NYS Budget and Legislative Process: Opportunities to Influence (and Improve) Public Policy

New York State Public Health Assoc. Annual Conference (April 2018)

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Schuyler Center

- Non-profit, non-partisan
- Founded in 1872
- Organized citizen brigades to visit county almshouses, then report and advocate to correct abuses and improve conditions.
- Dedicated to improving health and human services systems for all New Yorkers, especially low-income children and families
Schuyler Center
Gameplan for Today

- Lobbying v. Advocacy
- Opportunities to influence state public policy
  - Legislative process and timeline
  - Budget process
  - How to track a bill
  - Share success stories / challenges
Why advocacy?

- Make policies / systems work for those intended to serve
- Amplify voice for those who cannot easily make themselves heard

IMPACT
But we’re a 501(c)(3) non-profit. . . .

We can’t engage in advocacy – or can we?

- YES you can!
  - Advocacy
    - Yes
  - Lobbying
    - Yes (but with some limits)
Lobbying – defined - NYS

Any attempt to influence:

- Specific legislation
- Specific Executive Order
- Specific rule or regulation
- Ratemaking or procurement

N.Y. Legis. Law § 1-c.
Lobbying

- **Direct Lobbying**
  - In joint budget hearing testimony: “Schuyler Center urges the Legislature to reject the Executive’s proposal to consolidate and reduce public health programs and funding.”

- **Grassroots Lobbying (Call to Action!)**
  - “The Executive Budget proposes to cut funding to public health programs by 20%; call your Assemblymember and Senator and urge them to reject this proposal.”
One important distinction:

- Attempt to influence federal regulations is not lobbying under federal law.

Advocacy - defined

Making the voice of stakeholders heard on issues of public policy. (But not urging passage /defeat of specific, pending legislation.)

Advocacy includes:
- Education – of public and lawmakers
- Planting the seed
- Asking questions
Lobbying or Advocacy?

Home Visiting Need
NEW YORK STATE

1,150,112 children ages 0 to 5

Data Snapshot
July 2016

Indicators of Need

Poverty
Children ages 0 to 5 in poverty: 276,442
Live births/year: 218,000
Medicaid-covered births: 59.9%
Adolescent pregnancies/year: 6,976

24.2% children 0 to 5 live in poverty

Health and Well-Being

7.8% Infants born at low birthweight
152,955 Reports to Child Protective Services
71,416 Children mandated reports to Child Protective Services
2,451 Newborns with a drug-related diagnosis

Access to Home Visiting

Funded Capacity by Program Model
Early Head Start
Healthy Families NY
Home Instruction of Parents of Preschool Youngsters
Home-Parent Partnership
Parents as Teachers
Parent-Child Home
Total Funded Capacity in NY

Unmet need

95.3% Unmet need of children 0 to 5 in poverty
Total Home Visiting spots

*Data are pulled from various sources, most but not all from 2014 data. For a full report, which includes a snapshot of New York State and all New York counties, and for information and resources, please go to www.scaany.org and find "Pre-K and Early Childhood".

www.scaany.org | Numbers Tell a Story
Executive Budget Hits Low-Income Children

**Mental Health Care for Children and Adolescents**
Delays implementation of expanded Medicaid benefits for children with behavioral and other health needs, a savings of $15 million for the state.

**Child Welfare Prevention and Protection**
Caps state spending on child welfare preventive and protective services for NYC children. These are services designed to keep children safe and strengthen families.

**Child Care**
Fails to invest in improving or expanding child care subsidies, though fewer than 20% of eligible children get help.

**Close to Home/RTA**
Eliminates state funding for Close to Home, NYC’s trauma-informed juvenile justice system, just as the system is preparing to triple in size with implementation of Raise the Age.

New York’s kids need care, not cuts.
Most non-profits CAN lobby!

Under federal law, 501(c)(3)s - except for churches and private foundations – can lobby so long as it does not constitute a “substantial part” of the organization’s overall activities.

Advocacy tools

- Papers/infographics
- Site visits and case studies
- Earned media, op-eds
- Stakeholder convenings
New York State Capitol
How a bill becomes a Law

Identical bills introduced in both houses

Committee(s) of jurisdiction

Vote

Governor – sign or veto
Advocacy Opportunities

- **Budget**
  - Fiscal year April 1 - March 31
  - Governor presents Executive Budget to Legislature
  - Legislature amends, votes and then Exec and Leg negotiate until an agreement is reached.

- **Legislative**
  - Laws
    - Outside the budget process

- **Administrative**
  - Regulations
  - Implementation
New York State Budget Process

January
- Assembly & Senate reconvene; Governor "State of the State" Message and release of Executive Budget
- Media - Op/Ed, Ed. Boards

February
- Fiscal committees - Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means committees.
- Budget Conference Committees joint public hearings on major programs over the course of several weeks
- Meetings with Relevant Committee Staff
- Submit budget testimony

March
- Budget Conference Committees continue to meet to reach agreement and report out to leadership committee / "mother-ship"
- Leadership 3-way meetings to reach agreement and avoid veto.
- Grassroots Advocacy Days
- Action Alerts – quick responses

April
- April 1st – Legislature must pass budget to meet deadline.
- Governor has 10 days to act once sent.
- Cont. Meetings w/ Leadership

May-June
- If Governor issues Veto, Legislature must act by end of session for overrides; End of session in late June
- Meet with Legislators in District
- Arrange Tours of Programs, Projects
- Meet with Agencies

Fall
- State agency program package is assembled and submitted to the Division of the Budget
Budget

Key opportunities to influence

- **Executive Budget**
  - June – August – Governor’s staff
  - Op eds; case studies; convenings; roundtables
  - Tours of programs

- **Late summer /fall**
  - Governor – persist with message
  - Build legislative leaders /champions

- **January – April 1**
  - Focus shifts to Assembly/Senate – but also Governor
  - Joint Fiscal Committee hearings – early February
  - Joint budget committees – end of March
Beyond Budget

**Legislative**
- January – late June
  - Laws without a fiscal
  - Task forces
  - Legislative hearings
  - Roundtables

**Administrative**
- Post-Budget – implementation
- Check agency websites for rules / hearings
Bill Tracking

Budget
- NYS Division of Budget
  - [https://www.budget.ny.gov/](https://www.budget.ny.gov/)
  - Summaries, bill language (executive, one-house, enacted).

Outside Budget
- Assembly website
  - includes summary, status, sponsors, bill number
- Senate website – Bills and Laws
  - [https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation](https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation)
Advocacy successes? Lessons learned?
Take aways

- Advocate early and often!
  - To improve public policy
  - To expand impact

- Lobby if you can
  - Follow the rules