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ADVOCACY 2017 Newsletter FLORIDA SUICIDE PREVENTION COALITION

*A statewide, grassroots organization
of survivors, crisis centers, & interested citizens*

A SPECIAL NEWSLETTER !

This special edition of our FSPC newsletter is focused on advocacy for suicide prevention at local, state, and national levels. It is designed to help remind, instruct, and motivate us to be more effective advocates for important issues such as mental wellness and suicide prevention.

FSPC NEWSLETTER SIGN-UP

Don't miss the latest updates. FSPC encourages you to sign up with your email address to receive an email announcement directly to your inbox when each Newsletter is posted on the FSPC website. Email Steve Roggenbaum, Vice Chair, to register at roggenba@usf.edu

ADVOCACY FOR THE REST OF US: FLORIDA SUICIDE PREVENTION

Judy Broward, FSPC Chair &
Stephen Roggenbaum, FSPC Vice Chair

Advocacy is an important part of what Florida Suicide Prevention Coalition (FSPC) does to try to reduce suicide in Florida. Over the past years, FSPC and its members have advocated for a number of issues and related bills. For example, FSPC worked to encourage passage of an anti-bullying bill, passage of a bill creating the Statewide Office of Suicide Prevention and the Suicide Prevention Coordinating Council, and passage of an education bill offering suicide prevention training courses for educators on a voluntary basis. These advocacy outcomes were the result of collaboration and efforts with legislative contacts and numerous other agencies, organizations, and citizens.



It is heartbreaking to hear about the number of suicides that continue to occur. Advocacy is an ongoing process and previously passed legislation is not enough. In order to be successful we need *your* help in your local legislative area and/or in Tallahassee. The 2018 legislature will meet from January through March. The annual FSPC Suicide Prevention Awareness Day at the Capital is Wednesday, February 21, 2018. Plan now to

attend and join others in supporting suicide prevention.

TIP: Advance research and planning is essential to effective lobbying [and advocacy]. Before you begin your advocacy, be sure you are able to: Define your issue clearly. Can you state the issue in three sentences or less? If not, practice until you can. State the problem as well as the solution. For example, does the solution require a budget appropriation or a change in a current statute? (Florida Council for Community Mental Health's Legislative Advocacy: A Brief Guide)

We can all help!

Start now. Your local legislator is currently preparing for his/her upcoming legislative session. The summer is a good time to make an appointment with your legislator to establish a relationship, share your personal story of loss if you have one, discuss community and state efforts to reduce suicide, and make your request (e.g., support, co-sponsor). Try NOT to wait until next year's legislative session to meet your legislator for the first time. Legislators should be happy to meet with you because you are a voter.

TIP: When you call for an appointment with your legislator, clearly identify who you are and what organization you represent. Briefly explain the issue you wish to discuss with the legislator. Indicate if others will be coming with you. (Florida Council for Community Mental Health's Legislative Advocacy: A Brief Guide)

Who should I talk to? aka Who is my representative and/or senator?

You can find your Florida House of Representative here:

<http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Representatives/myrepresentative.aspx>

You can find your Florida Senator at:

<http://www.flsenate.gov/Senators/Find>

What else can I do?

Besides a visit with your representative, you can use a variety of other communication methods. You might choose to telephone, write, e-mail, or fax.

TIP: Never underestimate the power of the written word in gaining legislators' attention. Your legislators do want and need to hear from you. One well-written and persuasive letter will stand out from the stacks that arrive at the legislator's desk each day. (Florida Council for Community Mental Health's Legislative Advocacy: A Brief Guide)

Can I meet with more than one Legislator?

Each county has a meeting before the legislative session begins where all the legislators (the area legislative delegation of representatives and senators) listen to requests from local government, schools, and individual citizens. This is also a great place to present to your local

legislators about suicide prevention. When the schedule becomes available, we will help publicize meeting dates and locations. Find the 2017 Local Legislative Delegations list at: http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Handlers/LeagisDocumentRetriever.ashx?Leaf=HouseContent/Lists/FP_Reference%20Materials/Attachments/17/LocalLegislativeDelegations.pdf&Area=House

TIP: Attend legislative delegation meetings. Try to get on the agenda to educate legislators about issues of concern to your organization and the benefits that your services bring to the community. (Florida Council for Community Mental Health's Legislative Advocacy: A Brief Guide)

Once the legislative session begins, legislators become extremely busy. However, they and their staffs continue to meet with constituents in Tallahassee. Below are some additional guidelines from our lobbyist that can help when meeting in Tallahassee or your local community. Assume you only have about three (3) minutes with each staff or legislator. Make one main point and ask for his/her help. Remember that in Tallahassee (during legislative session), legislators are seeing people throughout the day that are addressing multiple topics. Frame your message by giving them a summary of what you want and what you hope they will do to help. If you're in a group, it is usually best to let one person take the lead and others help answer questions.

TIP: Remember to thank legislators regularly and publicly for their work, their support, and their votes. Few people remember to thank their legislators and they clearly remember those who do. (Florida Council for Community Mental Health's Legislative Advocacy: A Brief Guide)

What should I ask for?

You can make requests regarding issues for which you are passionate. For the 2018 Florida legislative session, the FSPC has identified an area we think can be strengthened to help reduce youth suicide: required K-12 educator training. Optional suicide prevention training for instructional staff is a nice start. FSPC plans to work with the Jason Foundation to require that teachers take their free two-hour online suicide prevention course for educators. If you agree, you could request support for the bill (once a bill is introduced and a bill number is assigned) or ask that your legislator become a co-sponsor.

NEW RESOURCE RELEASED: HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE SPOKESPERSON

How to Be an Effective Spokesperson prepares public health professionals to deliver messaging about their activities in communities. The web-based training course covers the role of the spokesperson and crafting messages for media opportunities. Participants will learn about current audience research and message testing. Opportunities to practice with new information and put knowledge into context are a core part of the course. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) developed and hosts the training.

Course Objectives

At the completion of the self-study training, learners will be able to:

- Name the four principles (the Four Be's) to be an effective spokesperson.
- Identify best practices for delivering key messages
- List ways to transition a response back to the main message.
- List key appearance considerations when performing an interview
- Identify the use of effective language from a list of examples
- List, in order, the seven steps to prepare for a media interview

Target Audience

Any community-level public health professional who may need to interact with media in the execution of his or her job duties

https://cdc.train.org/DesktopModules/eLearning/CourseDetails/CourseDetailsForm.aspx?tabid=62&courseid=1058892&utm_source=ActiveCampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_content=CMHNetwork+Friday+Update+2-3-17&utm_campaign=CMHNetwork+Friday+Update+2-3-17

WANT TO MOVE CONGRESS? FOCUS ON STORYTELLING.

Published on November 15, 2016

Featured in: [Social Impact](#), [US Politics](#)



By Rachna Choudhry
Co-founder. Advocacy + Grassroots Strategist. Speaker.

You know Congress is back from recess when your friends start sending you articles about advocacy! Yesterday, several friends shared with me an article with former Congressional staffer Emily Ellsworth's tips on How to Make Your Congressman Listen to You. She had some excellent suggestions. Tweeting or writing on Facebook is largely ineffective. Taking the time to make a phone call is great. And make sure you show up to town hall meetings.

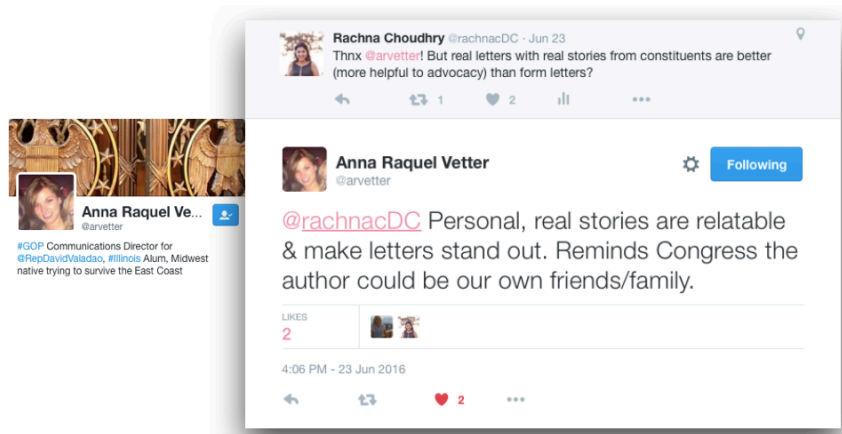
Real stories matter to Congress.

What struck me about Emily's tips was that they all involved a constituent sharing a personal story with their Member of Congress. Whether it is on the phone, via letter or in person, it's about communicating your expertise and story in a way that the Congressional staffer listens to you.

Former New Mexico Congresswoman Heather Wilson also chimed in:

Want to do advocacy? Focus on storytelling.

Sometimes constituents believe that letters to Congress must be filled with facts and figures and wonky words to "sound official." While statistics are always welcome—especially if specific to the Member of Congress's district or state—**the most effective constituent letters share personal stories and experiences.** A House Communications Director explained it to me on Twitter:



There's also science behind it!

It is far better to appeal to the heart than to the head, explains Wharton marketing professor [Deborah Small](#), who studied how to increase charitable donations. She divided her subjects in two groups: one group saw a bunch of statistics about food shortages in Africa, and the other group got a personal story about Rokia, a seven-year-old girl who lives in Mali in Africa.

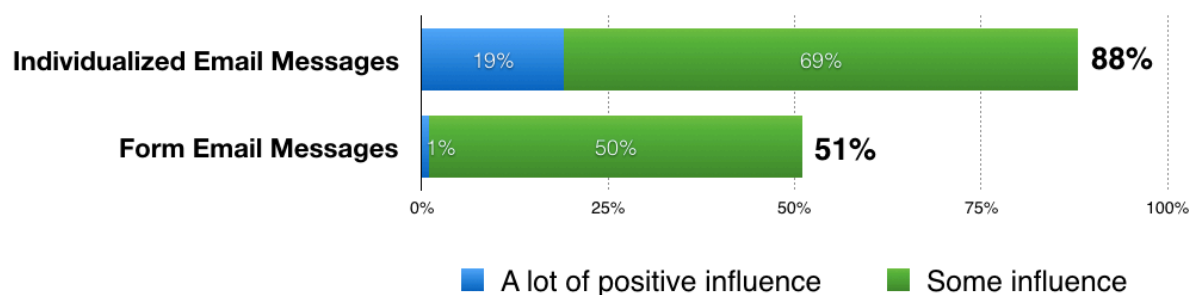
Guess which approach worked? The group who heard Rokia's story wanted to contribute 1.66 times more money than the group that heard the statistics. This example can easily be extended to advocacy.

Working with a group or association? Facilitate storytelling.

Many organizations and associations help facilitate advocacy. We've all gotten emails from organizations we care about asking us to take action. Often, these requests involve a petition or a form letter to keep things simple and easy. However, this isn't helping advocacy—it's only adding to the workload of already harried Congressional staffers.

Savvy advocacy organizations encourage their supporters to share their stories in their own words, rather than rely on form letters.

Only *one percent* of Congressional staffers said that form email messages have "a lot of positive influence." By comparison, 19% of staffers said that a personalized email message had "a lot of positive influence," according to the [Congressional Management Foundation](#).



Organizations and associations have a huge opportunity to facilitate storytelling. They can ask their members or supporters about how the issue affects their lives or their communities.

A few months back, I heard advocacy expert [Tiffany Kaszuba](#) talk about a campaign she worked on called Cuts Hurt (#cutshurt), urging Congress to reconsider cuts to federal health funding. Budget issues, especially sequestration, are very wonky, so they made the campaign about storytelling: seniors going hungry due to the cuts; women being denied health care; and children not getting important screenings. ([Full conversation.](#)) *These stories transformed the campaign from being about the federal budget into a conversation about real people and their lives.*

Now more than ever, storytelling has a critical role in advocacy. To many people, Washington, DC is a very loud circus and people aren't hearing others' points of view. Storytelling is a powerful way for us to be heard by our lawmakers, and for us all to understand where each

other is coming from, and possibly even empathize. Whether you decide to engage via communications tools like [POPVOX](#) or during in-person meetings, phone calls or town halls—it's important to tell your story and urge your networks to join you!

https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/want-move-congress-focus-storytelling-rachna-choudhry?utm_source=ActiveCampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_content=CMHNetwork+Friday+Update+2-17-17&utm_campaign=CMHNetwork+Friday+Update+2-17-17

THE ANATOMY OF A GOOD LETTER TO CONGRESS

Published on January 9, 2017

By Rachna Choudhry, Co-founder. Advocacy + Grassroots Strategist. Speaker.

People frequently ask me: *How should my letter to Congress read? Should it be long or short, use legal terms, or speak from the heart?* To answer these questions, I went to an expert, Anna Vetter, Deputy Chief of Staff and Communications Director for Congressman David G. Valadao (CA-21).

I was first introduced to Anna when she spoke at a conference about the power of constituent communications, and we exchanged Tweets that later inspired me to write a post on using storytelling to move Congress. We met for coffee one afternoon on Capitol Hill, and I asked her, “how can constituents ensure that their letter makes a difference?”

It's the constituent's sincerity that gets a letter noticed, she explained.

As a constituent, if you're trying to get your Members of Congress to pay attention to an issue, all you need to convey is why it's important to you, and do so in an authentic way. Her answer was so elegant in its simplicity.

The Honorable (full name) (Room #) (Name) Senate Office Building United States Senate Washington, DC 20510
Dear Senator/Representative [NAME]:
My name is (your name) and I live in district (your district). I am writing to express my concerns about (topic of your choice).
In the body of your letter, write your concerns by topic. Keep each letter specific to one topic. Be factual not emotional. Provide specific rather than general information about how the topic affects you and others. If a certain bill is involved, cite the correct title or number whenever possible.
Close your letter by requesting the action you want taken: a vote for or against a bill, or change in general policy. Ask for what you want to happen.
Respectfully,
(Your Name) (Your Address)

The average Congressional office receives thousands of letters from constituents a week. Most of these are “form letters”, sent at the prompting of an organization or association with identical text. In some offices, form letters get automatically grouped together as one letter. And, some Congressional offices don't respond to form letters at all.

The assumption in recent years has been that quantity trumps quality when messaging Congress. Instead, the form letters and social media blitzes via Facebook and Twitter are just creating more noise and less signal. These communications may be

convenient and easy to do, but they aren't effective in getting the attention of Congress.

Rather, the number of communications don't have to be high, but they must be sincere.

In fact, Anna explained, if a single constituent contacted her office about a bill, it will get discussed in their next meeting. So once you've written a letter, ask your friends and networks who feel as passionate about the issue to do the same.

How Do You Write a Sincere Letter that Gets Noticed?

- **Research the Member of Congress and research the District.** For example, if you're writing a letter about breast cancer research, you may want to know if the Member or their family has experience with cancer. Or, if you're concerned about an agriculture bill, you may want to check if the District has a high number of farms. This research may help bolster your point of view.
- **Shorter is better.** You don't have to write a long letter. One or two paragraphs is fine. Congressional staffers have a lot of mail to read, and if they want to know more, they can contact you.
- **Don't get intimidated!** Congressional staffers genuinely want to hear from constituents, and they aren't necessarily lawyers. So there's no need for fancy "legalize" or to comb through a thesaurus for the perfect word! (In fact, the average age of a DC-based House staffer is 31, according to the Sunlight Foundation.)
- **Include how it affects you or others from the District.** If you're writing about a disease, include, for example, information about the 10,000 other people in the District have the disease as well, or that 50 other workers will be hurt by an economic issue in your town.
- **Share your point of view.** Spend a few sentences explaining how the issue affects your life, family, community or workplace. Why is this so important to you? You don't need to inform the staffer on the technical legislative aspects of the bill. They can research it themselves (and probably have already).
- **Include a specific ask.** What do you want Congress to do about the issue? Include a sentence that conveys an action item, such as holding a hearing on an issue, voting for or cosponsoring a bill (and include a bill number), or increasing funding for a program.
- **If there isn't a bill that addresses your issue, then suggest one!** Members of Congress are open to introducing legislation that will improve the lives of their constituents. If you see a problem that can be fixed by Congress, then bring it to the staffer's attention. For example, in September 2016, the House passed a bill that would prevent the federal government from mailing letters to people that included their Social Security numbers on the outside of envelopes and postcards where anyone can see them. Congressman Valadao introduced the bill, H.R. 3779, the *Social Security Fraud Prevention Act of 2016*, when one of his constituents explained to him at a Community Coffee Event he regularly hosts that her Social Security number could be seen in a letter she received from a federal agency.
- **Don't guilt the staffer or be condescending.** Congressional staffers are there to help constituents—and they understand that your issue is very important to you. There's no need to say, "how would you feel if your kid/mom/grandma got stricken with ____." It only takes one person to convince a lawmaker to sign on to a bill and kindness always goes far when trying to accomplish this.

TIPS FOR WRITING A GOOD LETTER TO CONGRESS

- Be sincere.
- Shortest is best -- one to two paragraphs max.
- Mention specific legislation.
- Share your point of view -- a story, observation, or experience about life in the district or state.
- End with a specific ask.

POP VOX READY TO GET STARTED? HEAD TO POPVOX.COM.
AND SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS WITH YOUR LAWMAKERS!

It was already dark as we finished our coffee, and while we walked back to the Rayburn House Office Building—Anna still had work to do—she mentioned that **Members and staffers want to build relationships with their constituents.** (That's why they host coffees or town halls in

the towns and cities they represent.) As a constituent, it's important to stay in touch with your lawmaker after writing a letter about an issue. You can follow up with the office with a phone call or by attending a town hall meeting—and if your Member of Congress ends up cosponsoring a bill, then thank them!

Anna summed it up simply by saying, as a constituent, “your voice counts every day of the year.”

So speak up and share your voice!

Whether you decide to engage via communications tools like POPVOX, a nonpartisan platform that helps you track and weigh in about what's happening in Congress, or during in-person meetings, phone calls or town halls—it's important to speak up year-round and urge your networks to join you!

https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/anatomy-good-letter-congress-rachna-choudhry?utm_source=ActiveCampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_content=CMHNetwork+Friday+Update+2-17-17&utm_campaign=CMHNetwork+Friday+Update+2-17-17

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY: A BRIEF GUIDE

Prepared by the Florida Council for Community Mental Health

Get to Know Your Legislators

A key to successful advocacy is knowing your legislators and establishing a relationship with them. Doing your homework before contacting an elected official will help you craft your advocacy strategy and avoid political pitfalls. As a first step, be sure you know the following about the legislators you plan to contact:

- Their political party
- The legislative committees on which they serve
- Any leadership positions they hold in the Legislature
- Their voting records on the issues that concern you
- Personal facts, such as their profession, education, organizational affiliations and civic work in the community.



In small communities, if you do not know your state representatives, you probably know someone who does. These people may be able to offer helpful insights into legislators' areas of interest and how to best present your issue. Your legislators are also your neighbors. You may share many of the same interests and concerns, so make a strong effort to build on the common ground you both hold.

Here are some tips for building a relationship with your legislators:

- Introduce yourself to candidates and legislators at public events, such as campaign appearances and the legislative delegation meetings held each year to gain citizens' input. Give the legislator your name and contact information and let the legislator know your areas of interest and expertise.
- Start making your legislative contacts at the local level. Arrange a meeting at your legislators' local offices well in advance of the legislative session.

- Invite your elected officials to take a tour of your facility. Keep the tour brief but informative.
- Ask the legislator to address your board of directors or a group of local provider agency representatives.
- Stay in touch. One way of doing this is to send items of interest, such as a newspaper clipping of a successful program, the announcement of your organization's accreditation or a summary of a national study on the effectiveness of treatment.
- Develop a relationship with the legislator's professional staff members, especially the aide who will have the lead on your issues.
- Legislative staff members face an incredible amount of issues that they are obliged to understand. They always appreciate people who are credible resources and who can respond to requests for help in a timely manner.
- Attend legislative delegation meetings. Try to get on the agenda to educate legislators about issues of concern to your organization and the benefits that your services bring to the community.
- Offer your assistance in helping answer requests for information or complaints they have received involving mental health and substance use services.
- Develop success stories that demonstrate the good work of your organization. If a particular program or service was made possible because of a certain law and/or funding from the Legislature, include this information.

Do the Research

Advance research and planning is essential to effective lobbying. Before you begin your advocacy, be sure you are able to:

- Define your issue clearly. Can you state the issue in three sentences or less? If not, practice until you can.
- State the problem as well as the solution. For example, does the solution require a budget appropriation or a change in a current statute? Knowing this up front may determine whom you contact for support and what approach you take.
- Determine what existing statutes, rules and agency policies are relevant to your issue.
- If yours is a funding issue, be sure of your cost projections and be prepared to justify them.
- Know all sides of your issue and be able to discuss how it affects your organization, your colleagues, and your community.
- Know who your opponents are. You may be asked, and knowing who may be opposed to the issue will also enable you to be better prepared in presenting your issue.
- Identify other organizations in your area or at the state level that share your concerns and invite their participation in your advocacy efforts.
- Invite and encourage individuals served by your organization and key supporters from the community to participate in your public policy work. Their perspectives can strengthen your position.
- Alert these people when an important issue surfaces and provide them brief details.



Getting Your Message Across

Here are some useful tips for delivering your message to legislators:

- Put a human face on your proposal. Facts and figures alone will seldom convince a legislator to support an issue. Translating those facts and figures into human terms is critical to successful advocacy.
- Explain the impact of your proposal. How will what you're asking for affect the people you serve? How many people will benefit? Will your ability to deliver services improve? Will there be related savings down the line? What will happen if the action you're proposing isn't taken?
- Give a "real life" example and, if possible, have that person available to talk to your legislators, preferably during the initial lobbying visit.
- Talk in layman's terms. Avoid acronyms, abbreviations and professional "buzz words."
- Be brief and to the point. Legislators have a host of issues to juggle and many constituents to heed. Focus on a single issue when you contact your legislator.

The Lobbying Visit

Your concerns, expressed simply and sincerely, can be very persuasive. If you know what the issue is and have prepared for your meeting, you'll have a distinct advantage.



You can make a lobby visit individually or with a group. A group can demonstrate the breadth of support for your position, but it should be kept small. For example, you might arrange for a treatment provider, a consumer, and an independent advocate—such as a local official or a mental health advocacy organization representative—to attend.

When you call for an appointment with your legislator, clearly identify who you are and what organization you represent. Briefly explain the issue you wish to discuss with the legislator. Indicate if others will be coming with you.

Don't try to lobby the person who answers the phone. Ask for an appointment with the legislator. If that's not possible, ask to meet with a legislative assistant.

Try to see the legislator in his/her district office prior to the legislative session. If your visit will take place at the Capitol, call or write for an appointment as soon as you know when you are going to be in Tallahassee. And be prepared for your Capitol meeting to be a brief one, possibly preceded by a lengthy wait for the legislator.

At the meeting:

- Stay focused. You will be more effective if you keep to the point and discuss only one issue.
- If you are making a team visit, meet with your team members prior to the meeting to discuss what information each will provide.
- Be professional and factual in your approach. Don't be argumentative. Leave your emotions parked in your car.
- Never provide a legislator with inaccurate information. If you are asked a question you can't answer, tell the legislator you will follow up with the needed information. Then be sure to do so.
- Listen closely to what your legislator/legislative aide says, especially for hints your issue isn't being understood so that you can clarify it before leaving.

- Take notes on any questions asked or follow up needed. Note the legislator/aides' responses, questions or comments.
- Ask your legislator if he or she will support your issue. State your question clearly, so that there's less ambiguity in the answer you receive. Don't say, "What do you think of our proposal?" Instead ask, "Will you introduce a bill on our behalf" or "Will you vote for this funding issue?"
- If the answer is "No," don't be offended. Thank the legislator for spending time with you. Even if you're turned down, the legislator may look favorably on your next issue.
- Follow up with a letter thanking the legislator for the meeting. Use the letter as an opportunity to reinforce your message and, if appropriate, thank the legislator for his or her commitment of support.

Remember to Say Thanks

Remember to thank legislators regularly and publicly for their work, their support, and their votes. Few people remember to thank their legislators and they clearly remember those who do.

In addition to a thank you letter after a critical committee vote or when a bill has passed, find other ways to express your thanks. Recognition at meetings, presentation of certificates or plaques or a letter to the editor praising the responsiveness of legislators to local needs can be effective public ways of saying thanks to your representatives

Communications Checklist

Never underestimate the power of the written word in gaining legislators' attention. Your legislators do want and need to hear from you. One well-written and persuasive letter will stand out from the stacks that arrive at the legislator's desk each day.

Here are some guidelines for effective communications with your legislators:

- Think brevity. Limit your letter or e-mail message to no more than one page.
- Be sure you spell your legislator's name correctly. Check the phonebook or a legislative directory if you are uncertain.
- Identify yourself as writing on behalf of your organization or your community.
- Identify the issue or problem in the first sentence of the letter, and state your position. Example: "I am writing to ask that you support (name of bill or other measure). I believe this proposal will result in better services for people with mental illness and substance use disorders."
- If you are writing in support of—or opposition to—a particular bill, include the bill number and its title. If you have Internet access, you can get the bill number, a copy of the bill, and its status via the Internet at www.myfloridahouse.gov or www.flsenate.gov.
- Explain how the bill will affect you, your family, your business or community.
- Support your position with a few key facts. Check any facts or figures first to be sure they are accurate.
- Limit your communication to one topic. If there is another issue of concern to you, write another letter or e-mail
- Keep your sentences short and to the point. Translate bureaucratic or clinical terms into



everyday language. Avoid acronyms or abbreviations.

- Ask the legislator for a reply to the letter to help ensure it will be read and noted. Example: "Thank you for taking the time to consider my concerns. I would very much appreciate a reply indicating whether you can support this proposal."
- Sign your letter and type or print your name under it. Include your name, physical address and email address, and telephone number.
- Handwritten letters are okay. In fact, some experts say that in this day of emails and computer-generated messages, a handwritten letter may get more attention. But, please, write legibly.
- An email may be appropriate for simpler issues or providing legislators with information for their knowledge.
- Write a personalized letter to each legislator. Don't send copies of a letter addressed to one legislator to another member. Even if you repeat the body of the letter, address each letter individually.
- Be sure to tailor the letter to your organization, including local information and making it as personal as possible.
- Remember that e-mails pile up as the legislative session progresses. A personal letter will generally have more impact. If time is of the essence, send your letter by overnight mail. The extra expense may get your letter more attention.
- Address letters to members of the House of Representatives as follows: The Honorable John Doe, Florida House of Representatives, The Capitol, Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300.
- Letters to senators should be addressed: Senator Jane Smith, The Capitol, Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100.

When Lobbying Doesn't Work

The old adage of "try, try again" is a good lobbyist's rule of thumb.



Some longtime Florida lobbyists believe that it takes three years to get a bill passed or amended—unless the issue is one that has captured great public interest and demands immediate attention.

Don't write off a legislator who fails to support or voted against your interests. The legislator who voted down one bill may be your best ally on the next issue.

Political writer David Yepsen had this advice for citizen lobbyists: *"Stick with it. Stick with it. Some issue come up year after year. It is a fact of life in public policy-making that some things just take time. Consistent participation ... year after year, is essential to long-term success in the Legislature."*

Staying Informed

Here are ways you can learn about issues:

- Read your local newspaper, listen to local radio news shows, and watch your local television news.
- Watch "Today in the Legislature" on your public television station.
- Monitor legislative committee meetings and floor action via the Internet. Check the House and Senate websites for a schedule of webcasts.

Go to the source. The websites of the Florida House of Representatives and the Florida Senate contain timely and easily accessible information.

You can obtain copies of bills and track their progress, view and download legislative calendars, obtain committee agendas and meeting packets and get information about legislators and the committees on which they serve.

The legislative website addresses are:

Florida House: www.myfloridahouse.org

Florida Senate: www.flsenate.gov

ADVOCACY THROUGH AWARENESS

A few news articles highlighting Examples of How Individuals Advocate for Veteran Suicide Prevention by Raising Awareness:

Veteran Kayaking East Coast To Raise Money To Prevent Suicide . . .

CBS Boston / WBZ- Jun 7, 2017

<http://boston.cbslocal.com/2017/06/07/veteran-kayak-maine-to-florida-suicide/>

Joseph Mullin is a disabled vet who suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder but that's not stopping him from kayaking from Maine to Key West, Florida.

News-Herald.com

Veteran rides wheel chair 422 miles to raise suicide awareness

News-Herald.com- Jun 5, 2017

<http://www.news-herald.com/general-news/20170605/veteran-rides-wheel-chair-422-miles-to-raise-suicide-awareness>

Veteran rides wheel chair 422 miles to raise suicide awareness. Army Sgt. Joshua Geartz receives a police escort along Wilson Mills Road in Chester Township during his 422-mile journey from Indiana to New York to raise awareness of veteran suicide.

Wagner to swim to raise awareness of veteran suicides

June 2, 2017

Daily Press - Fain can be reached at tfain@dailypress.com or 757-525-1759. Ress can be reached at dress@dailypress.com or 757-247-4535. Read the Shad Plank blog at www.shadplank.com.

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/politics/dp-nws-shad-plank-0603-20170602-story.html>

State Sen. Frank Wagner, a former Navy diver and current GOP candidate for governor (Virginia), plans to swim part of the Potomac River Saturday morning. He'll join Bobby Powell, another Navy veteran and a former search and rescue swimmer, who plans to swim over the next 15 days from the Pentagon to Norfolk, the Wagner campaign said. Powell is swimming to raise awareness of veteran suicides.

WHAT'S HAPPENING



Summer & Fall, 2017. County Legislative Delegation meetings.

September 10, 2017. World Suicide Prevention Day.

September 10 – 16: National Suicide Prevention Week.

February 21, 2018 (Wednesday). *Suicide Prevention Day at the Capitol*. This advocacy event is in Tallahassee.

SAVE THE DATE: February 19 & 20, 2018 (Monday & Tuesday). *FSPC 2018 Third Annual Florida Taking Action for Suicide Prevention Mini-Conference*. A two-half day mini-conference in Tallahassee.

RESOURCES



If you or someone you know is in crisis, please call **1-800-273- 8255** (*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline*)

Crisis Text Line – text “start” to **741-741**

Veteran’s Crisis Line **1-800-273- 8255**, press 1 &
<https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>

Resources for Survivors of Suicide Loss. SAVE. Suicide Awareness Voices for Education maintains a resource list at: <http://suicidgrief.save.org/ResourceLibrary>

Suicide Loss Survivors. The American Association of Suicidology (AAS) hosts a webpage with listed resources for survivors of suicide loss at <http://www.suicidology.org/suicide-survivors/suicide-loss-survivors>

ADVOCACY RESOURCES

SOLUTIONS NEXT EXIT

Advocacy 101: Tips for Writing a Great Letter to Congress

<https://blog.popvox.com/2017/02/06/advocacy-101-tips-writing-great-letter-congress/>

2017 Local Legislative Delegations list (by Florida County) at:

http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Handlers/LeagisDocumentRetriever.ashx?Leaf=HouseContent/Lists/FP_Reference%20Materials/Attachments/17/LocalLegislativeDelegations.pdf&Area=House

Florida House of Representatives: Effective Communication with Your Representative:

http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/contentViewer.aspx?Category=PublicGuide&File=About_The_Representatives_Effective_Communication_With_Your_Representative.html

Florida Senate: Effective Communication with a Legislator:

<https://www.flsenate.gov/About/EffectiveCommunication>

National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention: Framework for Successful Messaging:

<http://suicidepreventionmessaging.org/>

Becoming an Advocate, John Madigan, Senior Director of Public Policy, American Foundation of Suicide Prevention http://www.suicidefindinghope.com/content/becoming_an_advocate

Advocacy Resources for Suicide Prevention (NEA: National Education Association):

<http://healthyfutures.nea.org/get-informed/mental-health/advocacy-resources-for-suicide-prevention/>

The Family Café Advocacy Toolkit: <https://familycafe.net/the-family-cafe-advocacy-toolkit>

Colorado: A Handbook for Community Advocacy (Suicide Prevention Coalition of Colorado and Colorado Office of Suicide Prevention):

http://www.suicidepreventioncolorado.org/resources/Documents/SPCC_advocacy_handbook_final.pdf

Florida Recreation and Park Association Legislative Handbook (a comprehensive background on Florida and National legislative processes with terrific general tips):

<https://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/FRPA/450d2186-a770-4d1a-a12d-66a0ab8b61a5/UploadedImages/Linked%20Files/Advocacy/Handbook.pdf>

FSPC MEMBERSHIP

New FSPC Membership or Renewal information available online at:

<http://www.floridasuicideprevention.org/membership.htm>