

BUILDING ADVOCACY CAPACITY IN COMMUNITIES

Goal: To influence mental health policymaking through the collective voice of the community.

PHASE ONE - AWARENESS

- What is policy? (What government does or doesn't do related to specific issues.)
- What is advocacy? (Having a voice and using your voice to influence decision-making.)
- Know the power of the constituent.
- Know the power of combined voices.
- Know the policy landscape – federal, state, and local.

PHASE TWO - SKILLS BUILDING

- Meet communities where they are and grow from there.
- Know the policymakers – in all three branches of government.
- Identify advocacy leaders within your community.
- Participate in advocacy/leadership training.
- Build communication and messaging skills.
- Practice inclusion and the art of compromise.

PHASE THREE - PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION

- Create an advocacy plan.
- Identify the issues. (Name the gaps and the challenges.)
- Develop recommendations. (Specify the changes you want to see.)
- Develop strategies. (Identify the actions you will take -- town hall meetings, legislative visits, agency visits, legislative hearings, letter writing campaigns, media campaigns)
- Create a timeline to keep you moving forward.
- Create a common message.
- Identify allies and opposition. (Who can help? Who do you need to negotiate with?)
- Determine target audience. (Who can generate the needed change?)
- Develop advocacy materials.
- Include accountability measures. (Is what we're doing working?)