

# Introduction to Advocacy: A How-To Guide

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**Based on  
The National Center of Medical Home Initiatives for Children with Special Need,  
Every Child Deserve a Medical Home Training Curriculum, 2004: Advocacy**

# Goals

- Recognize the significance of advocacy.
- Realize that every Psychiatrist has a role as an advocate.
- Identify steps you can take to advocate.
- Understand the power of coalitions to augment individual advocacy effort.

# What is an Advocate?

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary:

## **advocate** (n.)

- 1. One who pleads another's cause
- 2. One who argues or pleads for a cause or proposal

# Why Is Being an Advocate Important?

- Advances change that could result in benefit for a large population
- Keeps the interests of your patients and psychiatry on the radar screen of decision makers

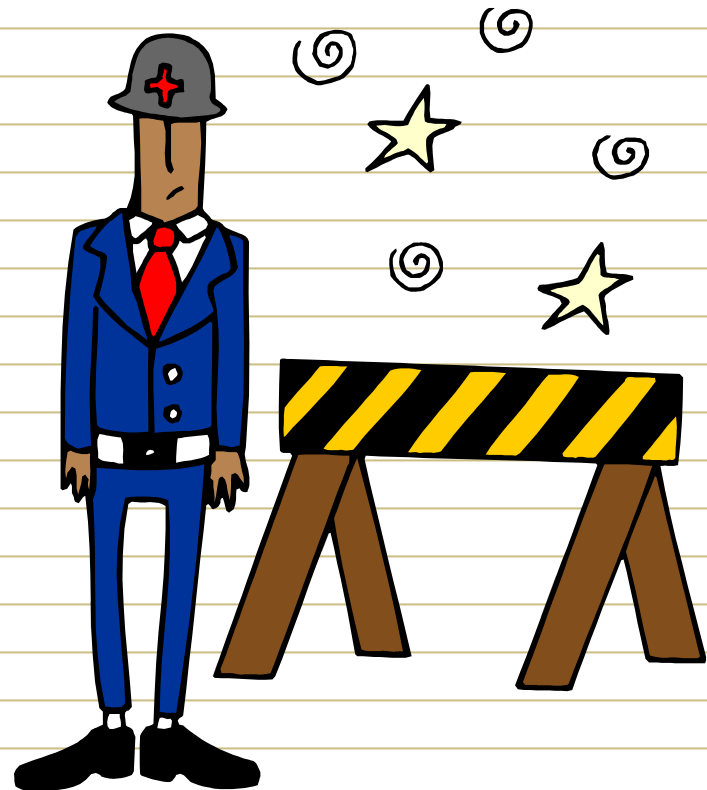


# Why Should You Be an Advocate?

- As a Physiatrist, you are knowledgeable of the needs of patients with disabilities and the practice of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation.
- As a physician, you bring credibility to the issues and are most often seen as working on behalf of others.
- No one else may be advocating for our field or our particular patients.

# Road Blocks to Advocacy

- Lack of time
- Lack of focus
- Lack of knowledge with the issue(s)
- Lack of comfort with advocacy process



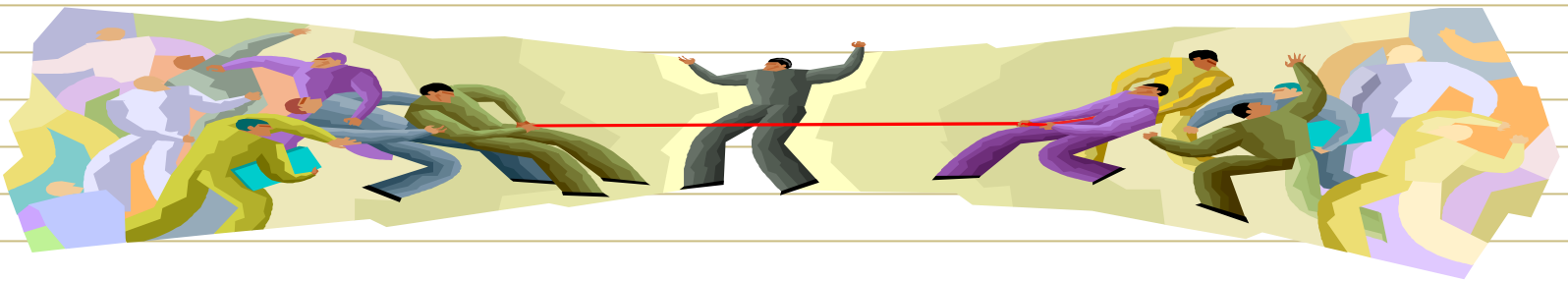
# How do You Get Started?

- Have an interest which has not been well addressed.
- Find out more about that interest.
- Join others who share your interest or ask them to join you.
- Join medical societies to share information and for assistance.



# Interest

- Decide on 1 or 2 issues that particularly interest (or bother) you
- Become an expert by really get to know the issue(s)
- Identify all “players” involved in the issue
  - those that support and those that oppose





# Speak Out on Your Issue

- Public hearings
- Letters to the editor
- Advisory boards
- Media Interviews
- Senior Centers



# Polish Your Message

- Clear
- Compelling
- Memorable



# Tell Your Story

- Identify the problem
- Avoid using technical/clinical language
- Describe a patient that best illustrates this problem
- Conclude with your clear, compelling and memorable solution to the problem



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# Become the “Go-To” Expert

- Cultivate relationships with decision makers
- Send information relating to your story without asking anything in return



# Join or Form Coalitions



# Coalition Benefits

- Access to more resources
  - Information, labor, perspective, expertise, etc.
- Avoid “reinventing the wheel”
- People with same interests are more likely to be effective by collaborating

# Partners

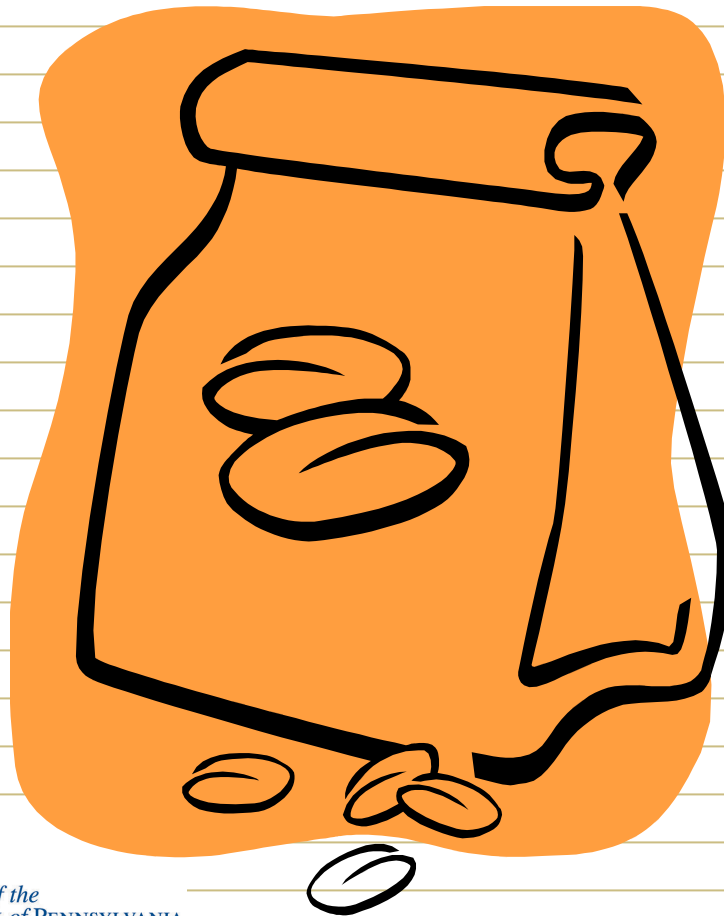
- AAPMR
- AMA
- State medical societies and specialty societies
- Disability groups
- Disease-oriented organizations
- Patient advocacy groups
- Government agencies
- Corporations



# Incremental Success: Start with Small Bites

- Comprehensive change often require perfect alignment of multiple variables including luck
- A series of small success make the process manageable and less daunting

# Take Home Messages



# Advocacy and the Busy Physiatrist

- Speak out and tell your story
- Monitor the *Legislative, Business and Clinical Practice Issues* Section of [www.AAPMR.org](http://www.AAPMR.org)
- Wear a conspicuous button regarding your issue
- Support political candidates by making available their campaign brochures in your waiting room



# Advocate for Others and Not Only for Yourself

- Focus on benefits to patients and families
- Explain the impact of your psychiatric practice on the community
- Personalize your story with real-life examples from your clinical practice



# Goals Recap

- The importance of advocacy for your patients and your psychiatric practice.
- Every psychiatrist has a role as an advocate.
- Steps you can take to advocate.
- The power of coalitions to enhance your individual advocacy action.



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Thank you!