WILL YOU LEAD?

A Guide to Grassroots Advocacy for Women Infected and Affected by HIV/AIDS

hiv law project

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This document can be accessed electronically through HIV Law Project's website www.hivlawproject.org

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HIV Law Project believes that all people deserve the same rights, including the right to live with dignity and respect, the right to be treated as equal members of society, and the right to have their basic human needs fulfilled.

These fundamental rights are elusive for many people living with HIV/AIDS. Through innovative legal services and advocacy programs, HIV Law Project fights for the rights of the most underserved people living with HIV/AIDS.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Center for Women & HIV Advocacy would like to thank CHAMP, the Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project, for training us to become advocates. For a full year Lei Chou, then of CHAMP, met weekly with our Steering Committee, and schooled us as advocates. With his wisdom, and gentle guidance, Lei set us on the path to becoming advocates. With all that we learned from CHAMP, and from the work we've continued on our own, we now believe we have something to share with you.

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PREFACE

We at the Center for Women and HIV Advocacy are women infected and affected by HIV. We see that positive women's voices are underrepresented while policies affecting us, our families, and our communities are made by government every day. We have spent the last four years involved in a campaign for comprehensive sex education, because we believe that the epidemic will not be contained without a greater emphasis on prevention, and transmission will never be prevented if we keep our youth from getting complete and accurate information about safe sex.

Over the course of our campaign, we have learned a lot about the policy process, and doing advocacy work. We have had to confront our own anxieties and develop skills which we didn't necessarily know we had. And we are still learning. We are constantly working to grow our campaign, and to overcome the challenges of growing our group. We wrote this manual because we want to share our experiences; to let you know that if we can become advocates, so can you. And to share some of what we've learned with you.

WILL YOU LEAD?

HIV policies in the United States have not focused on the rights or needs of women living with or at risk for acquiring HIV. As the epidemic continues to impact women and girls at steadily rising rates, there is a need for women, especially HIV-positive women, to step up to fill the leadership gap in domestic HIV policy-making. We can't leave this task to our elected officials, community-based leaders, or brothers in the fight against HIV; we must step up to the task ourselves. Why you? Why not you?

As a woman living with HIV, you probably already know on some level that HIV+ women must get more involved in domestic HIV policy-making processes. But, in case you don't, consider:

- Women of color are disproportionately burdened by HIV/AIDS. In 2007, Black and Hispanic women represented 25% of all women in the United States, but women in these two groups accounted for 81% of new AIDS diagnoses among women.

- Young women are increasingly touched by HIV/AIDS. 32% of new HIV infections in females in 2006 were among those aged 13-29.

- Most women acquire HIV from male sexual partners. 83% of Black and Latina women with a new HIV diagnosis were infected through heterosexual transmission.

- Most HIV-positive women are low-income. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of women with HIV/AIDS receiving regular or ongoing medical care had annual incomes below $10,000, as compared to 41% of positive men.

- Women with HIV are less than half as likely as their male counterparts to be privately insured (14% of women, as compared to 36% of men), and women with HIV have inferior access to care, and do not receive optimal levels of care, as compared to men.[1]

Now ask yourself:

- Are you angry at seeing the high numbers of new HIV infections among women and girls year after year?

- Does it outrage you that the Federal government has spent over one billion of our tax dollars to fund medically inaccurate sexual health education programs that place you and your daughters, nieces, sisters and girlfriends

[1] The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, HIV/AIDS Policy Fact Sheet: Women and HIV/AIDS in the United States (September 2009).

at a higher risk for acquiring HIV?

- Are you shocked to learn that 2.1 percent of heterosexuals living in high-poverty urban areas in the United States are infected with HIV?

- Are you disturbed by the fact that women who've been abused are more likely to be infected with HIV?

If the above does not anger you, or you believe it doesn't really matter, or if you believe it's someone else's job to deal with it, close this book now, it will be of no use to you. However, if you are upset and outraged by this information, and want to work with others to make a difference, read on…this manual will help you see how you can make a difference and give you the tools you'll need to do so.

Learning to become a policy advocate may take some time and practice to master – but, chances are you've already got a lot of the skills you need to succeed. Stop and think for a minute about all the different things you do in your life. Think of the skills it takes to manage medical appointments, child-care and homework, laundry, household chores, a job, a relationship or marriage, party or event, family reunion, school fundraiser, and other life tasks. You are a pro at doing those things, and you can be an advocacy pro, too.

In the following chapters we discuss different types of advocacy, and different elements of a successful campaign. Most advocacy campaigns draw on a variety of different tactics. The following chapters are intended to introduce you to various modes of advocacy that may be useful to your campaign. Much of what we discuss is grounded in a legislative advocacy framework; in other words, we are talking about making change in the law. But the basic principles in each of the chapters applies to all sorts of advocacy, whether you are hoping to make change in a local school, health center, or church, or whether you want to change the regulations of a particular government agency, like your local Department of Health, or whether you intend to change the law or funding patterns at the City, State, or Federal level, this manual has something for you.

PUBLIC POLICY-MAKING IN THE U.S.

Before we can get started with public policy advocacy, we need to understand what it is and how it takes place in the United States. Government actions (that is, its "public policies") are intended to solve societal problems and improve the quality of life. These public policies are then made into laws, rules and regulations that shape our lives under our local, state and Federal governments. For example, the Federal government's decision to create and fund Medicaid, a program designed to provide access to health care for low-income citizens, is a public policy. ADAP (the AIDS Drug Assistance Program) is another Federal public policy targeted more narrowly at providing low-income people with access to expensive HIV medications.

Public policy is a broad term that refers to **actions taken or not taken by a government.**

Public policies impact all aspects of our lives in the areas of taxes, healthcare, and education, among others. Public policy-making is based on three foundational steps:

1. **Issue Cutting**: Deciding what is and is not a problem;
2. **Agenda Setting**: Selecting which problems to solve; and
3. **Solution Development**: Deciding how to solve them to benefit society.

Grassroots advocacy is a set of organized actions taken by everyday people like you (members of the "public") to promote public policies that will empower them and/or improve their lives

If you have ever signed a petition circulated by a local community-based organization, attended an AIDS Watch meeting, or participated in a local Ryan White Planning Council meeting, then you have participated in grassroots advocacy. Other examples of grassroots advocacy include: lobbying by citizen groups; marches on Washington, and providing testimony in support of or against a proposal at a public hearing.

An advocacy campaign involves numerous steps taken toward a longer-term public policy goal. Examples of such grassroots advocacy campaigns include (click for link to official site)

1. Campaign to End AIDS (C2EA);
2. Global Campaign for Microbicides;
3. The campaign to pass the Responsible Education About Life Act (REAL Act); and
4. Local-level campaigns across the country to promote the state-by-state rejection of federal abstinence-only sex education funding.

An **advocacy campaign** can be thought of as a highly organized form of grassroots advocacy over a period of time

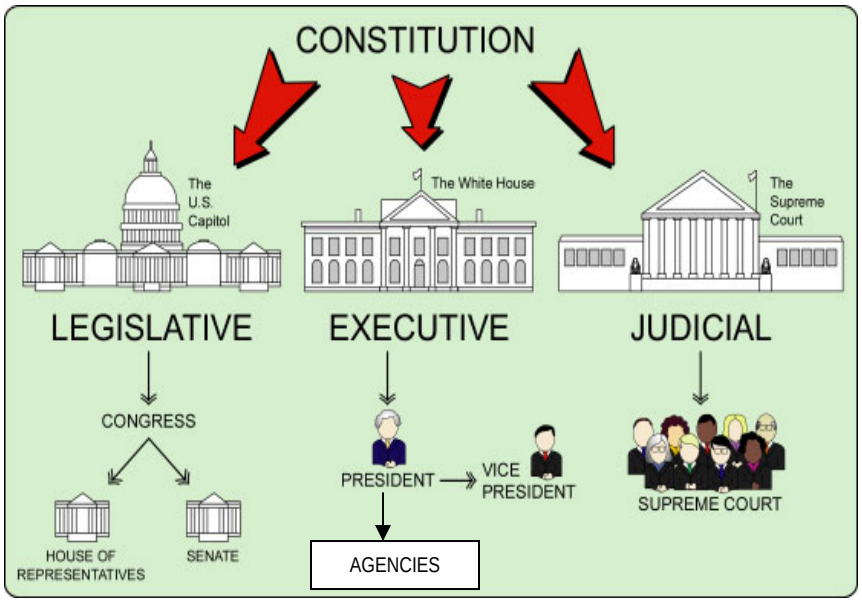
CWHA SAYS:

As a group we considered three possible advocacy issues, all of which were close to our hearts:
1) Promoting comprehensive sex education in schools,
2) Maintaining written informed consent for HIV testing, and
3) Advancing the development of microbicides.

In the end we decided on the topic of comprehensive sex education, not only because it was a "hot" issue, but also because it affected us most directly as mothers, sisters, daughters, aunts, and grandmothers, and we wanted to commit to an issue that we felt was affecting our families and school children most directly.

GOVERNMENT CONTEXT: THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

The United States government is a "republican" or "representative democracy" and it was established by the United States Constitution. The U.S. Constitution also establishes the three branches of government - Legislative, Executive and Judicial.



Source: http://bensguide.gpo.gov/3-5/government/branches.html

Each branch of government has a distinct role, which serves as part of the **system of "checks and balances"** established by the Constitution. The primary purpose of each branch is described below:

The Legislative Branch	**The Executive Branch**	**The Judicial Branch**
* Made up of elected officials, known as legislators. * Creates public policy by passing laws, and distributes money to support government activities.	* Made up of the President and the federal agencies he oversees (for example the Department of Education, and the Department of Health and Human Services). * Carries out government laws and administers programs, while maintaining the power to veto acts of the legislature.	* Made up of judges and the court system. * Makes law through court decisions, interprets laws, and protects individual civil liberties, which the legislature does not always prioritize when making policy.

To further control government powers, the Constitution specifically creates a central system which distributes political power between the federal government and the states. Thus, the states, as well as local cities and towns, also make laws and decide how to distribute local resources. All three levels of government interact and influence each other, forming a complex web of public policies.

Grassroots advocates work to influence government decision-makers to make public policy decisions. Other groups and individuals (including professional lobbyists, institutions, and unions) also work to influence government decision-makers.

Why is grassroots advocacy important?

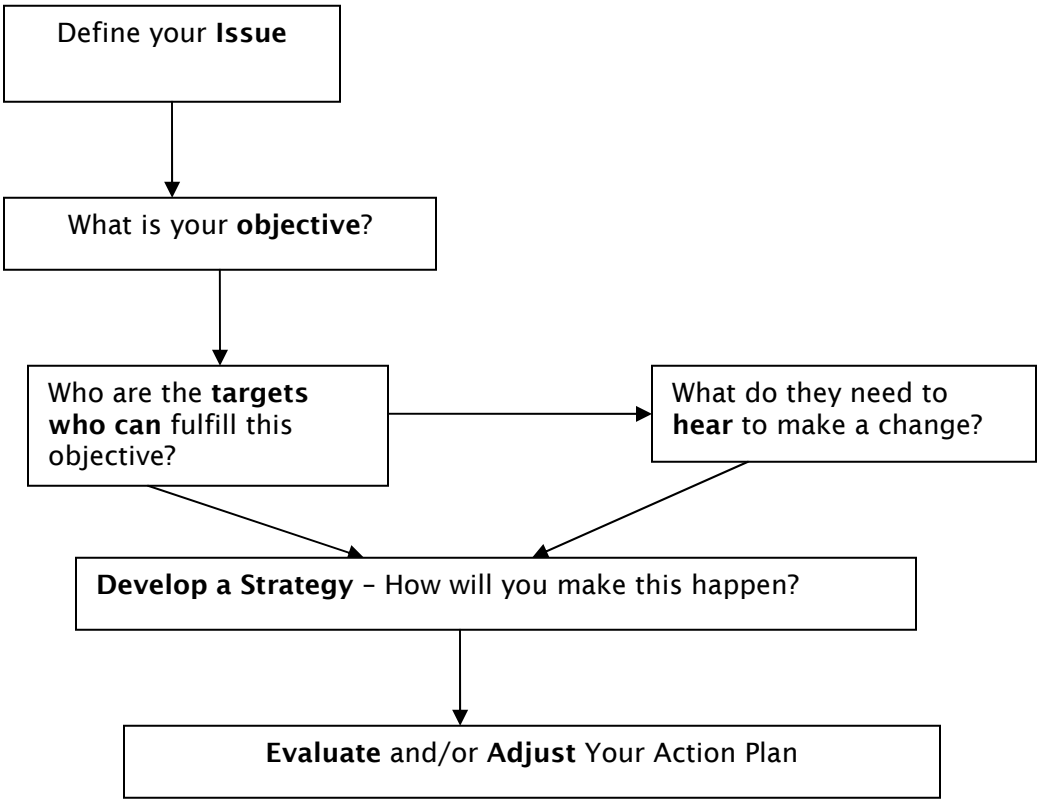
This process is necessary in order to develop sound policies. When no one speaks up, silence is considered agreement. Grassroots advocacy helps to make sure that the interests of the people are represented in the process.

The **purpose of advocacy** is threefold:

1. To change how a decision-maker thinks about an issue;
2. To educate the decision-maker about the needs of the community and help him/her to consider those needs when making a decision
3. To change the decision-makers' behavior or action on an issue.

Before you can start on the "how-to" of your strategy, first you need to do a little groundwork. The following roadmap is a guide.

YOUR ROAD MAP TO BUILDING AN ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN MODEL



BUILD AN ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN MODEL IN 7 EASY STEPS

We all love stories. They inspire us, motivate us, and give us hope. Perhaps you've heard it said that behind every successful grassroots advocacy effort is a powerful story. *Think*: Rosa Parks and the Montgomery bus boycotts. *Think*: ACT UP activists being arrested and the AIDS movement.

"When leaders emerge and people come together to make a difference in the world, stories are one of the things that hold them together, stories about how things once were, about how things ought to be, about how struggle today will bring about a better tomorrow."[2] Building an advocacy campaign model can help you find and tell your story, which will help you succeed in achieving your public policy goals.

The 7 Steps:

1. Choosing and developing an Issue

2. Developing the Policy Solution

3. Choosing Your Target(s): Who can give you the solution you want?

4. What does your target need to hear?

5. Developing Your Strategy

6. Making it Happen

7. Evaluating & Adjusting Your Plan

A successful campaign is one based on a clear statement of the social problem or issue to be solved. **How well you define the problem determines how well you can define the solution and how well you are able to persuade others that a particular action is necessary.** Without a specific issue statement, you are likely to seek an inappropriate policy solution that, in the end, will not be successful, or could even make the problem worse. So, slow down here, and do your homework.

[2] *Developing a Logic Model or Theory of Change*, on The Community Tool Box website at http://ctb.ku.edu, contributed by B. Milstein T. Chapel, Edited by Val Renault and S. Fawcett.

STEP 1: "Cutting an Issue": Issue Identification & Development

Issues v. Problems

Your first step is to distinguish between whether something is a problem or an issue. Not all problems are issues – that is - not all problems require a public policy intervention to solve them. For instance, if someone's Medicaid benefits are terminated because that person failed to provide proof of income to the government, it is a **problem**, but it is only a problem for her. And she can resolve the problem by submitting the required paperwork. On the other hand, if a community of people receiving Medicaid has their benefits terminated after five years, regardless of their on-going eligibility to receive those benefits, this is an **issue** requiring some policy intervention to resolve.

In short, a **problem** is unique to an individual and the solution to the problem will only benefit the individual, not an entire group or community. An **issue** is widespread and impacts a number of people, and a policy solution to the issue will typically resolve the issue for most, if not all.

Defining Your Issue

Try writing a few sentences, as general or specific as you like, describing the issue. **The following questions may be helpful**:

1. **Who** is impacted and **how**?
2. What **characteristics** does this population share? (i.e. gender, race, age, health status, geographic location.)
3. How **widespread** is the impact?
4. When is the impact? Is it ongoing, or felt at certain times?

You may be able to answer the above questions based on your own experience and knowledge, or you may not. In either case, getting more information can help the group more clearly define the issue, understand who it affects, and firm up the group's commitment to doing something about the issue.

Understanding the Issue

The next goal is to understand the cause of the issue. You will need to be as specific and concrete as possible in this section. For example, there are many possible reasons why sex education is not taught in your local schools. Is it because the state gets federal abstinence-only-until marriage funding from the federal government? Is it because the local superintendent cut the program for budgetary reasons? Is it because the schools have no money to train teachers? Is it because the superintendent is close with religious institutions that oppose comprehensive sex ed? In order to push for change, you need to know the cause of the issue.

Consider the following questions:

1. What are all the possible causes of this issue?
2. Does the issue exist because there is no policy addressing it, or because an existing policy is bad, unfair, or outdated?
3. Has anyone else (experts, academics, advocacy groups) researched this issue? What does their research show?

The more clearly or tightly you identify causes of the issue, the easier it will be to develop solutions to address those causes. As new advocates, focus on developing a "winnable" first campaign. This will provide you with the skills and success necessary to undertake bigger campaigns in the future.

Issue Statement

Once the group has identified the issue and its causes, you are ready for the final step: summarize your work into an "issue statement." This issue statement will form the basis of your entire advocacy campaign, it is your story in a nutshell.

An Issue Statement contains information that you will refer to again and again, and is the basis for many of the materials you will create. The Issue Statement should include the following: a concise statement of the issue, who it impacts, how it impacts them, why it needs a resolution, and what difference a resolution will have on the people impacted.

Sample Issue Statement: New York City schools are not required to teach comprehensive sexuality education to their students. As a result, a large percentage of New York City students never get complete and accurate information about prevention of unwanted pregnancies, STIS, and HIV, nor the opportunity to develop skills that would help them negotiate challenging sexual dynamics. This is no doubt a contributing factor to rising rates of HIV among the City's youth. In order to ensure that our young people have the information they need, and the skills necessary to protect themselves in their relationships, New York City must mandate that medically-accurate, age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education be taught to all middle and high school students.

Once the issue and its causes have been clearly defined, it is time to ask the critical question: how do we fix it?

STEP 2: Developing an Objective: The Policy Solution

Consider these questions as you work toward a solution:

1. How do you want the government to **respond** to the issue?
    a. Is the solution achievable now, or are there intermediate steps that need to be taken first?

2. What is the **form** of the government action? Will it involve creating, eliminating, or changing a policy?

3. What is the **cost** of government intervention? If the costs are high, are there off-sets? (i.e., the cost of doing nothing is higher than the cost of implementing policy, or that the costs are an investment in long-term savings. For example, the government may argue they can only pay for HIV tests for high-risk individuals. But supporters of universal testing can reply that testing everyone means diagnosing more people early on, and in the end saving money on long-term medical care through improved health outcomes.)

4. List any **potential flaws** with your proposed change.

5. What are the main arguments in **support** of and in **opposition** to your proposal?

A final step in setting an objective is to assemble some evidence to prove that your solution will work. This stage involves collecting research. Research can be information from newspapers, the internet, or other groups working on the issue. The research you will collect can show how your issue has been studied or addressed by other people.

CWHA SAYS:

In the area of comprehensive sex education, we've worked to gather information about the failure of abstinence-only until marriage programs to reduce rates of sexual activity or negative sexual health outcomes among youth. Similarly, we've put together evidence to support our position that comprehensive sex education is effective in reducing pregnancy and STI rates among teens. We did this by conducting thorough online research into programs across the nation, speaking with other sex ed advocates and learning about their approaches, and attending conferences to better inform ourselves of the types of solutions other advocates support.

In some instances you will not be able to find evidence to support your theory. In those cases, you can rely on the strength of the logic of your position and the experiences of the community members affected by the issue.

STEP 3: Identifying Targets: Who can give you the solution you want?

When we talk about targets, we're referring to the specific individuals you need to convince in order to achieve your proposed change. The question of who your target is hinges first on what level of government can give you the solution you want. In refining your list of potential targets, you should keep in mind two questions: 1) who holds the power on this issue; and 2) who influences the person/people who hold the power on this issue?

If you're trying to get legislation passed, figuring out who controls policy-making on your issue can be tricky. Talking to other local activists or legislative staff will help in identifying the key players.

On the other hand, if the action you want requires eliminating, preserving, enforcing or changing an existing policy, you just need to figure out which level of government made the original policy, or what agency administers the policy. Research (review of the bill, records from public testimony, position papers, etc.) can produce a wealth of information about the key players and the policy's supporters and opponents, all of whom are your potential targets.

If it is a health issue, for instance, key targets may be the members of the Health Committee of your State Legislature. Political party leaders are also important players. The "Majority leader" is the top legislator from the political party (Republican or Democrat) with the majority of representatives in the legislature. This person has a lot of influence over other legislators, and often has the power to help pass a particular bill.

In considering your targets, you should also think about who is likely to be against your work. What groups are likely to oppose your plan and why? What influence do they hold? How can you minimize the impact of their opposition and/or gain their support? Be sure to include among your targets some of your strongest opposition, since without their support you may never achieve your goal.

CWHA SAYS:

We chose then-New York Senate majority leader Bruno as our key target since it was the Senate which has blocked comprehensive sex education in New York for multiple years, and because he had the power to convince other Republican Senators that they should vote for the Healthy Teens Act, a bill which would fund comprehensive sex education in New York.

Assessing Their Position

Try to figure out where your target stands on your issue. Do they have a lot of constituents who are impacted? Do they have any level of expertise or even a personal connection to the issue? What are the pros and cons for them, from their perspective? Have they supported or opposed it or a similar proposal in the past?

STEP 4: Your Message. What does your target need to hear?

Advocacy messages always have two basic components: an appeal to what is right and an appeal to the target's self-interest. Your message needs to describe your issue in a way that connects with the values, emotions and needs of your targets. Your message should be bold enough to draw attention while at the same time remain sensitive to cultural context, social values, and the political priorities of your targets. Adopting language that is familiar to your targets, or using words that create a picture that is appealing to your targets, is very helpful.

Articulate Your Message

The following three-part framework, developed by the SPIN Project[3], will help ensure your message has all the essential elements. Each part should be clear and concise, only a few sentences. Tip: use active words and short sentences.

1. **Problem:** Introduce your story, or issue statement. Describe how the issue affects your targets or people of importance to your targets, and its broader social impacts.

   Example: The United States has poured over $1.5 billion into abstinence-only-until marriage programs, despite evidence that these programs do nothing to delay teen sexual activity, or to increase teen sexual health outcomes. At the same time, one out of four adolescent girls has a sexually transmitted infection, rates of HIV infection among youth continue to rise, and teen pregnancy rates in the U.S. are among the highest in the developed world.

2. **Solution:** Speak broadly about the change you wish to see. Speak to peoples' hearts by talking about values. Communicate the benefit to the target or the people who influence them.

   Example: Young people in the U.S. have a right to complete and accurate sexuality education. When armed with information about prevention, and skills to negotiate challenging relationships, young people will be better prepared to stay safe and healthy.

[3] See http://www.spinproject.org.

3. **Action:** Call on your audience to do something specific. After hearing your message, the audience should know exactly what to do. Prepared statements of actions or a draft legislation or policy helps.

   Example: President Obama and Congress should eliminate abstinence-only funding from the federal budget, and should add new funds for comprehensive sexuality education.

Delivering Your Message

After you've crafted your message, you must consider two other key factors: **1) who are the best messengers to reach your targets; and 2) what is the best time and way to have them hear it?**

Your messengers should be selected with your particular target and context in mind. If you are conducting legislative visits, for instance, legislators will want to hear from voters in their districts. On the other hand, you might want to choose a community leader, or an effective public speaker with relevant personal or professional experience to speak at a rally about your issue. Each messenger should be trained in delivering the message, as well as responding to the "opposition," and answering questions while staying on message.

You can use the following message box to help you anticipate the other side's arguments, and how you'll respond to these effectively.

Supporter of policy A	**Opposition to Policy A**
Your key message	Their key message
Opposition to Policy A	**Supporter policy A**
What you think they will say about your key message (i.e. their opposition to your position)	What you will say about their key message (i.e. your opposition to their position)

CWHA says:

To develop our own speaking skills, we organized a spokesperson training session. In anticipation of the training, we each wrote stories about ourselves, explaining why the issue of comprehensive sex education was important to us. We then practiced sharing these stories by taking turns as speakers, opposition, and audience. This exercise was one of the ways in which we built up our comfort level for speaking publicly about our chosen issue.

By What Means?

At different moments in your campaign, you will deliver your message in different ways. At each point along the way you will need to think about how to most effectively convey your message. Evaluate the situation carefully, and **consider these possibilities**:

- In a meeting? One-on-one or in a group? Formally or informally?
- At a public event?
- Should press or allies be invited?
- Over the phone?
- Via e-mail?
- Should the communication be timed to coincide with or avoid other events?

Typically, you escalate the intensity and aggression of your tactics over time, usually beginning your campaign with polite communication, and moving on from there.

STEP 5: Strategy Development

The final step involves taking everything you have developed from above and putting it into a concrete plan. **Developing your strategy involves a few key steps: recruiting members/allies, identifying and collecting needed resources, establishing a timeline, and delegating tasks.**

Recruitment

Recruit community members to join the campaign. This process can be formal, for example by creating a membership application, or it can be informal. While recruiting, consider the key skills necessary to make your campaign come to life. Skills might include: public speaking, ability to network with other advocates, writing skills, a knowledge of the community, or familiarity with the issue.

There are many good resources about building a membership base. For more information, **visit**:

1. "The Citizen's Handbook" at http://www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook/
2. "Tools for Organizers, Activists, Educators, and Other Hell-Raisers", at http://www.casagordita.com/tools.htm
3. "So You're Ready to Start A Movement?" at http://protest.net/activists_handbook/start.html

CWHA says:

Each time a new member joined our group, we asked them to tell us about their interests, experiences, and ambitions for advocacy work. This helped us get to know one another, and also gave us a sense of each member's strengths and areas for growth.

Resources

There are two main types of resources you will need: fiscal resources (money), and "in-kind" resources (stuff). Decide what fiscal or in-kind resources you will need in order to undertake your advocacy efforts. These might include: office space, computers, photocopying, communication, travel, etc.

Craft a budget so you can anticipate costs and have a sounding board and be prepared for future fundraising efforts. The Foundation Center provides a budgeting tutorial online at http://foundationcenter.org/getstarted/tutorials/prop_budgt/pbb_descrip.html.

Planning

In order to envision where you're headed, you should establish short-term and longer-term goals. The goals you define should be natural steps toward the achievement of your desired policy change. Having goals to refer back to will help you to evaluate and adjust your strategy as necessary. Goals will also help you measure your success over time. Use your goals to create a work calendar with start and end dates for each element, and dates for other key actions. Delegate tasks to specific individuals.

CWHA says:

We quickly realized that the calendar was a great way to keep us focused, but we couldn't always stay on schedule. We've learned that the calendar needs to be revisited regularly and adjusted to reflect changing circumstances.

STEP 6: Tactics

Tactics can be thought of as do-able steps that will lead you to accomplish each of your short-term and long-term goals. Tactics are the actions you take in order to:

1) Influence the target's perception or understanding of the issue, and
2) Influence the target's action on an issue.

Tactics are the building blocks of your campaign.

Building pressure that results in legislative change typically happens slowly. Tactics should be designed to build upon one another, in an escalating fashion. Expect to spend some time educating decision-makers and potential allies before you can even begin to push hard for a particular action. You should always be clear what outcome you intend or hope to achieve from engaging in a particular tactic.

It's important to assess the risks and opportunities for each action. Like all other aspects of your campaign strategy, your tactics should be directed toward achieving your stated goals or solution.

CWHA SAYS:

While brainstorming future campaign tactics, we discussed the possibility of organizing a march. It was hard not to get caught up in the excitement as we envisioned a mass of people descending upon the Department of Education building, demanding comprehensive sex education. But as we brought the idea to others in our group, we were forced to answer the question: What would be the goal? "Press coverage," we thought. But in New York, a modest rally goes virtually unnoticed by the people on the sidewalk, let alone the media. We went back and forth—stating our goals, and asking whether the action could actually meet the stated goals. In the end, we decided that although it seemed thrilling, we were not ready to commit the kind of resources required for a rally, given that we couldn't articulate a goal that would have merited the resources required.

STEP 7: Implementation & Evaluation

Just do it! Execute your plan. You've had the courage to envision change, to think through and plan it…now go for it! You have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Learn as you go. Review your strategy plan regularly. Document your outcomes and make note of tactical successes and failures. With the clarity and wisdom gained from hindsight, you can assess the strengths and weaknesses of your overall plan and individual tactics. Finally, adjust your strategy plan as necessary by asking the following:

- Did we achieve what we hoped to from a particular tactic? Why or why not? What could we have done differently?
- Are we working effectively with allies? What more could we be doing to maintain these relationships?
- Does our work calendar still make sense? Is it realistic? Do we need to modify it?
- What more can we do to increase the visibility of our issue?
- Have our targets been responsive to our tactics? Do we need to modify our strategy in response to their reactions?
- What else should we be asking?

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY: CONVINCING THE PEOPLE WHO PASS THE LAWS

Legislative advocacy (also called public policy advocacy) involves direct communication with those people who have the power to implement the policy change that you support. This sort of advocacy can take many forms: writing letters, postcards or emails, making phone calls, or meeting directly with the policy makers. These contacts are made in order to let a legislator or policy maker know that your issue is an important one, and that the public (or even better, the voters in their district) care about the issue. Legislative advocacy is one of the tools to consider when you strategize about tactics. In fact, legislative advocacy is often the first strategy one deploys, before escalating to more aggressive tactics.[4]

Letter Writing

A letter should make your point clearly and succinctly. Legislators receive a lot of mail, and it is typically read by their legislative aides. These aides don't have the time to read a five page letter from your group. Try to get your message across in one page. But don't think that because they're busy, it's not worth sending the letter at all. It is. They keep track of the issues that people are concerned about, and often keep track of the quantity of mail or messages they receive on a given issue.

Before writing a letter, spend some time thinking about the goals of the letter. As with other forms of advocacy, your action is most effective when it has been carefully tailored to your desired ends. Here are some questions to think about before writing your letter:

To whom should we send the letter?

- This goes back to the original decision – choosing your target. But remember, different people play different roles in policy change; rarely is there any one person acting alone.

- In New York, we began by focusing our campaign on our State Senator Joseph Bruno, because he was then the leader of the Republican majority in our State Senate. Therefore, our letters and card campaigns were directed at him. But we have also sent a copy of our letters to all the State Senators, to generate some buzz about the issue.

[4] Important Note: 501(c)(3) organizations are bound by certain limits to lobbying activity. If you are doing this work as part of a 501(c)(3), be sure to read up on the relevant regulations. See our Resources section for some suggestions about where to get more information.

What are we asking for?

- Maybe you want to raise awareness about an issue, with the hope that an appropriate policy maker might propose a policy that would be responsive to the problem you're concerned about. They could do this by writing and/or sponsoring a bill.

- Consider asking the legislators to support and pass an existing bill.

- Also, you may want to alert the legislators to the damage that could be caused by a particular bill.

What is the appropriate tone of the letter?

- In some situations it may be effective for a letter to express outrage or indignation.

- Other times it might be most effective to express support and thanks for a position that the legislator has taken.

- Or, a letter may be most effective as a simple statement of a seemingly inevitable conclusion, coupled with a request for a specific action by the legislator, i.e. "Last year in New York alone, there were 40,000 teen pregnancies. One in four American teenagers has a sexually transmitted infection, and new HIV infections among young people have more than doubled since… Young people are not getting the information they need to stay safe and healthy. We ask you to support comprehensive sex education for our youth."

Who should sign the letter?

- A group, for example "The Center for Women and HIV Advocacy." If the legislators are unlikely to know your group, in the body of the letter you should introduce your group, for example, "We are a group of women, mothers, grandmothers, aunts and sisters infected and affected by HIV, living in the five boroughs of New York City."

CWHA says:

We wrote a sign-on letter which we sent to the then-Republican Majority leader of our State Senate. We got 34 groups to add their names to the letter. The list highlighted the variety of organizations supporting comprehensive sex ed. (See a sample letter below.)

- An individual, for example, the director, or other staff or member of an organization.

- A list of organizations. This is known as a sign-on letter. In order to get other organizations to sign-on, you can circulate the letter via email or fax, asking for groups to sign-on to, or endorse, the letter. You can make follow-up phone calls to these groups if they don't respond to your request. Once you've gotten a list of groups willing to sign-on, you add all of those names at the bottom of the letter.

- A long list of constituents. A letter with fifteen pages full of signatures sends a powerful message to a policy maker.

LETTER TO LEGISLATOR

DATE

Senator XXX XXX
Legislative Office Building, Room XXX
Albany, New York 12247

Dear Senator XXX:

The Center for Woman and HIV Advocacy at the HIV Law Project and the undersigned organizations serving residents of New York State (NYS) are writing to urge you to bring comprehensive sexuality education to New York State students.

As organizations working to address the needs of New Yorkers living with HIV/AIDS and advocating for public health measures that would help turn the tide against this epidemic, we are outraged by the rates of pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among teenagers in New York, which are among the highest in the nation. What is more, approximately half of all new HIV infections occur in people under the age of 25. New York is faced with a public health crisis and a solution is urgent. An increased focus on effective prevention programs is one step in the right direction. Research shows comprehensive sex education—programs that teach not just abstinence but provide information about STIs and contraception—are effective in helping young people make healthy decisions.

Our communities witnessed the devastation of the AIDS epidemic first hand. It is unthinkable that a quarter century since it began, our teens are still not being taught how to protect themselves from this potentially deadly disease. We have already failed generations of our children and wasted millions of opportunities.

We are outraged that while NYS spends millions of our tax dollars on abstinence-only programs that have been found to be ineffective, there is no dedicated funding stream for effective comprehensive sex education programs[5]. An investment in comprehensive sexuality education will save lives and money.

We support real sex education for all young people. Members of the communities we serve are concerned with the health and safety of children, teens and young adults. New York youth need comprehensive sexuality education so that they are equipped to make healthy decisions about their bodies and their relationships.

Sincerely,

The Center for Women and HIV Advocacy

[5] Note to reader: New York State no longer accepts federal funding for abstinence-only programs.

Phone Call Campaigns

A phone call campaign differs from a letter writing campaign in a variety of ways. Why choose one over the other? Perhaps the most important reason is the speed with which you can get a large number of people to make the calls you want them to make. When timeliness is at stake, you can quickly send a fax blast or an email blast to a list of your allies, requesting that they make a phone call with instructions that you provide. In our experience, people will either make the requested phone call as soon as they read the message, or they won't make it at all.

A phone call campaign is appropriate when your message can be boiled down to one sentence. When you are putting your message into the mouths of others, you want to be sure that you have a short and simple script which they can follow. If the message is too long, or too complicated, it might get garbled by the people making the calls. But when you want to tell your legislators to vote **yes** or **no** on a particular bill, or to oppose a specific budget proposal or to make a particular issue a priority, phone calls might be the appropriate vehicle. One additional advantage to phone calls: from your target's perspective, calls are difficult to ignore. Once a legislative aide has received 75 calls or messages about a particular topic, the issue is fairly well placed on their radar screen.

Again, there are multiple questions to assess at the beginning of this process. Some we've talked about elsewhere, others are unique to this tactic:

1. **Who is the target?** Rarely will you or the people making the calls actually speak with your target. You will speak to an aide, assistant, or a secretary. Don't let that discourage you. As with letters, messages do get through to the policy maker, and to the member(s) of their staff who focus on your issue.

2. **What is the time frame for the action?** Is timing critical? If so, you'll need to get your email or fax blast out quickly. Otherwise, you can spend some time, but not too much time, crafting an appropriate action response.
    a. For example: after the release of the President's proposed budget, "Call your representative today and tell him/her that the President's budget should give funds to comprehensive sex education, and prevention efforts that work, and not to more abstinence-only programming" is an appropriate message.
    b. Or, in anticipation of a bill that will be going to a vote: "Call your representative today and tell him/her to vote YES on the Healthy Teens Act, to provide funding for comprehensive sex education for New York's students."

3. **To whom will we reach out about making calls, and how will we reach them?** Think about your support base. If you have been creating a database that includes email addresses or fax numbers, this is a good opportunity to put that contact information to use. If you don't yet have one, this is a good opportunity to make one.

4. **What is the message?** A caller should be able to deliver the message in one sentence. The script you provide should be a direct statement of what you want.

CWHA SAYS:

In our campaign, we helped to mobilize people in a city-wide phone call campaign aimed at the NYC Department of Education (DOE). We emailed a large group of people whose email addresses we had collected when they had signed postcards as part of our postcard campaign. The email asked people to call 311, a city information hotline, and to leave a message for the DOE explaining that they wanted comprehensive sex education in the city's schools. The calls were used to reinforce the message that we had already sent with the postcards.

EMAIL MESSAGE URGING PEOPLE TO MAKE PHONE CALLS:[6]

* Did you know that most public schools in New York City do not teach comprehensive sex ed?

* Did you know that New York City does not require comprehensive sex ed in schools?

Eight out of ten New Yorkers believe students should get sex education in school. Yet most New York City public school students do not! NYC youth need comprehensive sex education that encourages families to talk, which improves communication skills, highlights positive decision making and problem solving, develops relationships that are healthy, teaches information that is medically correct, and promotes responsible behavior including abstinence and birth control.

Together we can make a difference! Here are 2 easy actions YOU can take to ensure New York City youth receive real, comprehensive sex ed in schools.

ACTION #1: Call 311 and tell the City of New York we need comprehensive sex education in our schools. It's easy and it will only take 2 minutes:

Step 1: Dial 311. (It's a free call)

Step 2: Ask to make a suggestion to the Department of Education.

Step 3: Tell the operator you believe students should get comprehensive sex education every year in the public schools. Tell them sex education should be required for all kids.

Step 4: They will ask you for your contact information. You can leave your name and contact information or you can ask to be anonymous.

It won't take much time, but it can make a big difference. Your suggestion will go to the Department of Education and a report of 311 calls is sent to the Mayor and the City Council.

Speak up and make your voice heard!

ACTION #2: Tell a friend! Encourage your friends, colleagues, family members, and clients to join the Sex Ed Alliance of New York City (SEANYC) to protect the health and safety of New York City youth. Forward the email TODAY!

For more information or to get involved with SEANYC call 212-xxx-xxxx or email xxx@zzzz.org

[6] This email message was written and provided by the Sex Ed Alliance of New York City, a coalition of which we are a member.

Postcard Campaign

The idea with a postcard campaign is to impress your target with the depth of support for your issue by landing a massive stack of signed postcards on his/her desk. (We like the powerful visual of a big stack of cards.)

The two elements to a successful postcard campaign are:

1. Your ability to reduce your issue to a few, catchy lines, and
2. Your ability to get a large number of postcards signed.

A postcard campaign in five simple steps:

1. Identify your target.
2. Come up with a catchy, succinct message.
3. Design your postcard, front and back. You can design an 8.5" x 11" page to fit 4 cards. This will help reduce your copy costs. A well-equipped copy shop should be able to print your cards on card stock, a thick paper that works well as a postcard, and cut the pages into quarters, so you end up with a stack of cards.
4. Get out into your communities in order to get a sizeable number of cards signed. Stuff all the cards into large mailing envelopes (you don't need to mail each one individually) and send them to your target.

Legislative Visits

Sometimes there's no substitute for a face-to-face meeting. This could be a part of a coordinated lobby day, or it could be just your group members. But how do you know whom to target for a meeting? How do you distinguish one legislator from another? Well, there a few things to consider when trying to figure out whom you should meet with. Again, some of this goes back to the original and fundamental stage of the process: choosing your targets. But when thinking about making personal visits, there are some unique considerations.

Choosing Targets

First, legislators always want to hear from their own constituents: the people who live in their district, and have the power to re-elect them. So you can try and meet with legislators who represent the districts where your members live. (If you take this approach, remember that most legislators have two offices: one in the capital, and one in their district. So you can probably meet with your legislators locally, rather than having to travel to your state capital to see them.)

Second, each legislator has a unique set of issues that they're most concerned with. Remember, legislators are real people. They and their families and friends have been affected by different issues; they are passionate about some things and not others, just like the rest of us. So, you could (1) seek out those people who care about your issue in an effort to let them know about your work, and your support for theirs. (2) You could ask your allies in the legislature for insights about how to help with their efforts. Or, (3) you can focus on your adversaries. In our campaign for comprehensive sex education, we targeted our adversaries, conservative State Senators, to educate them about the importance of the issue.

When choosing targets for legislative advocacy, think about all the angles from which you can approach and sell your issue. Comprehensive sex education, for instance, is an HIV issue, but it's also a health issue more broadly, as well as an education issue, and also a youth issue.

You can also choose your targets by identifying the legislative committees relevant to the issue or particular legislation that you care about. The federal government and many state legislatures are organized into committees. The concept of committees exists in all sorts of institutions; committees are really just a way for a big group of people to make decisions, to ensure that there aren't "too many cooks in the kitchen," and to allow the people who are part of the institution to focus on the issues and projects that they care most about. For example, a PTA (Parents Teachers Association) might have committees to plan a potluck dinner, or to raise money for the school, or ensure top quality teaching. A church might have committees to oversee the facility, to plan community outreach activities, or to work on expanding membership.

Similarly, legislative bodies are divided into committees, so that there aren't hundreds (or even dozens) of people involved in drafting and editing every law. Committees monitor on-going governmental operations, identify issues of importance to them, gather and evaluate information, and recommend courses of action to the larger legislative body. Congress divides its legislative, oversight, and internal administrative tasks among approximately 200 committees and subcommittees.

Based on all these criteria, compile a list of legislators to visit and determine what kind of visit you want it to be – information gathering, an opportunity to introduce your organization and its work, or a chance to try and persuade your opponents or targets to see the issue as you do.

CWHA says:

When some of our women traveled to Albany, our state capital, we met with members of the Senate Health and Education Committees. Those legislators have a clear interest in the issue of sex ed, as well as the ability to help make comprehensive sex ed a reality in New York. Different meetings had different results: some were friendly; others just wanted to know more about the issue. Some didn't seem very motivated to move the issue forward. But for us it was a learning opportunity, and a good way to raise visibility about the issue.

Getting Prepared: You're Already an Advocate

If you'd like to see what a legislative visit is like before scheduling your own, or if you are nervous about speaking to a legislator for the first time, participate in a lobbying day that has been organized by a local group with interests that overlap with yours. Often coalitions will organize large advocacy days where busloads of members gather at the state capital and participate in visits scheduled by coalition staff. These visits often involve a large group of constituents, so it is easy to watch what happens, without having to do too much of the talking.

CWHA says:

We understand that in any group some people are more comfortable than others with public speaking. We all have different comfort levels with public speaking. For many of us, the thought of meeting with an elected official or their staff is very intimidating. Everyone wants to be prepared for such a big event.

Take a step back and examine the relationship between legislators and constituents (the people who vote legislators into power). Legislators depend on their constituents to stay in power. As a result, they have a real interest in keeping their constituents happy. If the people in their district are unhappy with the job they have done, they can be voted out of office. In other words, legislators work for YOU.

Also consider the different sorts of advocacy you and the members of your group do in your daily lives. Maybe you have a child who needs extra services in school and you had to advocate regularly with the teachers and principal to get the services your child needs. Or, maybe you have had to advocate for a family member needing care in the hospital. Maybe you have had a leaky sink, or a roach infestation, and you've had to advocate with your landlord to get the necessary repairs done. **In our daily lives we are constantly called on to advocate for ourselves and those we love, because we routinely confront oppositional forces.** Remembering that we are all already advocates may make the idea of a legislative visit less frightening.

Perhaps **the best way to overcome the anxiety about a legislative visit is preparation.** As a group you can prepare your talking points, and practice them together. (Below is a list of questions we used as the basis for an exercise when we began preparing to meet with legislators.) Write your talking points down so that everyone has them to refer to, if necessary. Brainstorm about personal stories and anecdotes that make your point. Your legislator will be more likely to remember, or relate to the substance of your visit if you can make your point personal. Also, if you are meeting with a legislator who is an ally and already convinced of the validity of your perspective, give them some personal stories that they can use when discussing the issue with their colleagues. You can hold a practice legislative visit where one person pretends to be the legislator or their aide. With this practice under your belt, the real visit may be less intimidating.

Use the following exercise as a basis for crafting a script that you can use in your meetings. You can modify the questions to fit your issue.

Preparation Exercise

You are preparing to speak to a legislator about supporting comprehensive sex education in schools. Discuss and take notes about the following questions. Repeat the exercise for supportive legislators, as well as those who oppose your position:

- Introduction. The introduction should include information about who your group is, and what issue you have come to speak to the legislator about.

- Make a list of your main points for talking to the legislator. Remember that the person you are speaking with may or may not know a lot about your issue. Do some research in advance about your target and you will have a better sense of how much background information you need to provide about the issue. Hint: Try www.google.com as a basis for your search.

- What statistics would be helpful in proving your point? Ask yourselves: What statistics would prove this point? Then go out and try and find those statistics.

- How can you convince a conservative legislator that abstinence-only is NOT the way to go? (Whatever your issue might be, anticipate your opponents' response. And know how you will reply with a persuasive counter-argument.)

- Brainstorm about some personal anecdotes to make your point. (Though you may not have to spend time convincing your allies of the wisdom of your position, you can help them to carry your message by sharing your personal stories with them. That way, they have some solid ammunition when trying to convince their colleagues in the legislature. They can say, "Well I just met with a group of women who told me…" It's hard to deny the truth in a personal story.)

- What is a powerful closing statement? Is there a specific action we're requesting? (This is your opportunity to summarize your position, and offer a memorable "take home" message.)

A meeting with a legislator typically lasts between 15 and 30 minutes, which is not a lot of time. Your script is not a document meant to be followed word by word. Instead, **use the script as a roadmap of your major talking points, to keep you "on message," and to ensure that you have all the relevant statistics and facts, as well as the name and number of any bills you might mention.** As discussed above, you can use your script in some practice sessions, to prepare you for the big day.

Legislative visits are often made not by an individual advocate, but by a team. A group presence sends a message that your issue is one that affects a lot of people.

A group visit also allows multiple people to share elements of their unique personal stories. Also, a group visit is likely to be more interesting for the legislator or aide with whom you are meeting, as they have the opportunity to hear multiple voices. In this spirit, it is helpful to divide up the points of your script among the different members who will be participating in the meeting. Encourage those who do not like public speaking to take on a very small piece, like perhaps saying your group's name, and what you do. Maybe the next time this person will feel comfortable taking on a bigger public role. One person should play the role of the coordinator, to ensure that everything flows smoothly in the visit. This person can make the transitions from one speaker to the next, by saying things like "And now Maria is going to talk about why comprehensive sex education makes economic sense for the state." Everyone should know the order of all the speakers, as well as the particular topic they are responsible for speaking about.

Bring Written Materials About Your Issue

Legislators and their aides get many visitors. As soon as you leave, someone else may be walking in the door. This means that by the end of the day, the aide has heard from people talking about everything from healthcare issues, to raising judges' salaries, to highway construction. In order to help them better remember you and your issue, bring along some materials to leave with the legislator or their aide. Your materials should not be too extensive. In general, the more you can boil your issue down, the better. Your materials should state your position, offer some brief background about the issue and why it matters, and provide some statistics or other information to support your position. (See our sample handout materials at the end of this section.)

The Visit: General Guidelines

- Dress comfortably and professionally.

- Arrive on time. If you arrive late you'll have less time to convey your point. Arriving late also appears unprofessional. (Bring the phone numbers of the legislators you'll be visiting. That way, if you get trapped in a blizzard and find yourselves unable to make it to the meeting, you can call the legislators' offices, apologize for the circumstances, and try to reschedule. But when planning your departure time, leave plenty of room for traffic and other conditions which might put you behind schedule.)

- Be courteous. You may be angered by the positions a particular legislator has taken, but it does you little good if by the end of your visit you've offended them, or left them feeling disrespected. Remember, you're trying to win them over to your side.

- Know your message, and stay focused on the message.

- If the legislator or their aide disagrees with your position you can respectfully offer the arguments and facts that support your position. Also, you can ask questions that will encourage the legislator to think more seriously about your position.

- Leave your materials (fact sheets, copies of newspaper articles, a brochure about your organization) with the person you've met with.

- Ask for the business card of the person you meet with, if it's an aide.

- Remember to thank them for taking the time to meet with you.

CWHA SAYS:
In planning for legislative visits, we decided to ask adversarial legislators: What do you plan to do to reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies and STDs among teenagers? This question forces them to confront the issues we're concerned with, and maybe even to acknowledge that we've proposed a strong solution.

Expect the unexpected! **Here are a few experiences we want to share:**

We didn't even get to meet with the legislator! He sent his aide instead.
Many of us were surprised and disappointed at our first legislative visit when we learned that we would be meeting with a member of the legislator's staff (an aide) rather than the legislator him or herself. We assumed that meant that they didn't take our issue seriously. We now know not to be disappointed when an aide walks into the conference room for our visit, because more often than not, that's what happens. But the truth is that these people have tremendous influence with the legislator they work for, and they are often called upon to explain an issue to the legislator, or help the legislator prioritize issues. Meeting with an aide, therefore, is an opportunity to educate the person who educates the legislator. That's a lot of power.

The aide didn't know anything! – or – The aide knew more than we did!
It would be nice if every legislator and all their staffers knew all about every issue affecting their constituents. But, of course, they don't. So don't be surprised if the legislator or their staffer knows almost nothing about your issue, and asks questions which seem basic or irrelevant. This is your opportunity to educate them. And if you've done research in advance you'll be able to anticipate the level of knowledge that your target has about the issue. We can safely assume that the Chair of the Senate Education Committee Aide knows a bit about comprehensive sex education, maybe even more than we do. With this person, your job is not to educate about the issue, but to show the depth and intensity of community support for the issue.

After the Meeting

Always send a thank you letter to the person or people you met with. The letter is an opportunity to reiterate your point, and to resend your materials. Your meeting was an opportunity to begin building a relationship with your legislator(s). Your advocacy will be more successful in the long-term if your legislator thinks of your group when they want more information about a particular issue.

Consider the following:

- Stay on their radar by periodically sending your legislators updates about your organization's work and your legislative priorities.
- If you are hosting a community event, send an invitation to the legislators. If they're able to come, let them speak. They'll be indebted to you for offering them a platform to speak to their constituents, and will remember you when you come knocking to follow up about your issue.

Timeline for lobbying activities

As we've said, your legislative advocacy might consist of a single visit to a targeted legislator. Or perhaps you want to piggy-back on the efforts of other organizers by participating in a lobby day organized by a coalition involved in issues that overlap with yours. Or maybe you'll decide to organize an all-day visit to your state capital where you will meet with multiple legislators. Depending on the scope of your plans, your to-do lists will vary widely, but you can use the following timeline as a general guide.

Two months before:

- Decide which legislators to visit and research their positions on your issue and related issues. To do this: Review some of the basics about choosing a target. Look at all the Committees in your State legislature, and figure out which ones are directly involved in your issue. Speak to other organizations (especially those that work with a lobbyist) to ask for advice about targets.
- Reserve a bus or a van, if necessary.
- Begin outreach so that you can gather a large group to attend, if that's appropriate to your goals.

Six weeks before:

- Call the office of each legislator you hope to visit and schedule an appointment. Remember that a visit probably takes approximately 30 minutes. If you're scheduling multiple visits you'll need to leave yourself some time to get from one meeting to the next.
- Write your script or talking points and begin practicing with your group.
- Continue with outreach to other potential participants, if appropriate.

Four weeks before:

- Prepare the written materials that you intend to leave with the legislators.
- Continue to fine tune your materials for the legislators.
- Continue working on your script/talking points.

- Continue outreach to other allies who might join you.
- Have all confirmed participants fill out a form with contact information and emergency information.

Two weeks before:

- Buy train or bus tickets, if necessary.
- Plan for meals. Will everyone bring their own food? Can you get a local bakery to donate breakfast for your trip? Do you have money to give to people to buy lunch if you'll be away all day at the state capital?

One week before:

- Hold a final training session for those who'll be participating and confirm their participation.
- Confirm transportation.
- Confirm visits with legislators by following up with their offices.
- Make list of phone numbers you'll need on the day of: participants, legislators, bus or train company, colleagues.

One day before:

- Make reminder phone calls to participants (or email to those who use email).
- Prepare/purchase any food you're bringing for the group.
- Pack materials to give to legislators (including business cards if you have them).

Fighting since 1989 for the rights and dignity of people living with HIV/AIDS

The Center for Women and HIV Advocacy

WHAT IS COMPREHENSIVE SEX EDUCATION?
Comprehensive sex education promotes a positive view of sexuality as a natural part of human development. It provides information about sexual abstinence as well as pregnancy and disease protection, and provides teens with skills to ensure they are able to take care of their sexual health and make healthy, responsible decisions.

OUR YOUTH NEED COMPREHENSIVE SEX EDUCATION
As young women, mothers, and grandmothers, we believe that comprehensive sex education is critical to effectively preventing the transmission of HIV. Yet many schools deny youth the information they need to keep them safe from HIV, STIs and teen pregnancies. In an effort to promote abstinence-until-marriage, from 1996 to 2007, the federal and state governments have poured a collective 1.5 billion dollars into abstinence-only-until-marriage programs, which take the place of comprehensive sex education. http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/factsheet/fshistoryabonly.htm

What is the problem with teaching abstinence? Teaching abstinence is appropriate, if discussed among an array of many possible approaches to staying healthy, and avoiding unintended pregnancy. The problem is teaching abstinence ONLY. As required by the strict federal definition of abstinence-only education, these programs are prohibited from teaching about contraceptives, except to emphasize their failure rates. Many of these programs even include false or misleading information, such as that touching another person's genitals can cause pregnancy, or that HIV is spread through sweat and tears.

THE PUBLIC SUPPORTS COMPREHENSIVE SEX EDUCATION
A 2004 poll by Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, the Kaiser Family Foundation, and National Public Radio found that 77 percent of Americans believe that giving teens information about how to obtain and use condoms makes it more likely that teens will practice safe sex now or in the future. The study found further that a mere 7 percent of Americans say sex education should not be taught in schools.

YOUTH ARE SEXUALLY ACTIVE
One of the fundamental problems with abstinence-only programs is that they ignore the reality of teenage sexuality. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2005, 47% of high school students had had sex at some time. Further, that same year 34% of high school students who were then sexually active had not used a condom the last time they had had sex.

SEXUALLY ACTIVE YOUTH ARE AT RISK

- According to the CDC, almost half of all new STD infections are among youth aged 15 to 24.

- Approximately 13% of the persons diagnosed with HIV in 2004 were youth, between the ages of 13 and 24.

- In 2000, 13% of all pregnancies were among adolescents aged 15-19 (approximately 831,000 teen pregnancies). http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/sexualbehaviors/

ABSTINENCE-ONLY-UNTIL-MARRIAGE PROGRAMS ARE INEFFECTIVE; COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION IS EFFECTIVE

Research has shown that youth who pledged abstinence until marriage are actually likely to have sex *earlier* than those who didn't and those who were given accurate information. Pledgers were also *less* likely to use contraception during their "first time" and were less likely to have been tested for STIs.
http://advocatesforyouth.org/publications/policybrief/pbabonly.htm

One study of 1,719 teenagers found that those who received comprehensive sex education had a *50% lower* risk of pregnancy than those who were taught abstinence-only. (http://www.siecus.org/info/info0018.html). In other words, youth who are taught comprehensive sex ed are more likely to delay sex, use contraception, avoid pregnancy, and get tested for STIs.

Despite clear evidence that abstinence-only programs do not work, the U.S. government still funds and promotes them. It is time that we stop funding values-driven programs which have been shown to be ineffective. We must elevate above all other values the protection of the health of our youth. In order to effectively bring down the rates of infection with HIV and other STIs, and to reduce the numbers of unwanted teen pregnancies, we must provide our young people with comprehensive sexuality education.

Using the Media to Get the Word Out

Remember that things that seem important to you and to us are not always considered "news" by those who work in the media. An issue may be compelling, without being "news." Working effectively with the media involves building relationships, being a reliable, accurate source, and knowing how to turn your issue into a story.

Know Your Message and Your Messenger

Your reputation as a credible source is critical to any successful relationship with media. This means **you have to know what you're talking about**. It means that you have to be an expert on your issue. Fortunately, anyone can be an expert; you just have to spend time learning about the issue.

Once you've mastered the basics of your issue, make some strategic decisions about the message(s) you want to convey. Whether it's in an interview, or in a letter to the editor, it's important to **stay "on message."** Don't get sidetracked by those issues which are related to, but not at the core of your issue.

Finally, **select spokespeople from your group**. This should be one (or a couple) of people who are the trusted media contacts. Media work can be stressful. Choose people who hold up well under this pressure, **and make sure that they are prepared**. If your group is invited to appear on a local radio or talk show, coordinate a practice interview. Both you and the spokesperson will be grateful for it when you walk in well-rehearsed knowing what you want to say once the tapes are rolling.

In short: Know your message, and STICK to it, and train one or more of the individuals in your group to be media spokespeople.

Building Relationships

Creating a Media Contact List

Before you can work with the media, you need to know who they are and how you can reach them. Your organization should create and maintain an updated list of media contacts. Here are some easy steps to get you started:

1. Avoid re-creating the wheel, if possible. Ask local non-profit organizations that do related work whether they would be willing to let you copy their media database. This will allow you to save your time for other work.

2. Visit your local newsstand and write down the names of all the newspapers you see, or visit www.google.com to do a search for them on a city/state/or nationwide basis. Contact information for the publication is likely to be located on the editorial page. If you are trying to raise awareness at a community level, look for local newspapers and newscasts that are targeting your community. If you are hoping to spread your message to legislators and public officials, you may want to include newspapers and newscasts that reach a broad audience, or are based in your capital city.

3. Begin to keep track of the reporters who write about your issue, or issues related to your issue. Keep your eyes and ears open for specialized publications or magazines that might cover your issue. Watch the news and write down the names and stations of reporters covering subjects related to your cause.

4. Use the phone book and Internet to gather any necessary contact information for each of the newspapers and news stations. Contact each of the newspapers or news stations and ask for the name of the person who covers issues related to your issue, and how best to contact that individual. A paper or news station may have one reporter who always covers health issues, for example, and s/he may prefer to receive news releases via e-mail rather than fax. These are important things to know. The easier you make it for the reporter, the more likely it is that your story will be covered. If the paper or station cannot direct you to a specific reporter, ask them how best to contact the Assignment Desk.

5. Set up a simple spreadsheet (like the one below) to keep track of your organization's media contacts and update it regularly. You may want to highlight the preferred method of contact for each individual contact.

News Station	**Reporter (contact person)**	**Position**	**Phone & fax number**	**E-mail Address**	**Media Category**
New York Times	Richard Perez	Health Desk	Ph: (555) 555-5555 Fax: (555) 555-5555	richard@nytimes.com (preferred)	Daily Newspaper
NY1	Kathy Brown	Local News Reporter	(555) 555-5555 (preferred)	news@NY1.com	Television

Crafting Your Message

Once your list of contacts is ready you can think about trying to get some media coverage. Media coverage comes in many forms. You might want a local newspaper to print an announcement about an event you're hosting. Or you might want to send a letter to the editor responding to an article that appeared in your newspaper. Or maybe you want to distribute a press release about a timely story, in the hopes that your paper will pick up the story. These are some of the many ways you might want to interact with media.

Making a Story

To turn an issue into a story, you need a "hook." Think of a hook as something to hang your story on, something that will grab the attention of the media staff, and their audience. Here are some examples[7]:

- **Controversy:** Frame the controversy to your advantage.
- **Dramatic human interest:** Include the stories of real people and the dramatic ways in which their lives are affected by your issue.
- **Localize a national story:** Take a nationally breaking story and emphasize its local impact, and vice versa.
- **Anniversaries/Milestones:** For example, "Eighteen years after the death of Ryan White…" or, "One year after New York rejected federal funding for abstinence-only until marriage programs…"
- **Fresh angle on an old story:** Take an old story and put a fresh twist on it.
- **Profiles and personalities:** This may feature individuals, community leaders, or galvanizing spokespersons who may be news themselves because of their fascinating stories, or their celebrity status.
- **Special event:** Frame your issue around a conference, rally or gathering. Frame the event to capture the issue and importance.
- **Respond and react:** Be on the lookout to respond and react to news others have made, with letters, op-eds, columns or editorials. It's often easier to jump in once public discussion has begun, then to initiate the public discussion.

[7] This list is adapted from RESULTS, "Media Hooks and Framing". Available at http://www.results.org/website/article.asp?id=1000.

- **Celebrity:** If you have a celebrity on your side (or appearing at your event), make sure they are included in the story.

- **Strange alliance:** If unlikely allies have come together in solidarity over your issue, this should be highlighted.

- **Timelines/calendar:** Your can make your issue newsworthy by tying it in to something coming up on the calendar, e.g. “In honor of National Women & Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day”, or “As school lets out for the summer…”

Building relationships with media is an important part of a successful advocacy campaign. The media can spread your message to a much larger audience, building awareness of and support for your cause.

Media Tools

There are many ways to communicate with the media, and the method you choose will depend on what your organization is trying to accomplish. It is important to remember that your issue is competing with many others for the media’s coverage so all writing should be clear, concise, and attention-grabbing. You should also follow up with your media contacts after submitting something to them. Common media tools include:

Press Release (aka News Release)

A press release is used to inform a media outlet of something newsworthy you believe they should cover. It tells a reporter the Who, What, When, Where, and Why of your story. In other words, a press release should include the following information:

- Who are you? (Write the press release on your letterhead.)
- What is the news? (Include this information in a straightforward headline, as well as in the first couple of sentences of the release itself.)
- When did/will the news/event occur?
- Where did/will the news/event occur?
- Why is this news important? (See “Making a Story” above for some ideas.)
- Try to personalize the news. Clarify the significance to your clients. Offer the story of an individual, if possible.

See the press release sample and template at the end of this section for more details.

Letter to the Editor

A letter to the editor is typically written in response to an article or editorial published by the newspaper or magazine. It is an opportunity to share your point of view with the readers of a particular publication. Most publications have strict guidelines governing letters submitted to the editor, including tight word limits, so be sure you review any submission guidelines before you sit down to write. Reviewing some old letters printed on the editorial page will help give you a sense of the style and format your paper is looking for.

See the letter to the editor sample and template at the end of this section for more details.

Op-ed

An op-ed is an opinion piece submitted to a newspaper by a member of the public. Op-eds are longer and more detailed than letters to the editor, and they are not written in response to a particular article (though they should be timely). An op-ed is a great way to lay out a thorough argument for your issue, and to introduce yourself to your paper and your community as an expert in your area. But newspapers only print a small number of op-eds each day, so don't be discouraged if yours is not accepted. You can always post it on your website. And you'll certainly have the opportunity to use the language from the op-ed in another form. Call the newspaper, or look on their website, before writing to find out about their guidelines and follow them exactly.

General tips about writing an op-ed:[8]

- Make an outline. It will help you stay focused and act as a reminder to cover key points.
- Focus on just one issue.
- Express your opinion.
- Assume that your readers do not know a lot about your issue, or the logic of your position. Provide necessary background information. (For example, don't assume that everyone knows what you mean when you say "abstinence-only programs".)
- Support your position with statistics or study results, but don't overwhelm the reader with numbers.
- It's helpful to have an anecdote, or a link to real people and their lives.
- Try to make your story relevant to your local community.

[8] These ideas can be found at: http://www.italladdsup.gov/pdfs/oped.pdf

News Conference[9]

A news conference is a useful tool when you are trying to draw multiple reporters to cover important news, and when you have the ability to put together a few speakers to share the news, as well as personalize the story. A news conference requires a lot of organizational time and energy. But when there's big news to share (a major new initiative, a major victory), a press conference may be the best way to do it.

Here are some of the critical organizational elements:

- **Secure a space** to hold the conference with easy access, good visuals, and room for multiple people. On the day of the press conference, prepare the site with all the necessary equipment and directional signs, banners, etc.

- **Invite reporters** a week in advance. Think about the media outlets you would like to cover the story, and make follow up phone calls to increase the likelihood that someone will attend.

- **Prepare a press packet** with important information to give to the press (press release, agenda for the press conference, fact sheets and relevant studies/reports, bios of the speakers.

- **Keep track of who attends.** Prepare a sign-up sheet in advance in order to follow up with these people afterward, and to invite them to your next press release.

- **Prepare your speakers.** Write and practice their statements, and prepare for Q&A.

[9] For more information on planning a press conference see: http://www.italladdsup.gov/pdfs/fact.pdf and http://www.citizenstrade.org/pdf/pc_pressevent.pdf.

TEMPLATE

PRESS RELEASE

(Your Organization's Letterhead)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Date

CONTACT:
Local Contact Person, Title
Phone Number
Email Address

Headline

"Kicker" - contains additional information that helps explain the headline

City, State (Date) - Your first paragraph is "the lead." It should include the most important information of the release including the who, what, when, where, and why of your news. Keep sentences and paragraphs short.

"Your second paragraph often starts with a quote," said [A SIGNIFICANT PERSON, PERHAPS YOUR ORGANIZATION'S DIRECTOR]. "Quotes put a human face on your news and add an opinion or additional piece of information." Make sure the quote is approved by the person to whom it is being attributed.

Your third paragraph should elaborate on the information in "the lead." Include interesting details and facts that help explain your news. You might include a human interest story to emphasize the importance of your issue.

"Your fourth paragraph might include another quote that reinforces your message," said [PERSON FROM HUMAN INTEREST STORY]. "Quotes can also come from community leaders." Quotes should be kept short and use plain language.

Your last paragraph is "the tag." It should include a description of your organization, its mission, and its work.

###
(this goes at the end of the release.
If the release is two pages, the bottom of the first page should say:
MORE)

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Date

CONTACT:
XXX XXX, Title
(212) 577-3001
xxxxx@hivlawproject.org

Birds Do it, Bees Do It

HIV Law Project Launches Campaign for Comprehensive Sex Education

New York, New York (Date) - On Monday, March 19th, the HIV Law Project's Center for Women and HIV Advocacy (CWHA) will launch a postcard campaign to tell State Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno that New Yorkers want comprehensive sex education in our schools. In anticipation of summer vacation, the card boldly states: "Birds do it, bees do it." As they collect signatures, CWHA members will be getting out the word about New York's failure to educate our students with information that keeps young people healthy, saves lives, and prevents unwanted pregnancies.

"The Healthy Teens Act, which would fund comprehensive sex education in New York schools, is once again stalled in the Senate Health Committee," Jane Doe, a member of CWHA, explained. "If we can educate our Senate leadership about the urgent need for comprehensive sex education, we will be one step closer to getting the prevention tools needed for our children."

Sixty-seven percent of the 56,000 teenage pregnancies in New York State in 2000 were among young women of color, and in 2004 young people received thirteen percent of all HIV diagnoses in the US. In spite of these facts, the federal government has continued to pour hundreds of millions of dollars into ineffective abstinence-only programs. Further, the New York State Senate has failed on four occasions to pass the Healthy Teens Act, which would allocate state funds for comprehensive sex education.

"We do not want our children to go through the experiences we have lived through," said Mary Smith, an HIV-positive mother and member of CWHA. "Teen pregnancy and HIV should not be birth rites for women of color."

Through innovative legal services and advocacy programs, HIV Law Project fights for the rights of the most underserved people living with HIV/AIDS. The Center for Women & HIV Advocacy is a dedicated project aimed at developing a strong national movement among HIV-positive women, including the growing number of immigrants within it, in order to shape the future of HIV policy for women in the United States.

TEMPLATE

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

(Your Organization's Letterhead)

Date

Dear Editor,

In your first paragraph, state the problem and your position clearly. Reference an article from your local paper, if appropriate.

In your second paragraph, elaborate on your message. Support your points with facts or personal stories.

In your third paragraph, state your solution to the problem. Your letter should conform with the word limits established by the Editors, possibly as few as 150 words!

Sincerely,

Name
Title
Address
Phone Number
E-mail

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

(Your Organization's Letterhead)

Dear Editor,

I am deeply disturbed by the New York State Senate's failure to pass the Healthy Teens Act on June 21 ("State Senate Says No to Sex Ed," news article, June 22) which, if passed, would have provided new state funding for comprehensive sex education in NY public schools. By failing to support this Act, the Senate is sending a clear message that its priorities do not include the health and well-being of our children.

New York State was home to 56,000 teenage pregnancies in 2000, and according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 13% of Americans newly diagnosed with HIV in 2004 were between the ages of 13 and 24. In spite of these facts, the federal government has spent over a decade pouring millions of taxpayer dollars into ineffective abstinence-only programs and now, for the fourth year in a row, our State Senate has failed to pass the Healthy Teens Act. Denying our children medically accurate information about contraception and disease prevention is irresponsible and short-sighted.

As an HIV-positive woman raising two daughters, I do not want to see my children go through the experiences I have had to live through. Teen pregnancy and HIV should not be birth rites for young women in America. Our children must be provided with the tools necessary to make informed, life-saving decisions. Supporting comprehensive sex education says that our children and their future are a priority, and it's time for the New York State Senate to get on board!

Sincerely,
Jane Doe
15 Southern Boulevard
Bronx, NY 10459
(555) 555-5555
Jane.doe@email.com

TEMPLATE

MEDIA ADVISORY

(Your Organization's Letterhead)

MEDIA ADVISORY FOR

(Date of event)

What:	Give the title of the event, e.g. "Center for Women & HIV Advocacy Press Conference to Announce…"
Why:	Provide a few sentences that summarize the news you will be sharing. Be sure to mention how your organization is connected to the news. Also note the relevance of the news to the local community.
Who:	List names and titles of featured speakers and any elected officials or other well known figures who have confirmed their attendance
When:	Day of week, date. Provide begin and end times, e.g., 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.
Where:	Name and address of building/site, including room name or number, if appropriate
Contact:	Name Phone number Email address

ACTIONS, DEMONSTRATIONS, CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE AND OTHER ON-THE-GROUND TACTICS

What is Direct Action?

Direct action is a tactic intended to change policy. It's one more tool in the toolbox of strategies when working toward social change. It ramps up the intensity of your campaign and raises the stakes for your target. It lets the target know that you are not going to silently back away from your fight. Martin Luther King Jr. described the goal of non-violent direct action in his *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*:

> **"*Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored... The purpose of our direct action program is to create a situation so crisis packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation.*"**

Examples of direct actions from the civil-rights era include the sit-ins at segregated lunch counters, and the bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama. While direct action can include violent techniques, we support only nonviolent direct action in the great tradition of Gandhi and King.

Why Would You Use Direct Action?

Sometimes you need to hit the pavement to help get your message out, to gather allies, and to get the attention of your target. Perhaps you've met with your legislators about your issue, you've sent them hundreds of signatures in support of your issue, you've held a press conference, and had a letter to the editor published in your local newspaper. And yet, nothing has changed. Maybe the legislators don't agree that the problem is a problem. Or maybe the bill you support was "killed" in the committee process. Despite all of your advocacy efforts, the problem persists. You could dig in your heels, and decide you're in for the long haul, and wait for the next legislative season to try again. Or, perhaps you have no choice but to take to the streets for some direct action.

Direct action might also be triggered by a crisis. Maybe a new bill appears which, if passed, would have truly devastating consequences. Or a proposed budget is released which would slash funding for your project, or the services that you or your clients or allies rely upon. When the outrage in response to a proposed policy is so great that letter-writing campaigns or polite visits with legislators cannot adequately express the public's anger and frustration, it may be time to hit the streets.

There is a seemingly endless variety of forms an action could take; you could plan an intimate confrontation with your target, or a widely visible local demonstration. The array of visuals and messages you could use are as vast as your imagination. Your choice of the most appropriate action will depend on your goals and the resources (time, people, money, space) available to you. We hope that this section can inspire you to think creatively about possibilities for direct actions, even in the face of limited resources.

Direct Action in the HIV/AIDS Movement

One early landmark in the history of AIDS activism came in 1988, when ACT UP organized a demonstration at the Food and Drug Administration building outside Washington D.C. The organizers demanded the speedier approval of AIDS drugs, and the end to double-blind, placebo-controlled tests of potential AIDS drugs which denied treatment to the members of the control groups that were given placebos. They referred to the F.D.A. as the Federal Death Administration, and graphically depicted the impact of delayed drug approval with images of tombstones, and the ACT UP logo, “SILENCE = DEATH”. The members of ACT UP, all volunteers, recognized that the only way to move the federal government to change its drug approval policies was to shine a national spotlight on the problem. The images of their powerful words and actions caught the attention of the media in a way that no amount of polite lobbying could have ever done, and forced the government to respond.

How Can We Use Direct Action?

Sometimes a direct action is understood as an opportunity to directly confront the target (the decision-maker) in a setting that is outside of the expected framework. Direct action is intended to make the target uncomfortable, to force him or her to respond in a public way to public demands (or at least to recognize the power of your group’s voice, your persistence, and your creativity).

AN EXAMPLE: Maybe the Schools Chancellor is a secondary target in your campaign for comprehensive sex education. Though he does not have budgetary authority, he has the Mayor’s ear, and he has an interest in lowering unplanned teen pregnancies.

Now let’s say you’ve heard that the Chancellor will be speaking at a community breakfast in a couple of months. You arrange to get seats at the event for some of your members. While the Chancellor is speaking, you all stand up holding the signs that you’ve brought (and stealthily concealed in your purses) demanding “Sex Education Keeps Kids Safe”, and “No More Unplanned Pregnancies”, and “1 in 4 teens has an STI. We need sex ed now!” In other words, reduce your message to some catchy phrases, and insert yourself into a situation where your message was

neither invited nor anticipated. In this sort of a direct action, you turn a moment that was about the target into a moment that's about your issue. If the media are there to capture this sudden twist, it's likely to be even more effective.

ANOTHER IDEA: A direct action could be more of a symbolic opportunity to make demands, legitimized by the size and energy of your crowd. Maybe you organize a march from a local high school to city hall (or Town Hall, or the City Council, or the Department of Education), demanding that your locality implement a comprehensive sex education curriculum. You could bring a group of 100 students, and put 25 in red tee-shirts, and the rest in black tee-shirts. They could hold signs with 100 dots, 75 black and 25 red, and the slogan "1 in 4 teens has an STI. We need sex ed." Parents could hold signs saying "Keep our kids safe. Parents want sex ed in schools." Catchy visuals provide good opportunity for coverage in local newspapers and television news.

Some Considerations as You Decide Whether to Plan a Direct Action

- Direct action is appropriate when you want to force a response from your target.
- Direct action is a good strategy for getting media attention.
- Direct action can help build your group, or strengthen the commitment of your members.
- Actions are resource-intensive, since they require a lot of planning.
- Actions require a strong leadership to ensure that the action is well organized.
- An action casts your group in a particular light. You have to be willing to accept the consequences of the public image that comes with your action.

Things to Think About When Planning an Action

- The action should be fun. This is an opportunity to attract new members or allies to your group.
- The action should demonstrate your power. Actions are intended to be a bit threatening to your target. (Again, power in this sense is not about physical strength or violence. It's about your ability to force the target to respond to your demands.)

- Have clear demands. Convey your demands in the materials you use to advertise the event; e.g. “Rally to demand comprehensive sex education in schools”.

- Visuals are important in an action. Reduce your message to signs and banners which you’ve prepared well ahead of time.

- Get bodies! Though this is not true for all types of actions, the success of many actions is derived in part from the size of the crowd. The bigger the crowd, the more attention your event will receive.

- While you will need strong leadership to coordinate an action, there is a role for everyone. See our planning guide below.

- Invite the media, if appropriate. Send out a media advisory in advance of your event, so that local press can come out and cover the event. See our chapter on Media for more information about this.

- Obtain any necessary permits. Check with your local police department to determine whether you need to obtain a permit for your event (e.g. to occupy the street, or to amplify sound). (Sometimes activists may choose to hold their event without a permit. An unpermitted event can be a form of civil disobedience, and will likely end in arrests.)

- If people will be arrested, plan for those arrests. Look for local organizations that offer free trainings for groups planning an event where people may/will be arrested. Anyone planning to get arrested should be trained first about the physical experience of being arrested, how to handle the police processing experience and how to expedite release from police custody, the legal implications of the arrest, and the legal process after release. Look also for organizations that can provide legal observers for your event, to ensure that police activity is monitored. The National Lawyers Guild has chapters around the country; they provide these services in some regions. (www.nlg.org)

Planning Guide for a Rally

Eight Weeks Prior to Event: Preliminary Planning Meeting[10]

- Assemble your planning committee (you’ll probably need a minimum of five people)
- Agree upon your goals for the action and your demands
- Agree upon what sort of action you intend to organize
- Create a task list and assign individuals to tasks.

[10] Thanks to November Coalition for the document which was the basis for this checklist. November Coalition has several great resources for organizers at http://novembercoalition.org/BottomsUp/index.html.

- Key tasks include:

Media Liaison	Permits and Legal
• Research media outlets • Create press advisory	• Research local rules & requirements • Acquire any necessary permits • Reserve the venue if needed • Communicate with law enforcement before and during event • Research and pay fees if necessary
Graphics	**Outreach**
• Prepare flyers to advertise the event • Create visual elements to be used in the action (posters, banners, etc.)	• Publicize event via hanging posters and flyer distribution, hand delivery, fax, email, listservs, etc. • See our Technology chapter for more ideas.

Six Weeks Prior to Event:

- Finalize Purpose and Agenda, including speakers or performers
- Finalize and schedule event(s) location. Set date and time, reserve site, pay fees if necessary.
- Schedule speakers, local experts or groups, performers.
- Organize media contact information: gather list of local media and their contact information. You may be able to get a local organization that is sympathetic to your issue to share their media database with you.
- Plan publicity/outreach to maximize attendance: posters, flyers, local calendars of events. Brainstorm a list all the venues where you can post the information, and all the allies who can help distribute the information.
- Begin planning design of posters, banners, etc. that may be required.
- Reserve any special equipment if necessary (e.g. sound equipment)

Four Weeks Prior to Event:

- Finalize speaker list and discuss with speakers the content of their speeches.
- Finalize publicity literature (posters, flyers, handouts)
- Continue working on any display design to be used on stage and/or at the podium.
- Begin working on news release. (See our Media section for more information.)
- Make phone calls to allies to get out the word, and ask them to pass along the information to their networks. Also send information via mail, fax and e-mail to interested leads.

Two Weeks Prior to Event:

- Distribute flyers and posters in community (ask permission if necessary)
- Finalize News Release
- Create an event sign-in sheet, if it would be practical to get people to sign in at your venue. (This is a helpful way to gather names of individuals who support your issue, so that you can rally them to join your group or to participate at your next event.)
- Set-up 'trial-run' information/display table

Two Days Prior to Event:

- Distribute News Releases, confirm event details (venue, time and date, speakers, equipment)

One day Prior to Event:

- Call key media in follow-up to press releases faxed & emailed

Day of the Event (the following will be appropriate for some types of events, but not others)

- Volunteers arrive at least 1/2 hour early to set-up information/display table and special equipment (if used), greet people as they arrive, hand out literature, collect names on sign-up sheets
- Designated speakers should arrive at least 1/2 hour prior to event, know the agenda and allotted speaking times
- Allow time for questions and answers after speakers
- Post volunteer(s) at table during and after event to answer any other questions
- Return meeting room to original condition

Items to Bring to Event (this will vary)

- Table & covering (if not provided)
- Banner & prepared display
- Megaphones or sound system
- Donation jar
- Your printed materials
- Business cards & name tags
- Meeting attendance sheets, petitions, fact sheets and questionnaires (plenty of extra copies)
- Clipboard, pens, tacks, tape, safety pins, notebook(s)

After event(s)

- Create e-mail and postal contact list from attendance sheets
- Send letter thanking people for participating, reminding them of the mission of the organization, and letting them know that they may be hearing from you about future events
- Collect event facility deposit (if necessary)

USING TECHNOLOGY AS AN ADVOCACY TOOL

Uses of online technologies (email and Internet) are an important tool in helping to spread the word about a campaign, mission, or effort. Organizations looking to expand their membership or donor base have begun to recognize that increasing numbers of people are turning to the Internet for information. As a result, online advocacy has become a popular way to tell the local and global communities about the issues that matter to you and your organization.

NOTE: At the end of this section there is a glossary which defines key words that appear in this section.

How to Start

If you have never used the Internet or email, we strongly encourage you to find some free computer classes at a local community center or school. Internet technology should be available to everyone. Even if you don't have a computer, there are probably computers in your area that are available to you, for free. Many libraries now have computers with Internet access, as do lots of community centers.

If you are looking for a good way to practice using the Internet, we suggest you take some time to become familiar with Google (http://www.google.com). Similarly, if you are familiar with the Internet but are not yet using Google as your search engine, we encourage you to give Google a try. Google is a powerful search engine that allows users to locate information by typing in basic phrases, keywords, or even quotes. In response to your search, Google suggests a list of websites that contain the terms you're looking for. By reviewing some of these sites, you will usually be able to find the information you seek.

In addition, if you do not have an email account, we suggest that you create an email account for yourself. There are a variety of Internet-based email services that allow you to maintain an email account free of charge. Three of the most popular services are:

- Email by Google: www.gmail.com
- Email by Yahoo: www.ymail.com
- Email by Microsoft: www.hotmail.com

To create an email account with any of these providers, go to the website of the service you choose and follow the directions to "Sign Up" for a new account.

CWHA SAYS:

Many of our members had little or no experience using computers. We found a local computer class that taught basic computer skills, including use of the Internet to help people get comfortable with computers. We also helped everyone create an email address so that they could communicate by email, and we have encouraged our members to come and use the computers in our office, to practice their new skills.

Online Groups

What are they?

Online groups are essentially electronic mailing lists (listservs), allowing for immediate distribution of information to many Internet users. Groups also serve as Internet-based forums, where users participate in online "discussions." A group is typically organized around a given subject area that is of interest to group members. Messages to the group can be posted and read by email, or on the group's homepage (provided by whichever service hosts the group). Some groups exist primarily as a way to share news and announcements, while others are more lively discussion groups that host evolving conversations.

Why?

Forming an online group is a convenient, inexpensive, and efficient way to communicate. Here are some of the top reasons to use a group:

- to create a community that does not yet exist;
- to begin a conversation among the group members;
- to learn from fellow members about topics of interest or developments in the news;
- to share information; and
- to ask questions of others.

How?

Online services such as Yahoo!, AOL, and Google allow you to create and manage groups for free. Membership and management rights usually require that you maintain an email account with the service you choose. However there is no fee for joining.

If you want to start a group, decide which service you prefer (ask friends or colleagues for reviews, if you don't know how to distinguish between them), and then follow the directions on the website (see list below). When you register your group, you'll have to choose whether to make the group public so that anyone with an Internet connection can see the content of the group's discussions, or to keep access limited to invited group members.

CWHA SAYS:

Creating a group is a quick and easy way to start communicating with potential members. Over time you will be able to determine the most effective uses of your group, and to adapt the tone of the group. Also, you control who can become a member.

The following services host groups:

- Google: http://groups.google.com
- Yahoo: http://groups.yahoo.com
- AOL: http://aim.groups.com

Blogs

What are they?

Blogs, also known as web logs, are websites typically maintained by individuals who regularly enter commentary, announcements, reviews, as well as photos, video, and other media. They are often used like a journal, some are more formal, some are less. Some blogs function as serious news sources for readers seeking perspectives outside the mainstream media. You can use Google to find examples of blogs. For example, you can search for "hiv blogs", or "women's rights blogs", or "New York politics blogs" and see what comes up.

Why?

Because they are typically maintained by an individual, blogs have a more personalized feeling than a formal website, even if the blog is associated with an organization. Of course, the disadvantage to the reader is that it may be difficult to establish the credibility of the blog's author, the blogger. A blog can take on all sorts of different identities: a diary, a networking opportunity, a news resource, etc. A blog is easy to create and maintain, and allows the author to regularly post new content without having to spend a lot of time designing or updating a complex website. A blog is an efficient way to update your members, allies, and interested readers when there's news to share. Because of their basic design, readers can easily navigate the content and focus on what interests them.

How?

1. Take a tour to see what a blog is and how it's created at http://www.blogger.com/tour_pub.g.
2. If you decide to create a blog, visit **http://www.blogger.com/start** and follow the instructions. If you have a Google email account this site will provide templates, and let you create a blog for free.
3. Remember that the name you give your blog should be logical (at least to the intended audience) and should be easy to remember.

CWHA says:

We have determined that at the moment we do not have the resources to commit to regular blogging. Though we have decided that in the future we would like to experiment with blogging at an event where there is a fixed window of time in which we can test our blogging capacity.

Social Networking Services

What are they?

A social network service builds online social networks. Members are connected to one another through shared interests, activities, and contacts. Members can invite others to join their network by sending an email message. People around the world now use social networking websites as a regular feature of their interaction with others. A social network is an old concept applied to new technology.

Why?

A social network is another no-cost way for you to increase the visibility of your group, raise awareness of your issue, and to connect with individuals and groups both locally and around the world. Social networks support many types of communication, including chat, messaging, email, blogging, discussion groups, and video. Also, because social network sites have a predetermined format, social networking does not require the technology or the skill needed to create a website.

How?

1. Visit a few social networking sites (see list below) and look at the online profiles to see which one matches your organization's needs.
2. Once you've chosen the site that seems best most appropriate, follow the directions on the site to create a new profile. Begin by putting basic information up on your profile, such as your mission statement or campaign goals, your achievements, member contact information, etc. You can share the link to your profile with others who may be interested in learning more about your work, and passing on your information to others.
3. Take a look at the profiles of organizations and groups which have similar missions to your own, or who are also in the start-up phase of their online work, so you can get ideas for your own profile.

Here are some popular social networking sites:

Social Sites (friends, family)	Professional Networking Sites
MySpace: http://www.myspace.com Facebook: http://www.facebook.com	LinkedIn: http://www.linkedin.com Ryze: http://www.ryze.com
Issue-based Social Networking	
Change: http://www.change.org National Endowment for Democracy: http://www.ned.org	Gather: http://www.gather.org Care 2 Connect: http://www.care2.com

Creating a Website

What are they?

A website is a collection of web pages or documents, available on the Internet. A website is a "space" in which information is shared with all those who "visit" the website. The information can include text, graphics, and other media (e.g. sound, video).

Why?

A website offers an online presence for your work. As more people across the country and throughout the world become Internet users, successful marketing relies more and more on a good website. It's easy to get bogged down when imagining the perfect website, and all the time it would take to create it. But even a

simple site can convey important information, and help with publicity. It can tell people the basics about who you are, your work, and how to contact you.

How?

Creating a website is not as difficult as it might seem. There are lots of software programs that are used for creating websites, and some of these are quite user-friendly. However, if making a website seems beyond your current capacity, you may able to get help from "high-tech" volunteers or nonprofit organizations.

Consider the following at all times when planning your website:

Message: An organization's website should quickly convey the group's purpose and main activities.

Purpose: A good website is *not* all things to all people. You must decide who your target audience is, and what your goals are for the site. Will the website contain substantive information about the issues you work on (e.g. fact sheets)? Will the site provide examples of your advocacy work (e.g. sample press releases and campaign materials)? How much personal information do you want to provide about the individual group members?

Appearance: The organization and design of the text should ensure that the reader doesn't get overwhelmed. There are numerous ways to visually unify and streamline the content of your site. For example, you can use a set number of text columns on every page, and a consistent color scheme throughout.

Location: There are some fairly technical ways to make a website easy to find in a search engine (i.e., Google). One easy way is carefully choosing the web address you give your site; the address should be simple and straightforward. If you are a Louisiana-based organization working to improve the lives of HIV-positive women, a URL (a site address) like http://www.louisianapositivewomen.org is probably a more sensible choice than www.louisianapoz.org, which is not as clear.

Organization: Your site must be organized so that it is easy to get from one place to the next, and to find the information you are looking for.

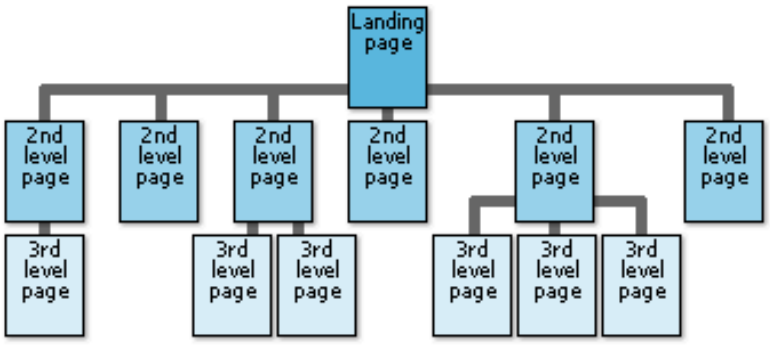
CWHA says:

When planning our website, we knew we wanted our materials to be professional, accurate, useful, and up-to-date, and we wanted the site to look good. We had numerous meetings about the style, organization, and content of our site. We decided to include the following pages on our website: Who We Are, What We've Done, Our Campaign Materials, News Releases, Hot Topics, and Links & Resources. We were extremely fortunate to have a professional web designer make our vision into reality. But even without the help of a professional, a bit of planning and a little creativity go a long way toward making an attractive and informative website. And remember, a website is not fixed in stone; it can always be altered or updated.

Relevance: Stay focused on your issue. If your group focuses on increasing condom use in women's prisons, then make information about that topic available. An article on the increase in HIV infections in India probably has no place on your site, even if it would be of interest to your readers.

Timeliness: One of the most important aspects of a website is that the material be current. Periodically updating your site and the information it contains assures readers that they are getting accurate, up-to-the minute information about both your group and the issues you are working on.

You can plan your site content once you have thought about these questions. A good way to start is by building a tree, similar to a family tree. The point is to break down the content of each page starting with the homepage, or "landing page." See below:[11]



[11] Source: http://www.nerc.ac.uk/images/diagrams/production-website-tree.gif

TECHNOLOGY GLOSSARY:[12]

Browser: Short for Web browser, a software application used to locate and display Web pages.

Cable modem: A modem which operates over cable TV lines, providing high transmission rates.

Cyberspace: The non-physical world created within computer systems. When you're connected to the Internet, for example, you are 'in cyberspace'

Dial-up connection: A widely-used method of connecting to the Internet. A dial-up connection uses regular phone lines to connect one computer to another via modem.

Domain name: A name that identifies an IP address, such as www.hivlawproject.org. Every domain name has a suffix that indicates which top-level domain it belongs to. Top-level domains include com, org, edu, net, gov, mil and the various country domains (such as au for Australian sites).

Download: To copy information from a remote computer to your computer. When you connect to the Web, you're constantly downloading Web pages and files to your computer system.

E-mail: Electronic mail. Messages exchanged between users on a network.

Email address: A unique name that identifies an e-mail recipient. E-mail addresses take the form *username@hostname*.

An example is msmith@hivlawproject.org, which is said as: "*M Smith at HIV Law Project dot org"*. Note that e-mail addresses, unlike URLs (Internet addresses), are not case sensitive.

Home page: The main page of a Web site.

Internet: A global network of computer networks, allowing communication and information exchange.

IP address: Internet Protocol Address. Every resource on the Internet has a unique, registered address.

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[12] This glossary appears with the generous permission of http://www.geekgirls.com/net_Internet_glossary.htm

ISP: Internet Service Provider. ISPs maintain a dedicated communication line to the Internet; users dial in to the ISP, which then connects them to the Internet via a (hopefully) high-speed dedicated communications line.

Listserv: An automated mailing list server.

Mailing list: A list of e-mail addresses grouped together under a single name. Any e-mail sent to the mailing list address is automatically forwarded to all the addresses (the subscribers) on the list. Mailing lists are used to share information between people with common interests.

Mailing list server: A server that manages mailing lists for groups of users.

Modem: A modem is used to transmit digital data across phone lines.

Network: Two or more computer systems linked together.

Newsgroup: An online discussion group on a particular topic.

Online: Connected to a computer communications system.

Search engine: A program that searches pages on the Internet for specified keywords and returns a list of the documents containing the keywords.

Surf: To move from place to place on the Internet, usually using a Web browser.

Upload: To send information from your computer to a remote computer.

Web page: A document on the World Wide Web.

Web server: A computer that stores Web pages and delivers them to Web browsers on request.

Web site: A location on the World Wide Web, consisting of at least one page (the home page) and possibly many pages.

World Wide Web: A collection of online documents stored on Internet servers around the globe. The documents are written in a language called HTML that supports links to other documents. Users can view the documents using a Web browser, and can jump from document to document by clicking on the links contained in the documents. The Web is only a part of the Internet – some Internet servers perform functions other than being Web servers. For example, mail servers store and handle e-mail; news servers store and handle newsgroups.

RESOURCES

Get the STUFF you need:

Business Cards

You can get free or low cost business cards through a variety of Internet-based vendors. A Google search for "free business cards" will reveal numerous options.

Get the TOOLS you need:

Free Conference Call Services

Free conference calls can be arranged at www.freeconferencecall.com.

Free Internet-Based Fax Services

If you have Internet access, but no fax machine, there are a variety of websites that offer free fax numbers. A Google search for "online fax" will provide options.

Free Online Document Sharing

Google Documents allows multiple people to access and edit shared documents. It also offers free software for creating documents.

Get the INFORMATION you need:

Legislative Advocacy

Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest has numerous useful resources about advocacy and lobbying, including useful handouts on finding and using data, working in coalition, and knowing the legislative process and players.
http://www.clpi.org/nuts-a-bolts

Dose of Change is an interactive forum, developed by the AIDS Foundation of Chicago, that provides a space for anyone to find or share information on the craft of AIDS advocacy.
http://www.aidsconnect.net/dose

Media & Communications Work

Colorado Nonprofit Association has published, "Working with the Media Nonprofit Toolkit", an in-depth guide to working effectively with the media.
http://www.coloradononprofits.org/media%20toolkit.pdf

The SPIN Project offers advice, tutorials, and other resources for effective media advocacy. http://spinproject.org/

Proposal Writing and Budgeting

The Foundation Center offers extensive information about grant writing and non-profit management. http://foundationcenter.org/

The Foundation Center's online budgeting tutorial offers help with the basics of creating a budget.
http://foundationcenter.org/getstarted/tutorials/prop_budgt/pbb_descrip.html

Non-Profit Guides offers free Web-based grant-writing tools for non-profit organizations and other community-minded groups.
http://npguides.org/index.html

A sample budget can be found at: http://npguides.org/guide/budget.htm

Organizing, Membership & Recruitment
"The Citizen's Handbook" is a great resource: http://www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook

The November Coalition provides helpful information for organizers at:
http://novembercoalition.org/BottomsUp/index.html

Virginia Organizing offers lots of interesting articles for organizers at:
http://www.virginia-organizing.org/content/organizing-toolbox

501(c)(3) Regulations
For more information about the limitations on lobbying that govern 501(c)(3) organizations, see:

http://stayexempt.org/ (A new website by the IRS for 501(c)(3)s.)

http://www.ombwatch.org/article/articleview/599/1/49?TopicID=1

http://www.afj.org/for-nonprofits-foundations/about-advocacy/lobbying.html

http://www.coloradononprofits.org/lobbying%20toolkit.pdf