

Advocating for Change

January 2023 Written by Rebecca Zimmermann Prepared by Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families

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Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families

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Advocating for Change

About us

Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families (AACF) does research on and works to get laws passed at the state and federal levels to improve the lives of kids and families in our state and to advance racial equity. We hope that you will join us in being a voice for our state's kids, from Little Rock to D.C.



To start with a spoiler, you are! Everyone can be an advocate. And while there are a lot of ways to be an advocate, for the purposes of this guide, we are talking about advocating for laws at the local, state, and national levels. From kids advocating for a law to give them more recess time (which passed!) to families advocating for health care coverage for Arkansans with disabilities, every voice can make a difference, including yours! If you only have a minute a week, or all the time in the world, you can use your voice to push for good laws and fight back against bad laws, to help your own well-being and that of your fellow Arkansans.

Why we advocate

Wish there were more public parks in your community? Would you like to see more done to make sure new parents and babies have a healthy start? Do you think more money should be invested so there is more access to childcare? If you answer yes to these or any similar questions, then advocating for laws is for you!

Using advocacy techniques, you can improve your own life and the life of your family, as well as the lives of people across Arkansas. If you want to see big changes that have a wide impact, pushing for changes to our laws is the way to go. It is important to know, though, that it can take years of work to see the change you want. But with your advocacy and the advocacy of others, you can help transform our state for the better.

About this guide

This guide has a lot of information for people who want to start their advocacy from the ground up. But if you want to support the advocacy efforts of other people, you can skim through to find ideas for how you can help them. Use what is helpful. Skip ahead. Make this guide work for you. And if you have any questions, please reach out to us at **connect@aradvocates.org**.

However you use this advocacy guidebook, we hope you see that no matter what you do to advocate for laws to help the kids and families of Arkansas, be it in big or small ways, you can make a difference.



Making your advocacy plan

To create your advocacy plan, we will go over a few questions to help you think through how to create a plan that will be customized to you, your group, and your situation. Your plan should be flexible. While you want to plan as much as you can before you start to advocate for a new law, once you start advocating, things may change. You may have new opportunities or find new people to work with or might have new challenges that you need to deal with. Your plan should adapt to fit your changing advocacy needs.

We'll talk about:



What is your goal?

For the purposes of this advocacy guide, your goal is the law you want to get passed, the law you want to stop, or the policy change you want to see a government agency make. Every decision you make about your advocacy should be in support of achieving your goal. It is important to make sure that you pick the best goal to achieve the results you want to see.

As an example, let's say you want to make sure there are enough afterschool and summer programs in your community and around the state. You see that there are not enough programs for children, and maybe, at the time of reading this, you already have an idea of a law that could be passed to fix it. That is great! But maybe you still need to figure out what would be the best solution to make sure that all kids across the state who want to go to afterschool and summer programs can. Below are a few ideas of how you can do that.

Center racial equity. When deciding what laws to support and what laws to oppose, the staff at AACF believes racial equity should be a central focus. That means figuring out how structural racism has caused or made the problems we are trying to solve worse and what barriers need to be removed. It means working with a diverse group of advocates, including people who are directly impacted by the issue we are working on, to guide and lead our work. And it means making sure that achieving our goal would make our state a better place for Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color to live. We hope you will join us in considering how what we advocate for, and how we advocate, can either increase or decrease racial equity. AACF's Racial Equity Director for Advocacy made this presentation (adapted from

Racial Equity is a process of eliminating racial disparities and improving outcomes for everyone.

It is the intentional and continual practice of changing policies, practices, systems, and structures by prioritizing measurable change in the lives of people of color. In relation to race, equity is achieved when all people – especially people of color who have historically been oppressed and marginalized – are the "owners, planners and decision-makers in the systems that govern their lives and are provided the infrastructure needed to thrive." Through racial equity, the needs of each community, group or individual are met and everyone benefits from a more just, equitable system (adapted from **Race Forward** and **United Way of the National Capitol Area**).



OpenSource Leadership Strategies) to help you think through the racial equity impact of the problem you're trying to solve and the law you want to advocate for to solve it.

Reach out to other people impacted by the problem you want to solve.

You may be impacted by the problem you want to solve, like a lack of afterschool and summer programs. And you have ideas of improvements that need to be made to make things better. But even then, there may be other people impacted by the problem, too, who can help you decide if more needs to be done or to confirm that what you're thinking is right. By connecting with them, they also may be willing to become advocates with you.

If you aren't directly impacted by a problem, but you're still passionate about trying to push for a law to fix it, the best place to start is by asking people directly impacted by the issue how you can help. What are the changes they would like to see? You could talk with students, parents, or nonprofits that have programs for kids in your community. Ask them how they feel about afterschool and summer programs. How important are they to them and their families? What may make it hard for them to enroll in a program? What resources would a nonprofit need to welcome more children to their programs?

Talk to local or national policy experts. Groups like AACF, or a professor at a local university, can be good resources to help you pick a new law that would help solve the problem you want to fix. They may have also already written about the issue and have information on their website that can help. You can also try to set up a meeting with them if you have questions or want to talk through ideas you have. And just like people directly impacted by an issue, policy experts may also be willing to advocate with you.

Do your own research. It's important, if you can, to do some online research about what laws already exist in Arkansas around your issue. If you're trying to solve a problem at the state level, the Arkansas Legislature has <u>a great website</u> where you can search current laws and look up bills that have been filed on the problem you're trying to solve by searching keywords, like "afterschool." You could also look at what other states have been doing that works well. There are online resources like the <u>KIDS COUNT Data Center</u> that have a lot of useful data that can help you identify how many people are impacted by the problem you want to solve.

Ask an elected official. Your elected officials work for you, be it a city councilperson or a state senator. They want to hear from you about the needs you see in your community, and they can help you identify a potential law that could help. And hopefully, they may also be willing

to sponsor a bill that could become a law. The best place to start is by talking to <u>the elected</u> <u>officials that represent you</u>. But if that doesn't work, you can search online for which elected officials have supported bills in the past about the problem you're trying to solve.

Connect with other advocates. There may already be other people or groups advocating to solve the problem you care about, and they may have already identified a solution they think would make a good law. For instance, for afterschool programs you might connect with a statewide group that connects out-of-school programs or maybe there is a person who is well known for speaking about the need for summer programs. Ask to meet with them, go on their website, see if their goal could become your goal. If you think their goal is a solution you can get behind, see how you can support them in the work they have already started.

Working with partners and fellow advocates towards a shared goal

It's important that you work with your partners to create a shared goal because you don't want to get to this situation where you've been working with them for months only to find out that, while you both want to solve the same problem, you have very different ideas of how to do that. This is a problem that has happened even at big, national nonprofits. Make sure you have a conversation early on about what law you all want to support, or oppose, and other shared expectations and shared values for your work together.

After all your research and conversations with advocates and people impacted by the problem you want to solve, you have hopefully identified a law to support (or oppose) as your goal, or maybe you still have more work to do to pick a goal. Use the section below to write some things you can do to help figure out the solution you want to support, like look up laws that have passed in Arkansas around afterschool programs or meet with a staff person at a local summer program. And then, once you have picked your goal, write it down below too, like getting a law passed to fund a state program for out-of-school programs.

To figure out my goal I will:

My	goal	is:
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BONUS! Other goals.

You have a main goal you want to achieve, which is a law you want to get passed or stop. But it can sometimes take (many) years of work to achieve your main goal. But that doesn't mean you aren't making progress. What are some important things you can try to accomplish on your way to your main goal? Build a strong volunteer network? Build relationships with key elected officials? Increase awareness about the problem you want to solve? Achieving these other goals should be celebrated! And you should make sure the people advocating know that their hard work is paying off, even if it takes time to achieve your ultimate goal.

Other goals I/we want to achieve are:

What are your resources?



Next, think through what resources you have to dedicate to your advocacy and to achieve your goal.

Time. No one talks about it enough, but your time is your most valuable resource. Whether you're a nonprofit with a few staff members trying to support your community in many different ways, a student with a lot of responsibilities for school and extracurricular activities, or someone trying to enjoy their retirement while staying civically engaged – you have only so many hours in a day. Be honest with yourself about how much time you and other people in your group or organization can spend on advocating for your goal. Even with limited time, you can achieve a lot. But if you don't make a plan that fits your schedule, you may end up scrapping your advocacy work altogether because of stress or the time it takes away from other parts of your day. If you need more time than you have, recruit other people to advocate with you to increase your time resources.

Relationships. Relationships are very important when you're advocating for a law. You have friends and family members who would be willing to write a congressperson if you ask them. You may have board members who are well connected in your community that can spread your message and recruit new advocates. And you may have coworkers who are in a civic group with a local legislator and can connect you with them. Think of all the people in your life who may be willing to help you achieve your advocacy goal. The more people working with you, the more time and other resources you will have, as well.

Knowledge/Experiences. What you've learned in your research and conversations and things you've gone through are excellent resources for your advocacy work. If you're a parent who tried to enroll your child in an afterschool program and couldn't find one in your community, you can share your story to encourage other people to advocate with you. If you attended a summer program that helped you grow your passion for art, talking with a legislator about how the program impacted you could inspire them to try to pass a law. If you've done a lot of research about the numbers of out-of-school programs in the state and how much demand there are for programs compared to slots available, you can share that research with a well-respected community leader to try to get them to speak out about your goal. What experiences and knowledge do you have now? Do you need to learn more to gain more knowledge? Do you need to connect with other people who have direct experience with the issue you're advocating on so you have more stories to share?

Money/Material resources. As you're advocating, you may have to spend money, maybe to print flyers or buy food for an event, or use material resources, like meeting space or markers, as part of your work. Maybe a bill has been filed to fund afterschool programs, and you want to do a letter-writing event to get people to mail letters to their state senator. You want to make sure you have paper, pens, stamps, envelopes, a place people can gather, snacks, etc. Maybe you can get someone to donate food for the event. As you start to make more detailed plans for your advocacy, make a list of the money and material resources you need to get and already have.

Are there other resources you can think of that don't fall into one of the categories above?

Resources I already have:

Resources I need:

Who are your audiences?



If you're trying to get a law passed or get a law overturned, you'll have multiple groups of people you're talking with to achieve your goal. Who are all the people whose help you need? This will be helpful to write out now, because when you're deciding what strategies you want to use, you'll need to make sure you're reaching out to each group in a way that works best for each. People are different and a one-size-fits all plan probably won't work.

Elected officials. Passing a law usually takes the support of elected officials (unless you're working on a ballot measure for voters to consider). Where are you trying to get a law passed? At the City Council? In Congress? Are there elected officials you think will likely vote "yes" for your goal with only a little outreach? Are there officials you think will need more convincing?

People directly impacted by the problem you want to solve and your goal. Sometimes people who are impacted by a problem aren't given a say in how it is solved or a voice in advocating for a solution. When that happens, you probably don't have a very good solution or meaningful support. Make sure you're not just reaching out to people directly impacted to identify solutions and recruit advocates, but you're including them in all aspects of your advocacy. In the case of out-of-school programs, you would be talking with students, parents, and educators.

People who already support your goal. Going from a specific audience to a broader audience, one group you should try to connect with are people who already support your goal. Like, if you're talking about afterschool programs, that might include education advocates. People who already care about your goal are probably looking for opportunities to help. They just need you to connect with them and tell them how they can make a difference.

People who can be persuaded to support your goal. Some people may not know much about the problem you're trying to solve or the solution you're proposing. With education, they can become supporters and advocates. But keep in mind, not everyone is persuadable. Some people may never care no matter how much you try to educate them, or they may outright oppose the proposed law you're advocating for.



My key audiences are:					
A 11 11 1 11					
And I will connect with	them by:				

What is/are your key message(s)?

What you say about your goal, how you say it, and who you say it to are important. When talking about the problem you're trying to solve and your goal, you want to make sure you not only emphasize the importance of what you're advocating for but also motivate people to take action. One increasingly popular way to develop messages is called VPSA, which stands for Value, Problem, Solution, and Action.

You start by highlighting a shared value that you think most people can agree with like, "Every child should have access to out-of-school programs where they can learn and grow."

Then you talk about the problem you're trying to solve and its impact on racial equity. "But in many communities across Arkansas, there are no afterschool or summer programs for kids. This is a major problem when we know that out-of-school programs decrease the racial inequities we see in students' outcomes."

Next you talk about a solution. "By providing dedicated funding to the state program for outof-school programs, we can expand the number and quality of out-of-school programs around the state."

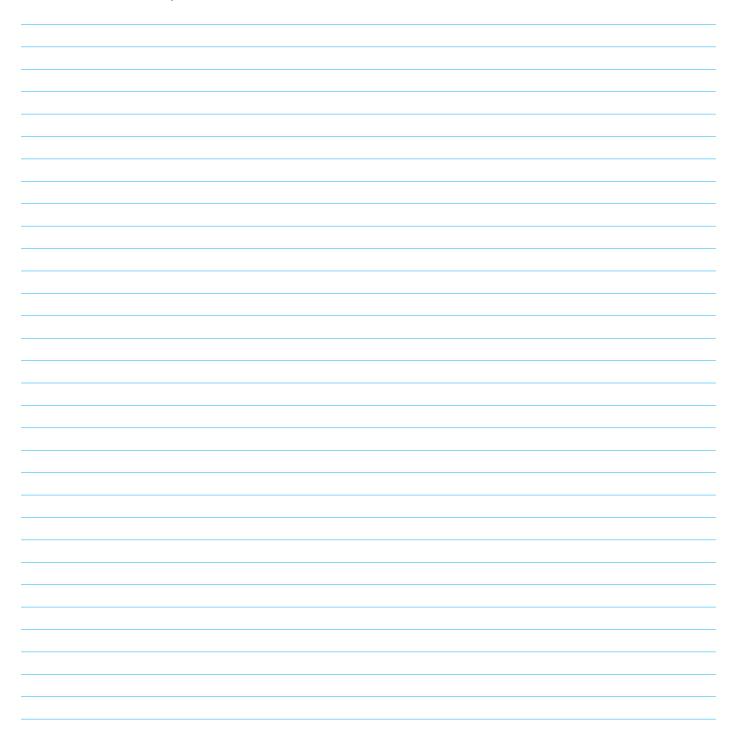
Finally, you tell people how they can help, by suggesting an action they can take. "Write your state legislators and ask them to vote yes for HB 1111."

The communication group **The Opportunity Agenda** has created many online resources you can review to learn more about the VPSA messaging model..

One note: though you may have a key, overarching message, you want to make sure you also create messages that best connect with your different audiences and why they care about the problem you're trying to solve and the solution you want them to support. Maybe if you're talking to legislators you might highlight how money invested in afterschool programs helps the economy in the long term because it makes sure students are more prepared for careers. If you're talking with people who are persuadable to support your goal, you may focus on how summer programs can improve the overall well-being of children in both the short and long terms.

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You also want to consider, depending on how you are reaching out to people, whether to change how you deliver your message. For example, you might take a different approach on TikTok than you would with a conversation with a friend or a presentation to a community group. The words may be the same, but the tone may be different. One may be more formal, whereas another may be more informal.



Who is your opposition?



Just like you want to think through the audiences that you want to connect and engage with, you also want to think about who might be opposed to your goal. And there are two main groups of opposition to consider. First, there are people who don't support your goal, but they won't take any action to try to stop your goal law from getting passed. You don't have to worry too much about that group. But then there are the people who oppose your goal law and will try to stop it from getting passed. That group you do have to worry about. To continue with our example of trying to get funding for out-of-school programs, it may be hard to think of anyone who would oppose it. But one opposition group might be an organization who thinks that education funds would be better invested in other ways.

You will need to think through ways that you can minimize their impact, like getting your messages out first and connecting with persuadable people and legislators first. Because a person's opinion can be formed after hearing about an issue just once (though you should connect with people multiple times to get them to take action). You can also identify people who legislators know and trust to talk with them about your goal when the opposition is trying to get the legislator to vote against your goal. That's because legislators are more likely to listen to someone they already have a good relationship with.

Hint: Don't directly refute an argument by repeating it.

One key rule in advocacy: Don't try to directly refute an argument the opposition makes by repeating their argument. Like don't say "our opposition says this will be too expensive, but really it isn't that expensive." Our brains can work a bit weirdly sometimes, and in this case, even though you're saying your opponents are wrong, by repeating their message you may actually be making the opposition's argument stick in people's minds.

Who might be opposed to your goal law that might try to stop it from getting passed?

What are some ways you might be able to minimize the impact of the opposition?

What are your strengths?



When making a plan for your advocacy, you should choose strategies that play to your strengths and the strengths of people and groups advocating with you. Maybe you have a friend advocating with you who is really good at social media. You should consider using their skills to raise awareness on social media. Maybe you're really good at connecting with people. You should consider trying to speak at civic and community meetings to encourage people to join you in supporting your goal law. Do you have a board member who is really well connected? Perhaps you can use their strength to help you lobby legislators. Is there a great artist who is advocating with you? Talk with them about how you could use art to connect with more people.

My/our strengths are:



What strategies will you use?

With everything you've already thought through, what your goal is, what resources you have, who your audiences are, what your messages are, who your opposition is, and what your strengths are, you're ready to decide what advocacy strategies you'll use that take all that information into account. In the section below we highlight 10 types of advocacy strategies you can use, though there may be more you can think of. Think about which strategies you'd like to use to get your goal law passed or to stop a bad law.

10 Types of Advocacy

We'll talk about:



Social Media Advocacy



News Media Advocacy



Election and Ballot Advocacy



Financial Advocacy



Research Advocacy



Grassroots Advocacy



Friend Advocacy



Legislative Advocacy



Administrative Advocacy



Legal Advocacy

Social Media Advocacy

OVERVIEW:



Social media advocacy is likely the most common type of advocacy, but it can be very difficult. People are overwhelmed with messages online. Making your message stand out among the noise takes thoughtful planning.

WHEN TO USE:

To reach a wide audience. To advocate when you have a small budget. To publicly engage with decision-makers. To make viral campaigns.

WAYS TO USE:

Educate – to teach people about the problem you're trying to address and the goal you're trying to solve it with.

Activate/Motivate – to inspire individuals to take action on your issue by contacting a legislator, volunteering, donating, etc.

Fundraise - to encourage individuals to donate to help you advocate for your goal.

Interact with decision-makers – to ask legislators to vote a certain way, share information that will help them decide, ask them why they voted a certain way.

Keep up with the conversation – to learn what the public, the press, and decisionmakers are saying about your issue.

Share updates – to keep your followers informed on the progress you're making on your goal.

TIPS:

Mix messaging – keep people interested and engaged by mixing up messages between education, activation, updates, etc.

Experiment and have fun but make a plan to ensure you're consistently connecting with people and are able to figure out what types of posts work best.

Look at what groups and people with messages that you have responded to are doing online. What made you respond? What techniques can you adopt?

Use images and videos— social media posts with images or videos are more likely to be shown in someone's social media feed and more likely to get people's attention.

Social Media Advertising

The social media paid-ad landscape is constantly changing, but a few basic tips still apply. If you have never run ads on a social media platform, or if it has been more than a couple of months since the last time you did, give yourself plenty of lead time. You may need to become authorized or have your account reauthorized, and you will need time to learn or relearn the process. Stay aware of limitations on political or social-issue ads leading up to election season, and plan accordingly. If you don't have a lot of experience running ads, a good way to start is to find an organic (regular) post that is already getting good engagement and boost the post to your followers and their friends.

Notes:

www.aradvocates.org

News Media Advocacy

OVERVIEW:



Many people still rely on digital news publications and televised news for information, especially community leaders. Educating and activating through news sources can be useful.

WHEN TO USE:

To educate and activate individuals outside of your current network. To increase the likelihood of your messages being seen by decision-makers and community influencers.

WAYS TO USE:

Create news – send press releases when you publish new research; invite press to demonstrations and community meetings.

Capitalize on breaking news – if you can act quickly enough, release a statement to the press or hold an event related to a current news story that connects with your goal.

Cultivate relationships – Send reporters data, tips, and research; and submit opinion pieces and letters to the editor.

Train spokespeople – Have at least one person you are advocating with (maybe you!) who is comfortable taking interviews and keep them prepared with relevant talking points.

TIPS:

Read through op-eds, watch human interest stories, and identify what types of information the media are looking for and who they're getting it from.

If you're going to talk about a problem, be sure to share your goal as well and suggest an action people can take to help.

Election and Ballot Advocacy

OVERVIEW:



Election years provide a lot of opportunities to advocate for your goal. People are paying more attention to policies. And potential elected officials are much more open to having conversations with the people they may represent. Note: if you're doing election advocacy as a nonprofit, you have to be very careful. Like with all nonprofit advocacy, laws apply, but there are even more rules during election years. Find out more about the dos and don'ts at **Bolder Advocacy**.

WHEN TO USE:

If your problem and goal are affected by decisions made by elected officials. If you have a large base of supporters you want to engage. If you want to ensure your issue is being discussed by candidates.

WAYS TO USE:

Host/attend a candidate forum – candidate forums are a great way to make issues you care about part of the conversation during the election.

Create a Voters' Guide – You can write a basic flyer for voters about your goal and suggest questions people can ask candidates to find out where they stand on the issue. Some groups write longer guides that also include candidate's responses to questionnaires or a list of candidates to support (this is not something a 501(c)3 nonprofit can do). A voters' guide increases the likelihood of your issues being discussed at a range of election events.

Propose a ballot initiative – instead of trying to get a specific piece of legislation passed through the legislature, you can petition to have an initiative or constitutional amendment added to the ballot that would leave it to the voters to decide on. These take a lot of work and resources, though, and we could write an entire advocacy guide just on proposing ballot measures.

So, if another group is leading efforts on an initiative that you support, consider connecting with them and ask how you can help.

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OTHER ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE AS AN INDIVIDUAL (BUT NOT AS A 501(C)3 NONPROFIT):

Run for office Volunteer on a campaign Endorse a candidate Donate to a campaign or party

Consider this:

Running a ballot initiative or constitutional amendment campaign is very time-consuming and expensive. You must collect tens of thousands of signatures to get the measure on the ballot. That takes a lot of people power and money. Then promoting the initiative throughout the state and gaining support can be equally challenging, both locally and statewide. If this is a route you would like to take, consider partnering with like-minded organizations that may have funded initiatives like yours.

See the <u>Arkansas Secretary of State's</u> website for information on the laws regarding ballot initiatives.

For best practices for running ballot measure campaigns, <u>**Ballot Initiative Strategy Center</u>** has helpful resources for advocates.</u>

Financial Advocacy

OVERVIEW:

Where you spend your money is an indication of what you value. Making campaign contributions or donating to groups can be an effective way to help you achieve your goal.

WHEN TO USE:

To support a candidate or party (not as a nonprofit, only as an individual). To support a cause.

WAYS TO USE, AS AN INDIVIDUAL:

Donate to a political party. Donate to a candidate.

Donate to a Political Action Committee (PAC).

Donate to a nonprofit.

Donate to a crowdfunding campaign.



Research Advocacy

OVERVIEW:

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Knowledge is power. Ensuring the accuracy of information is important to advocacy because it's what advocates use to ask decision-makers and stakeholders to support or oppose an issue. There is a lot of misinformation out there.

WHEN TO USE:

If the use of data will help you achieve your advocacy goal. If current research would help make the problem you are trying to solve and goal more understandable and show its importance. If information is not currently available about the problem you're trying to solve with your goal law. If information about the problem and goal needs to be updated. If conclusions drawn by current research are inaccurate or the current research itself is inaccurate. If current research is incomplete.

WAYS TO USE:

Sharing research someone else has done – don't reinvent the wheel if you don't have to. Look for what current and reliable research is already out there that you can share. You may also have to rely on research done by others if you can't do your own research for whatever reason.

Conduct your own research from scratch – if there are no data in your issue area or if the data are not specific to your region or state, you may want to consider conducting a full-scale research project. This can take years depending on the data being collected and whether you will analyze and publish the data.

Analyze data sets that already exist – several public institutions house raw data and make it publicly available. However, the data must be analyzed to relay compelling stories. You can pull and analyze the data relevant to your issue to draw conclusions on the need.

Fill-in the gaps – if some research exists for your issue area but certain points are missing, conduct additional research to deepen the scope by others.

Grassroots Advocacy

OVERVIEW:



There is strength in numbers. And grassroots advocacy is probably the most powerful form of advocacy because it brings together so many voices. It's also the most diverse and complex form of advocacy because of the many methods you can use.

WHEN TO USE:

If you wish to engage a large number of people. If you want decision-makers to see the wide support for your goal. If you want decision-makers to see the wide opposition for a current law or proposed law. If the problem you want to solve is big.

Consider this: Plan, plan, plan.

There are often intermediate and short-term goals for grassroots advocacy. But grassroots movements are about the long game. With your fellow advocates, decide on a goal and create a strategy to achieve it. Waiting till down the road will likely cause division among your supporters.

WAYS TO USE:

Petitions – if you have a large network of advocates and friends, petitions, particularly online versions, can be an easy way to gather voices in support of or opposition to a current law or proposal, especially with the online petition websites that you can use.

Letters of support – usually signed by leaders of organizations, letters of support are a great way to illustrate support for current laws under threat or support for proposed laws.

Days at the Capitol – hosting a gathering of your members or supporters at the state or nation's Capitol can be an engaging activity for your followers, get them excited about advocating, and get them more comfortable with the legislative process. It also helps increase awareness about your issue(s) with lawmakers.

Art – community art projects can be a fun, "out-of-the-box" way to raise awareness about your goal and connect it with people emotionally. You can host a concert with songs about your issue or have an art contest with images that raise awareness about your issue.

Letter writing campaigns – lawmakers pay attention to the letters and emails they get from their constituents. Encouraging advocates to write to or call their legislators can have a big impact. And you can host a letter-writing party to make it more fun.

Marches – they can create a powerful image about the support your goal has. Marches will likely be picked up by the news media and seen by a wide audience.

Coalitions – connecting with like-minded groups who share the same goal as you can increase the number of people and voices supporting your cause, as well as the amount of resources dedicated to achieving your goal.

What other types of grassroots advocacy can you think of?

Friend Advocacy

OVERVIEW:

Where is the easiest place to start your advocacy? Your current network of friends, family, classmates, and coworkers! People are much more likely to get involved and take action on your goal law if you're someone they already know and trust.

WHEN TO USE:

When you want to activate your friend, family and professional networks to support and take action for your goal.

WAYS TO USE:

Get coffee – advocacy is all about relationships. Hang out with a friend, ask them what issues in your community they care about and tell them about the goal you're working on. Give them a flyer with ideas on ways they can help.

Host a party – throw a house party with your friends, coworkers, or classmates and your friends' friends. Take a few minutes once most people have arrived to talk about your goal and give them an opportunity to meet with current advocates at the party to learn more and find out ways they can take action.

Call, text, or email – for those friends that you know won't take a lot of convincing – just give them a quick overview of the goal you're advocating on and how they can help.

TIPS:

Share updates with the people who have helped in your advocacy, so they can know if more help is needed and the impact their efforts have had.

Don't forget to tell your network **thank you**! Send a thank you to everyone who contacted legislators, shared information on Facebook, volunteered, or attended an event.



Legislative Advocacy

OVERVIEW:



Legislators hear from many voices when they create a law. They listen to lobbyists, campaign contributors, and their constituents. They get data from experts. They get information from people claiming to be experts but really aren't. They speak with colleagues, attend committee hearings, and debate bills at the Capitol. There are plenty of opportunities to advocate and lobby.

WHEN TO USE:

If there is legislation you want proposed. If there's a bill that has been filed that helps your goal. If there is a bill that has been filed or if there is a current law that will harm your goal or is causing the problem you're trying to solve.

WAYS TO USE:

Lobby – ask a legislator to vote a certain way on a specific piece of legislation or to propose certain legislation. This can be done with meetings, emails, phone calls, texts, or on social media. You can write your own letter or complete an action alert sent out by a group.

Educate – if you don't want to tell legislators they should vote a certain way, but just want to educate them on your issue, you can do that, too. Or you can do both. Educate them, then lobby them. You can invite legislators to an event you're hosting or, if you are a nonprofit, invite them to your facilities and talk with them about the importance of addressing the problem you're working to solve.

TIPS:

Meet with legislators when they're not in session, as this will allow you more time to educate them about your issue and create a trusting relationship regarding your advocacy goal. As a result, a legislator may turn to you for insight and advice when a bill comes up in your issue area.

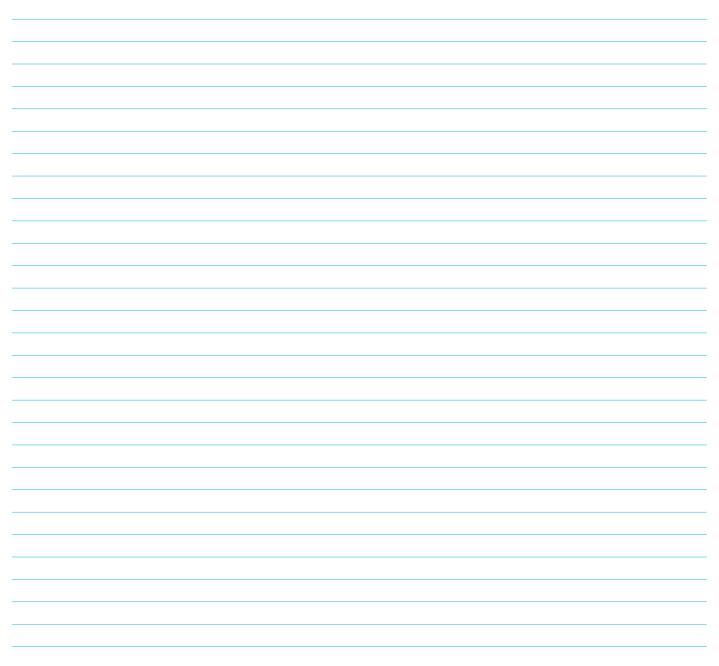
Learn where legislators stand on your issue through social media, attending committee meetings, and asking other advocates and legislators. This can help you determine who still needs to be persuaded and who can be a champion for your cause.



Stay on top of what's happening at the Capitol. Things can move quickly, so follow what is happening on Twitter (follow #arpx and #arleg), sign up for bill tracking on the General Assembly's website, **sign up for alerts on AACF's website**, and sign up for emails from news organizations.

Stay focused on your goal(s) and don't get sidetracked.

Make sure to **follow up and thank** legislators for sponsoring a bill or voting for the law you were pushing for. You can also reach out to share your disappointment if a legislator voted against your goal, share information on why their vote will be harmful, and offer to be a resource if they have questions.



Administrative Advocacy

OVERVIEW:



Passing a law is only the first step. Generally, after the governor signs a bill into law, it is sent to the relevant state agency where the rules will be promulgated, or, in other words, where the ins-and-outs of implementation will be decided.

WHEN TO USE:

To ensure that a law best assists the people it is meant to serve. To ensure a bad law doesn't get worse in implementation.

WAYS TO USE:

Meet with relevant department staff – share information, data, and stories about your issue that can help them in the rule-making process. Do this soon after the bill is passed.

Provide public comments – give your written input on how the law should be implemented

Attend public rule-making hearings – provide testimony on how the law should be implemented through data and stories.

TIPS:

Get in the weeds! This is the time to really nail down exactly how a law will be implemented. What are the on-the-ground details that will affect implementation that might be overlooked?

Create ongoing relationships with relevant department staff. If you already have a relationship, they're more likely to turn to you for insight when a new law comes up in your issue area.

You are an expert in your field, and decision-makers need to hear from you. From their position, there are a lot of important details that can be missed. You can fill in those gaps.

Legal Advocacy

OVERVIEW:



After a law passes and/or is implemented, legal advocacy can be a last resort option to repeal a law or prevent a law from being enacted.

WHEN TO USE:

If you want to repeal a current law. If you want to prevent a law from being enacted. If you believe a current law is not being properly implemented or enforced.

WAYS TO USE:

File suit – this takes money and legal experts, but you can file a lawsuit against the relevant government entity.

Write an *amicus* brief – if you have legal experts on your staff or can hire legal experts, but you don't want to file a lawsuit yourself, your legal experts can write a legal opinion supporting a suit that has been filed by others.

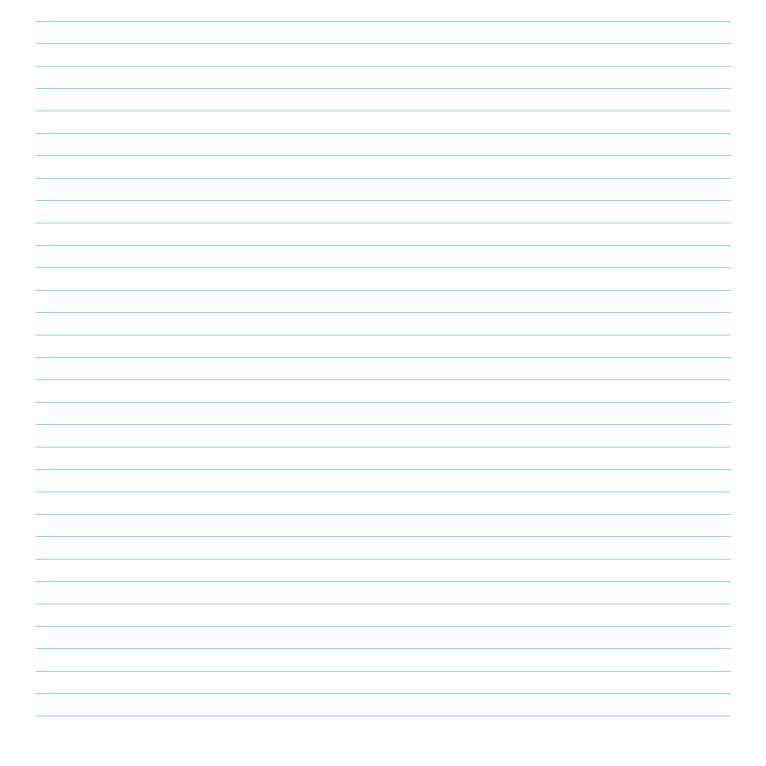
TIPS:

If you want to file a suit, make sure you have **enough money**. This type of litigation can take years and significant financial investment. You may also consider jointly suing with other groups so you can gain more resources for the suit.

Make sure you hire the **right legal expert**. Lawyers are like doctors. They specialize in certain areas of the law. And just like you wouldn't want your dentist to conduct your heart surgery, you don't want a human resources attorney to lead your suit about water pollution laws not being enforced.

What different types of advocacy will you use? (Like legislative advocacy or election advocacy)

What specific actions and activities will you take and when? (Like host an event in December, post a TikTok in October, or try to schedule meetings with elected officials in June.)



The Grand Finale

Put it all together!

You can <u>click here</u> to download a Word Document you can use to put all your advocacy plans together in one place.

Time to advocate!

We hope this guide has helped you create a plan that will help you in your advocacy as you push for a law to help improve the lives of the kids and families in our state, making Arkansas a more equitable place for everyone who calls it home.



How a bill becomes a law in Arkansas (with your help)

1. Recruit Bill Sponsor.



Take your idea to your legislator or a legislator you think may be passionate about your issue. Have stories and data about the problem and your proposed solution/idea for a bill. Do this as far in advance of the legislative session as possible. If one legislator declines, that's OK. Reach out until you find a legislator who connects with the purpose of the bill and the people it is meant to serve. You can go to the state Legislature's website (www.arkleg.state. ar.us) to see who has sponsored similar bills in the past.

2. Stay in Touch.

If the legislator is willing to file a bill, keep in touch and ask how you can help. Do you need to reach out to other legislators to ask that they co-sponsor? Does the legislator need additional data to file the bill?

3. The Bill is Filed.

In the weeks before the legislative session begins, or during the session, the legislator officially files the bill, and the bill is assigned a number. Ask the legislator about the timeline for the bill. Often, even though a bill is filed, it will not immediately be considered by the General Assembly.

4. The Bill is Considered by the First of Two Committees.

The bill is considered and voted on in the relevant committee and on the bill sponsor's side of the chamber. For example, if the bill's lead sponsor is a House member, it will be heard on the House side first. Again, make sure to confirm the timeline of the bill with your bill sponsor. Just because it's on the agenda to be heard by a committee does not mean it will be. Ask your bill sponsor when your bill will be discussed by the committee and how you can help. They will have the best idea of what is needed, or not needed, to move the bill forward. Do you need to recruit people to testify on behalf of the bill? Do you need to create a one-page explanation for the bill? Do you need to send an alert for people to call committee members? Or should you do nothing?



5. The Bill is Considered by the First of Two Chambers.

If the bill passes out of committee, it will move to the full chamber of the House or Senate for a vote. Ask the bill sponsor how you can help.

6. The Bill is Considered by the Second of Two Committees.

The bill will then move to a committee in the opposite chamber to be considered and voted on. Usually, it will be in a corresponding committee. For instance, if it is heard first in the House Education Committee, it will be heard in the Senate Education Committee. But there are rare exceptions. Check with the bill sponsor about which committee it will be heard in and ask the bill sponsor how you can help.

7. The Bill is Considered by the Second of Two Chambers.

If the bill passes out of the second committee, it will go to the final chamber. Ask the bill sponsor how you can help. Even if there is nothing directly you can do to help and you think it's likely to pass, it's always nice to invite supporters of your bill to watch the final vote in person or online to celebrate. If the bill was amended in this chamber, it will then go back to steps 4 and 5 to be heard by the first chamber again, as amended.

8. The Bill Becomes Law.

If the bill passes both committees and chambers, it will go to the Governor's desk to be signed. Most bills that pass through the General Assembly are signed by the Governor. But a bill can still become law even if the Governor does not sign it. Your bill sponsor would most likely not need help at this stage. Confirm with the bill sponsor when the bill will be signed by the Governor and ask if you can invite your fellow advocates and the press to celebrate!

9. You Thank Legislators.

Make sure to personally and publicly thank the legislator(s) who sponsored the bill and ask others in your network to thank the bill sponsor(s), too.



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