

Advocacy 411: What is the Difference Between Advocacy & Lobbying



Both advocating and lobbying are critical to raising awareness of and support for afterschool. For afterschool in particular, the voices of providers are absolutely indispensable! There are many misconceptions about what organizations can and cannot do when it comes to lobbying that often times silences programs. But, how do you make sure you are staying within the rules when speaking up?

WHAT IS ADVOCACY?



While all lobbying is advocacy, not all advocacy is lobbying. Advocacy is any action that speaks in favor of, recommends, argues for a cause, supports or defends, or pleads on behalf of others.

- Public education
- Regulatory Work
- Litigation
- Work before legislative bodies
- Nonpartisan voter registration
- Nonpartisan voter education
- Lobbying
- And much more...

Advocacy that is NOT lobbying includes:

- Sending an email to your afterschool program community with an update on or summary of legislation that does not include a call to action.
- Meeting with your Member of Congress or their staff to discuss your program, as well as the general need for and benefits of afterschool programs in your community without referring to a specific piece of legislation.
 - Inviting your lawmakers to visit your program and discussing the positive impacts of your program on the young people, families, and community.

Example of Advocacy: "Our program has helped improve the students' academic achievement. Last year, we saw math test scores increase for 85% of our students!"

WHAT IS LOBBYING?

There are two types of lobbying:

1

Direct Lobbying

2

Grassroots Lobbying

Direct Lobbying

Direct lobbying is defined as **communication with a legislator**, an employee of a legislator or legislative body, or any covered executive branch or other government employee who may participate in the formulation of legislation. The communication refers **to a specific piece of legislation** and **expresses a view** on that legislation. **To be considered lobbying, all three of the bold elements need to be present.**

WHAT IS LOBBYING? (CONTINUED)

Direct lobbying includes:

- Calling your Senator to say that you'd like him to increase the amount of funding in the new appropriations bill for the 21st Century Community Learning Center Program.
- Writing an email to your Representative urging him to support a change in the Every Student Succeeds Act that would make funds more accessible to afterschool programs.
- Attempting to influence a legislator on a confirmation vote.

Grassroots Lobbying

Grassroots Lobbying is defined as an attempt to influence specific legislation by encouraging the public to contact legislators about that legislation. A communication constitutes grassroots lobbying if it **refers to specific legislation, reflects a view on that specific legislation and encourages the recipient of the communication to take lobbying action.** This type of communication is known as a call to action.

Example of Grassroots Lobbying:
GSAN's action alerts (<http://bit.ly/2ti2mNI>) to afterschool supporters asking them to contact their Members of Congress and urge them to support an increase in funding for afterschool programs in the federal spending bill.

NOW THAT I KNOW THE DIFFERENCE, WHAT CAN I DO?

Contrary to popular belief, nonprofits can lobby. In fact, the Internal Revenue Service has stated that public charities "may lobby freely" so long as lobbying is within generous specified limits. However, you do need to be mindful of your funding sources and any lobbying restrictions they may have. Some grants do have restrictions on lobbying and it is important to be aware of those restrictions.

If your program has other funds that can be used to cover the cost of your time and other related expenses (often non-federal and non-foundation funds apply to this), then you are able to lobby.

If you are still unsure whether or not you can lobby, **you can always advocate!** Educate those around you, including policymakers, by describing how your afterschool program works and how it benefits students, families, and the community. If your organization cannot lobby, you can also lobby on your own personal time.

Visit www.afj.org and www.bolderadvocacy.org for more information on advocacy and lobbying. Call Bolder Advocacy's hotline at 866-675-6229 with any specific questions you have regarding advocacy and/or lobbying.

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