



Quick Tips: Actions You Can Take to Advocate

Lay the groundwork

- Sign up for the Advocacy Alerts many advocacy organizations send when important legislation is pending. When possible, take the actions the alerts recommend.
- Sign up for a few legislators' newsletters, especially the chairs of key committees (such as health or appropriations committees). Include lawmakers from different political parties to be sure you understand all points of view.
- Identify examples of positive legislation to share with your legislators and their staff.
- Create a packet of information to educate lawmakers about schizophrenia and the need for the policy changes you seek.
 - Include materials from websites (SPAN, S&PAA, TAC, NAMI, NIMH) and even books that provide helpful information.
 - Send your packet to relevant elected officials and/or others who influence policy in your state/region. (If you include a book, you can use cheaper USPS Media Mail rates.) Bring a packet to any meeting you attend.
- Consider registering as a lobbyist in your state. It's easy to do and usually is free for those who are advocating for a personal cause (vs. being a professional lobbyist). In some states, being a registered lobbyist provides increased ability to secure meetings with lawmakers and access to some building spaces that are not open to the general public.

Make connections

- Identify/develop relationships with staff of policymakers who handle mental health issues.
- Request a meeting with your legislators ahead of the legislative session to share your priorities and discuss bills you hope they might sponsor. Invite legislators to any events you are involved in locally or at the state level.
- Send lawmakers thank-you notes for every action that is helpful, especially for voting for your bills and filing bills on your behalf.
- Build relationships with other lobbyists and advocacy organizations and support their legislation when appropriate.
- Connect with reporters (print, TV, radio) to offer yourself as a resource on schizophrenia and related policy issues. Create a media list and update it as needed.



Amplify your message

- Write op-eds and letters to the editor for your local and/or state capital newspaper to support legislation or to suggest different ways of solving problems.
- Share articles and research that support your suggested policy solutions with your lawmakers.
- Share relevant articles and ideas on your social media channels and “tag” your lawmakers whenever possible. (Many legislators have public profiles on these channels.)
- Accept as many speaking engagements as possible to help spread your message.
- Seek opportunities to testify at committee hearings and other governmental forums.
- When you meet with a legislator, take pictures and send them to their staff so they can post them on their social media channels and include them in constituent newsletters.
- Participate in peaceful rallies that promote your policies at the local, state and federal levels.
- If you are focused on particular programs, request outcomes data whenever possible to determine program effectiveness.
- If a lawmaker’s staff reaches out to you for help, do everything you can to fulfill their request.



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