

Intelligence Gathering:
**A crucial prerequisite to building effective advocacy campaigns in support of
Community Health Centers and the people and families they serve.**

The following is a list of recommended information that should be gathered **prior** to planning an effective public policy advocacy campaign. Remember, your primary goal in such a campaign, as a local Partner, will be to influence the decision(s) of those elected policymakers who represent the district in which your CHC is located.

A. Political Assessment

1. Know your legislator's position on the issue(s).
 - ⇒ check his/her past votes on the issue or related issues
 - ⇒ check whether he/she has sponsored or co-sponsored legislation for or against this issue.
 - ⇒ learn what the legislator has said publicly about the issue (i.e. in the media, speeches, correspondence to constituents)
 - ⇒ learn from others - legislators or friends of the legislator - if his/her views are known about the issue.
 - ⇒ ask the legislator or his/her staff.
2. Know the legislator's political party.
3. Know the margin of votes he/she won by in last election and if the district is considered "marginal" by the leader of his/her house. (And, therefore, may be more likely to get his/her requests approved by the leader in order to hold onto the seat).
4. Know whether the district has mostly Democrats or Republicans, and if there is a sizable number of Independents or a minority party. (i.e. Conservative, Liberal, RTL).
5. Know if the legislator has a leadership position, such as committee chair and what committees he/she is on.
6. See the contributor's list to identify anyone who you know that may be supportive of your issue and willing to contact the legislator on your behalf.

B. District Profile

1. Is it rural, urban, suburban, upstate, and/or downstate?
2. What are predominate ethnic, racial, religious groups?
3. What are the major industries, colleges or universities, and other businesses?
4. Do any of these have organized unions with positions on your issues, or related issues?
5. Are there active student organizations in the colleges or universities?
6. Have any public opinion polls on the issues on your agenda, or related issues, been conducted in the district or the region in which the district is located? Or, any national polls on the subject that could support your position?
7. What are the active nonprofits in the district that may have your issue(s) on their agenda or are likely to support your agenda? (i.e. LWV, NASW, Public Health

Assoc., Child Health groups, Y's, Lung Assoc., Nurses Assoc., School Guidance Counselors, PTA, Cancer Society, Juvenile Diabetes Assoc., etc.)

C. Assessment of the Problem and Potential Solutions

1. Get constituent input through local organizations and provider groups (i.e. clinics, parents groups, consumer groups). Use mail or phone surveys, polls, focus groups, local meetings or forums. Keep in mind that polls may be skewed due to high % of non-responses. Therefore, use multiple sources for gathering input from constituents. If you know that an Assemblymember or Senator representing the district is conducting his/her own survey that includes questions on your issues, alert your constituents in the district to respond.
2. Collect real case examples (not using real names).
3. Collect data on relevant rates of morbidity and mortality, and prominent diseases/conditions leading to costly hospitalizations affecting your county.
4. Know the impediments to accessing needed services, whether health care, social services, etc. (i.e. lack of health insurance, transportation, conveniently located service sites)
5. Know current and proposed public funding levels in the state budget for CHCs, and if there have been any cuts.
6. Know the impact of proposed cuts.
7. Know the number and location of all CHCs in your county.

D. Assess your strengths and weaknesses (Develop a strategy that maximize your strengths and minimizes your weaknesses)

1. Is the issue consistent with widespread values? Do public opinion polls show support for the issue? Is your perspective supported by science and/or law? Is your issue one that can be broadened to draw in wider support?(i.e. use promotion of civil rights or human rights instead of the rights of a particular group, such as women or gays)
2. Does your organization have contact with the *political* actors who can help “fix” the problem? (i.e. Chair of an important legislative committee, a Party leader, a key contributor to the Party)
3. Are there members of powerful organizations, in the district who could help lobby on the issue? (i.e. Unions including 1199, DC 37, NYSUT, UFT that contribute heavily to election campaigns, as well as the State Hospital Assoc, the State HMO organization, GNYHA)
4. Does your organization have strong grassroots support in the district?
5. Does your organization have contact with other groups who are also harmed/impacted by the proposed change, i.e. a cut in funds for health services?
6. Do you have “insider” contacts/networks that can be resources and advocates on the issue?(i.e. in the local or state health department, or the state legislature, or your legislator’s office)
7. Do you have access to “inside information” about current power brokers, their relationships and political interests? (i.e. Does your representative have a “friend” who you can talk to about your issue? Is your legislator planning to run for higher office and might be looking for help in that campaign, or a new campaign issue with wide appeal?)

8. Do you have legislators with clout in both houses and both parties who are willing to take the lead on the issue? Is the chair of the committee to which the bill is assigned supportive?
9. Do you have contacts in the media who see you as a credible source of information on the issue?
10. Have you or your organization established a relationship with the legislator's staff in the district or in Albany?
13. Do you have bi-partisan support in the grassroots and in the legislature for the issue?
14. Can you gain access to the legislative leaders through any of your organization's constituents? (i.e. campaign contributors, party workers, power brokers)