their viewpoint.
- Remind students that for homework at the last session they were asked to bring in a copy of a local Newspaper with an editorial article.
- Ask students to break into groups of four to review the editorial articles
- Students should review and discuss at least two editorials of interest to them in the paper.
- They should be able to answer the following questions:
 1. What was the editorial about?
 2. What was the viewpoint of the writer?
- Distribute two sheets of white paper to each group and ask them to appoint a recorder.
- Each group should identify a current controversial issue in their community and take a position on the issue. The recorder should write down these points.
- Each group should identify a lead person that will report back to the larger group and that will also be contacting the Newspaper directly.
- Have each group report to the larger group the issue area they have identified with key points.

- Once each group has reported, indicate that as a home work assignment each group should:
- Conduct research on the issue through the use of the internet.
- Identify a local Newspaper and find out the requirements for submission of articles. (Handout 2.2 Developing a Letter to the Editor) *Note:* Consideration should be given to the school newspaper.
- The lead person for each group should
 1. Identify contact person at the newspaper, make introductions, and explain that they would like to submit a letter to the editor on the important issue of
 2. They should ask what are the requirements (timelines for submission, word number, format, etc)
 3. This process will help to increase the possibilities of getting published (Note to facilitator: students may need assistance in what to say—practice helps)
- Debriefing

Activity #3: Media Advocacy Part 2 (55 min) (For advanced Students)

Procedure:

- Icebreaker
- Have students form groups of three
- Remind students that for homework at the last session they were asked to conduct research on the issue; identify a local Newspaper for submission of an editorial article.
- They were also asked to:
 - a. Identify a local Newspaper and find out the requirements for submission of letters
 - b. Identify and call the contact person at the newspaper, introduce themselves, and explain that they would like to submit a letter to the editor on the important issue of
- Now ask students to draft a Letter to the Editor on an important issue impacting their community.
- Their draft letter should be submitted to the facilitator for suggested changes.
- Once in final form the group should submit the letter to the newspaper.
- Note: A follow-up call should be made to the newspaper to ensure that they received the letter.
- Debriefing

Activity #4: The Art of Collaboration (55 min) (For advanced students)

Context



Part of Advocacy is working with others toward a solution to a public problem. Collaboration with other groups is part of this process. This process allows for building bridges with other groups to create policy answers to common problems.

Procedure:

- Icebreaker
- Students should review Handout # 2.3 Coalition Building
- Students should work in teams by individual ASPIRA Clubs. If there is only one Club, have students break into groups of five participants per group.
- Each Club represents an organization or group. Each Club should identify a current controversial issue for discussion. They should identify the issues related to their topic area. These are a few examples: student dropout rates, violence in the community, lack of college options for undocumented students, etc. Students can also visit the ASPIRA Association's web site at aspira.org and download ASPIRA positions on various issues impacting the Hispanic community.
- Ask each group to appoint a recorder and have them identify possible solutions to address the issue.
- Have each group develop a two page letter that will eventually be sent to their Governor or elected official bringing attention to the issue and posing possible solutions.
- Each group should identify one overall objective for the Club or group on this issue. For example, if your group selected dropouts as an issue, the club objective may be *to reduce dropout rates for your city*.
- Have each club or group identify a spokesperson to present the issue to the other ASPIRA Clubs or groups.
- Each Club should make a three to five minute presentation before the larger group. They should ask other clubs or groups to collaborate with their club or group by providing suggestion to the letter. It is important that other groups be given the opportunity to suggest changes that would improve or enhance their letter. It is important that each group understands that other members may suggest changes to the original document, and the facilitator will need to review the final letter.
- Once finalized, ask other ASPIRA Clubs to sign on to your letter, for example, a letter to the Superintendent requesting that the school hours begin at 9:00AM rather than 7:00AM would be signed on by: Jaime Gonzales, President, ASPIRA Club of Kindle High school or Juan Gonzalez, President, ASPIRA Club of Bank Street School, etc.
- Once each letter has gotten its support, it may be sent out.
- Debriefing

Handout 2.1

Key issues impacting youth in my community:

Strategies for change:

Handout 2.2 Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor are letters in a newspaper or other periodical presenting the opinion of an individual. Editorials are also a form of Advocacy. They often comment on current issues being debated by a policy making body at the local regional or national level. Frequently the writer will urge elected officials to make their decision based on their viewpoint.

You have been asked to develop a letter to the editor that will be submitted to a newspaper.

- Identify a local Newspaper and find out the requirements for submission of articles
- Identify contact person at the newspaper, make introductions, and explain that they would like to submit a letter to the editor on the important issue of
- They should ask what are the requirements (timelines for submission, word number, format, etc)
- This process will help to increase the possibilities of getting published

Handout 2.3 Coalition-building Skills

Part of Advocacy is working with others toward finding solutions to public problems. Collaboration with other groups, such as coalitions is part of this process. This process allows for building bridges with other groups to create policy answers to common problems.

Coalition-building is about leadership. Recognize your own leadership skills. Provide leadership without alienating people. Understand your leadership strengths and weaknesses.

To be an effective leader, you will need to build confidence, support, trust, and recognition. You will need to be a diplomat, giving support to others.

You will need a plan that will benefit all, showing no favors to others.

When there are disagreements in the coalition, it is important to settle the differences. Look for points of agreement and help opposing parties to reach a common ground. Set aside your own points of view.

Encourage mutual appreciation of involved groups and individuals. All members should have a voice at the table and should be involved in building the coalition.

It is important that the coalition remain inclusive; that you welcome and actively listen to all our coalition members. To some extent, this includes using our cultural competency skills to allow you to understand others viewpoints.

As a coalition you should have a common understanding and agreement on how decisions are made. This is very important to building trust and cooperation. Always keep your focus on what you have in common – encourage a feeling of partnership.

Use technology as a tool for regular communication with members. As you know, today technology plays an important role in communication.

Get to know everything you can about the groups involved in your coalition.

In doing so, we can use a logic model to help us guide our decisions. It can help us in framing our issues, public policy interventions and our desired outcomes

Develop a plan for your coalition, and for the participation of its members. Always look for ways in which your plan can benefit coalition members.

Establish ground rules for participation, then welcome those who subscribe to those principles. Always keep your focus on what you have in common – encourage a feeling of fellowship.

Never criticize other groups, individuals, plans, or policies. Don't allow coalition members to publicly criticize each other. Always discourage private criticism. Your aim is to build confidence in your leadership and a sense of being part of a group with a strong sense of identity, high morale, and pride in its achievements.

Building a strong coalition includes communicating and reinforcing a sense of the importance of the work of your members, and of their personal worth. Your goal is for your participants to feel that they are engaged in the most important endeavor there is.

The coalition should have realistic goals.

Show respect and appreciation for the efforts and contributions of others. No matter what part you play, large or small, communicate your appreciation of whatever part they play.