Maine AAP

A MAINE PEDIATRICIAN'S GUIDE TO:

COMMUNITY ADVOCACY



ADAPTED FROM RESOURCES AND FUNDING SUPPORT PROVIDED BY THE NATIONAL AAP
COMMUNITY PEDIATRICS TRAINING INITIATIVE

WHAT IS COMMUNITY ADVOCACY?



Unlike legislative advocacy which focuses on passing legislation at the municipal, state, and federal levels, community advocacy focuses on partnering with community members and organizations to implement solutions that address local community needs and health concerns. Community advocacy empowers communities to come together to address localized issues that may not require a policy change to be remedied.

Importantly, community advocacy comes from within the community, and the need and solution are both identified and agreed upon by community partners. You don't need to be an expert on the problem at hand to participate in community advocacy - simply being passionate about the health of your community and drawing on the experience of the community partners you work with is enough to create change.

PEDIATRICIANS AND COMMUNITY ADVOCACY

Pediatricians have incredible insight into the issues experienced by the children and families in their communities, because they see the impacts every single day. When enough is finally enough, community advocacy is in your toolbox.

As a pediatrician, you have a unique and important role to play in community advocacy. You bring:

- **Child Health Expertise:** You are a child health expert and can share the factors that both affect and improve child health outcomes.
- **Evidence-based interventions:** Pediatricians are skilled at reviewing existing literature and understanding whether an identified solution is rooted in evidence and likely to improve child health. Pediatricians have skills in developing goals and SMART objectives to help organize the work of the group.
- **Connection and funding:** You have standing in the community and often have connections to systems and organizations that may play a supporting role through resources and/or funding.

We see some things every day, all day, all week, all month, as the ultimate witnesses to failed social policy. There comes a time when enough is enough, and we get spurred into action. The burden of this constant bearing witness activates that latent advocacy gene, combining with our love for kids and our experience and expertise, releasing the true hero within all of us.

Dr. Ben Hoffman,
Former AAP President





WHAT CAN COMMUNITY ADVOCACY LOOK LIKE?

HERE'S AN EXAMPLE OF COMMUNITY ADVOCACY:

A pediatrician, 'Dr. Advocate', partners with a local school district to bring summer programming to students that not only engages youth in fun learning activities, but also incorporates a summer feeding program. This feeding program includes food pick up for parents and siblings as well as daily breakfast and lunch for students. The programming includes health education topics for the summer, led by clinic staff, and resources for families to connect to other services such as health insurance, WIC and SNAP with onsite support.

Remember this example - we'll use it as we discuss each of parts of community advocacy.

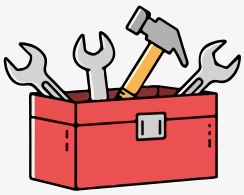
PHASE 1: IDENTIFYING YOUR COMMUNITY

Based on your advocacy focus and passion, your community may look different and include different populations.

A community can be based on geography, a specific population, or a specific health issue that brings health care providers and community organizations together to affect change.

Communities can be defined by a host of factors:

- **Geography:** Can be defined by a specific name, identity, or natural and man-made boundaries
- **Populations:** Can be defined by specific groups within a larger area with core commonalities



TOOLS FOR IDENTIFYING YOUR COMMUNITY:

- CPTI Community Asset Mapping Tool
- Maine Kids Count Data
- Maine Integrate Youth Health Survey Data

'Dr. Advocate' noticed that a lot of the families in her practice were struggling to afford summer camp and child care during the summer months, leading to increased boredom, lack of adult supervision, and regression of educational skills and social abilities.



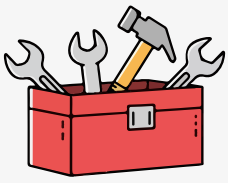
PHASE 2: GO OUT AND ASSESS

Explore your community to identify specific assets, needs and challenges that impact the health and well-being of children and families. Observation should include exploring existing resources in the community, assessing your community's structure and identifying the community-based organizations that are currently involved in various aspects of community development. Community development efforts find solutions to common problems and working together to address them.

Examples of community structure include: housing and zoning, retail services, schools and childcare, places of worship, human services, open spaces, transportation, public safety and neighborhood life.

Once the mapping tool is completed you can reflect on what you discovered:

- What would be the biggest strength(s) about living and raising children in this neighborhood?
- What would be the biggest concern(s)?
- Are their local organizations and people who are already working to find solutions?

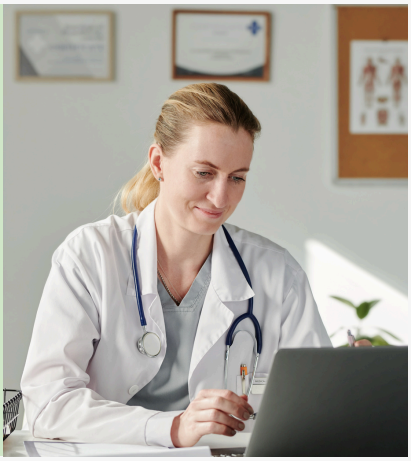


TOOLS FOR ASSESSING YOUR COMMUNITY:

- CPTI Community Asset Mapping Tool
- Community SOAP Note

'Dr. Advocate' did research to see if opportunities for free or affordable summer programs and camps already existed in her community, and found very few.

After talking with some community members, she learned that about 20% of the students in her school district can't afford summer programs and camps.



PHASE 3: MEET YOUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Identify community partners who can collaborate on planning and implementing solutions. Align with community organizations or members in your community who are already doing similar work, or who have a shared passion or vested interest.

Examples:

- A local child advocate organization (such as CASA) working to advocate for children in the court system.
- A local youth sports league looking to provide education around concussion prevention and management.
- A local food pantry working to expand a community garden.

Consult the **Community Wheel** to brainstorm partners in your community.





TOOLS FOR ASSESSING YOUR COMMUNITY:

- Maine Association of Nonprofit Directory

'Dr. Advocate' reached out to the local school district to discuss how they could create summer programming for students. The school district agreed to partner, and also pointed out that many of the same students also struggled with food insecurity during the summer. They also recommended looping in the community recreational center and food bank to discuss additional collaboration.



PHASE 4: TAKE ACTION

Once you've identified the issue and formed key partnerships, it's time to take action. As you move forward, make sure partners:

- **Agree on the process**: Set clear expectations and define roles for all involved.
- **Understand interests**: Ensure diverse perspectives by identifying each partner's priorities and needs.
- **Allocate resources:** Support community members' participation with stipends, childcare, food, or interpreters.
- **Balance power**: Make the community an equal partner in decision-making for sustainable advocacy.

Remember: As a pediatrician, you have a unique and important role to play in planning and implementation. You bring value to the process by having:

- Child Health Expertise: Sharing knowledge that impacts child health outcomes.
- Evidence-based interventions: Assessing solutions for effectiveness and developing SMART objectives for group organization.
- Connection and funding: Leveraging community standing and connections to secure resources and funding, such as AAP CATCH (Community Access to Child Health) grants.

Together, 'Dr. Advocate' and school district leadership decided to create a summer program that would provide fun learning activities to occupy students and fight educational and social regression over the summer. The school was also able to provide breakfast and lunch to students. The clinic staff agreed to lead info sessions and create resources for parents on the different social services available to them, including WIC, SNAP, and health insurance.



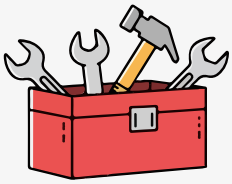
PHASE 5: EVALUATE & SHARE IT BACK

Consider the following questions in planning to evaluate your project:

- Do you have a specific plan for measuring outcomes (overall numbers of individuals impacted, surveys designed to measure change, epidemiological measures, etc.)?
- What are your specific outcomes measures? They should be aligned with your objectives.
- How will you and everyone else know if it worked?
- Think about short-, medium- and long-term goals and what the specific measures of success might be.

Consider what comes next, and what you need to sustain your project, improve it, and expand it.

Then share it back with the community! Sharing what you did and how you did it can help to preserve and expand on the change you created.



TOOLS FOR ASSESSING YOUR COMMUNITY:

- Maintenance of Certification (MOC) Health Care Improvement (Part 4) Credit

After the first summer, 'Dr. Advocate' and her community partners evaluated the success and challenges of the program. They revisited the metrics and goals they had set during the planning process to help with the evaluation. Then, they presented about the success of the program at school board and city council meetings, and asked for the resources they needed to continue providing the program to the community.

