

# Successful Advocacy – Crafting and Delivering Your Message

**National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care**

Sarah Wells, Executive Director  
Robyn Grant, Director of Public Policy & Advocacy

Webinar – Tuesday, June 4, 2013

# Welcome & Introductions

## *Review of the Agenda*

- Facilitated by Lori Smetanka, Director of the National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center



# About Us

The Consumer Voice is the leading national voice representing consumers in issues related to long-term care, helping to ensure that consumers are empowered to advocate for themselves. We are a primary source of information and tools for consumers, families, caregivers, advocates and ombudsmen to help ensure quality care for the individual.



# Agenda

## **1. Crafting your message**

*Presented by Robyn Grant, Director of Public Policy & Advocacy*

## **2. Delivering your message**

*Presented by Sarah Wells, Executive Director*

## **4. Questions**

*Facilitated by Lori Smetanka, Director of the National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center*

# Crafting Your Message

- Robyn Grant, Director of Public Policy & Advocacy



# Six Steps to an Effective Message

## **Issue**

Residents on Medicaid in assisted living facilities are being evicted because facilities are withdrawing from the Medicaid program.

# Six Steps to an Effective Message

## **Step #1**

Open with a statement that engages your audience.

# Six Steps to an Effective Message

## **Example**

Assisted living facilities in our state are evicting frail dependent residents simply because Medicaid is paying their bills.



# Six Steps to an Effective Message

## **Step #2**

Present the problem.

# Six Steps to an Effective Message

## **Example**

Assisted living facilities that participate in the Medicaid program know what the reimbursement rate is. These facilities often admit people when they are able to pay out of their own pocket. Facilities sometimes promise the individuals that if they run out of money they can remain at the facility and have Medicaid pay for their care. Then – after residents have paid thousands of dollars and go on Medicaid – there are facilities that withdraw from the Medicaid program and kick these residents out. Residents, who now have no money left, are forced to leave what has become their home and move into nursing homes. As a result of being evicted, many residents are devastated, upset, and grief-stricken and the move can even result in physical harm and decline. In addition to this human cost, eviction costs the state money because nursing home care is more expensive than assisted living care.

# Six Steps to an Effective Message

## **Step #3**

Provide facts and data about the problem.

Facts you could consider using:

- Number of residents in the state that have been evicted.
- Number of residents in the legislator's district that have been evicted.
- Number of residents on Medicaid in assisted living facilities in the state who could face eviction.
- Number of residents on Medicaid in assisted living facilities in the legislator's district who could face eviction.

# Six Steps to an Effective Message

## **Example**

*In the past two years, 20 assisted living facility residents - each of whom was over the age of 80 - have been evicted from their homes when the facility decided to withdraw from the Medicaid program. Five of those residents are from your district.*

*Two thousand five hundred (2500) other seniors face the same fate statewide and 200 of those seniors live in your district.*

# Six Steps to an Effective Message

## **Step #4**

Give a real life, human example about the problem.

# Six Steps to an Effective Message

## Example

Mary Johnson was evicted from her assisted living facility where she had lived for 10 years. Mary spent \$350,000 of her own money on care at the assisted living facility. When she ran out of money, Medicaid covered the cost. Mary's son, John, says that officials at the facility always promised him that his mother could use Medicaid if she ran out of money. But the corporation that owned the facility changed its policy and decided it would no longer accept Medicaid payment.

Mary received the eviction notice 2 days after her 99<sup>th</sup> birthday. John kept the news from her as long as he could. There was no other assisted living facility in Mary's community that accepted Medicaid, and even if there had been, John was worried that she might face the same situation. Because Mary was broke and on Medicaid, her only option was to go to a nursing home

When John did finally tell Mary, she became very upset. She asked John if she had done something wrong because otherwise why would she have to leave. Mary became so distressed and anxious about leaving her home and having to go to a nursing home that she couldn't eat and began losing weight. This started a downward spiral from which she never recovered. She died only a couple of months after having moved to the nursing home.

# Six Steps to an Effective Message

## Step #5

Connect the issue to your audience:  
See how it fits with what they care about/want/need

Do as much research as you can about the person:

- Personal experiences, feelings, values.
- Family.
- Public statements.
- Voting history.
- Campaign materials.
- Goals/aspirations.

For elected officials: <http://votesmart.org/>

# Six Steps to an Effective Message

## **Example**

- We wanted to come to you with this issue because we know that you are very concerned about the state deficit and are looking for ways that the state money can save money.
- We knew you would want to hear about this issue because you've always been a champion for seniors.
- Seniors who served their country and survived combat are now being kicked out of facilities just because Medicaid is paying for their care. We've come to you about this problem because you've always stood up for veterans.



# Six Steps to an Effective Message

## **Step #6**

Make your request (the “ask”).

# Six Steps to an Effective Message

## **Example**

We're here today to ask you to sponsor legislation that would give residents on Medicaid the right to remain in the assisted living facility if the facility withdraws from the Medicaid program and require the facility to inform all prospective residents that the facility does not accept Medicaid.

# Tips

## **Prepare for arguments opposing your request.**

Argument: Facilities can't be expected to subsidize people at the Medicaid rate - they would go broke doing that.

Possible response: This bill would not prevent facilities from limiting the number of residents on Medicaid going forward. It just protects those the facility already admitted while participating in the Medicaid program.

# Tips

## **Don'ts**

- Don't be too complex (“wonky”).
- Don't be too wordy.
- Don't use inflammatory words/statements.

# Delivering Your Message

- Let's now turn it over to Sarah Wells, Executive Director of the Consumer Voice, who will share tips on how to deliver your message.



# Delivering Your Message

- During this portion of the presentation we'll cover the following topics:
  - How to get your message to policymakers;
  - How to get your message to supporters/your own network;  
and
  - How to get your message out to the media.

# Delivering Your Message

**Let's begin with how to get your  
message to policymakers.**

# Delivering Your Message: Policymakers

- Do your homework.
- Get the “ear” of the policymaker; think about gatekeepers.
- Prepare for an effective meeting with a policymaker.
- Know that policymakers are not likely experts on your issues.
- Become the “go-to” person for the policymaker.
- Know how to handle difficult situations.



# Delivering Your Message

**Now we'll give you tips for getting your message to supporters (or your network/any potential allies).**

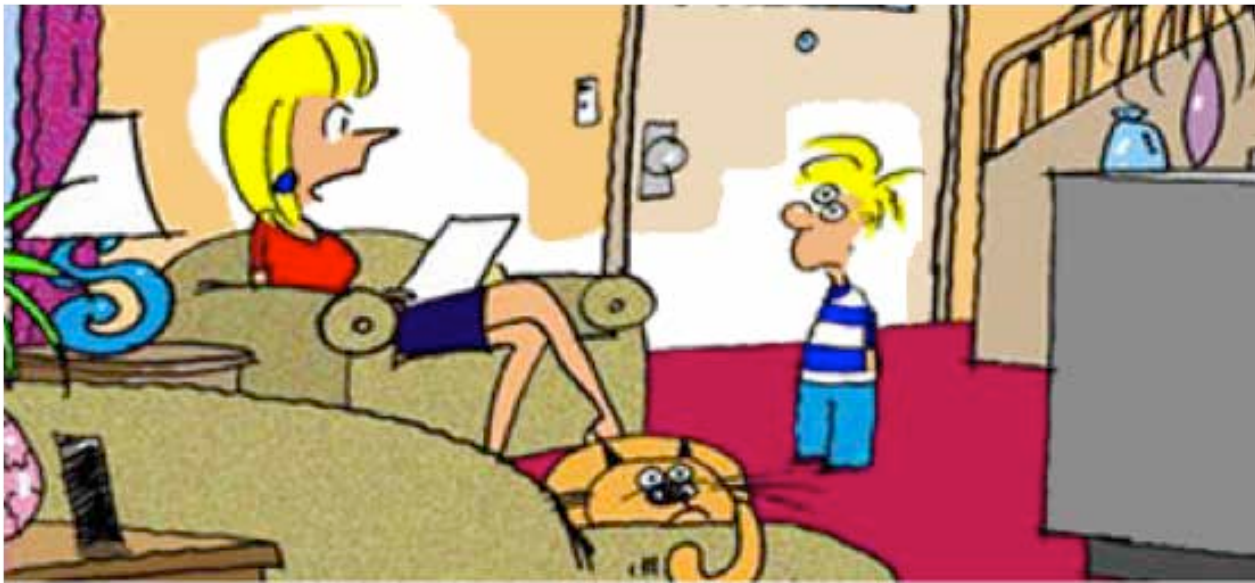
# Delivering Your Message: Supporters

- **Use Email**
  - **Educate about the issue**
  - **Send Action Alerts**
  - **Encourage supporters to use email to reach policymakers or other influential people**

# Delivering Your Message: Supporters

- **Use Social Media**

Stereotype: It's just a younger persons communication tool.



*“No, I didn’t download you off the Internet.  
I gave birth to you, end of discussion!”*

# Delivering Your Message: Supporters



# Delivering Your Message

**Now I will share some tips for getting your message to the media.**

# Delivering Your Message: Media

## **Television and Radio**

- **When They Want to Interview You**
  - Try to take a few minutes to collect your thoughts.
  - Be clear and concise.
  - Pause before answering.
  - Do answer questions, even if they are tough.
  - Try to turn negative comments into positive comments; don't ramble, don't argue and don't lie.
  - Speak in plain English.

# Getting Your Message to the Media

## Television and Radio

- **When You Want to Get a Story Out There**

- *Radio Strategies*

- Contact stations and invite them to attend your event or pitch your story.
- Pre-record a news story and/or sound bite(s) and pitch it to stations yourself or work with a company that does radio newsfeed placement.

- *Television Strategies*

- Research the show(s) carefully, and know your targets. Try to tell a story in your pitch; make the issue real. Include something eye-catching in your pitch/outreach.

# Getting Your Message to the Media

## Newspapers, Magazines, Etc.

- **Letter to the Editor**
  - *What is it?* When you feel strongly about an issue and you want to reach an audience larger than just your friends or membership.
  - *What can I do?* Anyone can submit a letter to the editor! They should remain around 300 words.



# Getting Your Message to the Media

## Newspapers, Magazines, Etc.

- **Op-Ed**
  - *What is it?* This occurs when newspapers publish an entire letter submitted by an individual or group. It should use arguments to present an informed view, be on a newsworthy topic, and emphasize the author's personal viewpoint.
  - *What can I do?* Anyone can submit an op-ed! They should remain around 600 words.

# Getting Your Message to the Media

## Newspapers, Magazines, Etc.

- **Editorial**

- *What is it?* An article that presents the newspaper's opinion on the issue. In essence, an editorial is an opinionated news story.
- *What can I do?* It's possible to influence an Editorial Board to write an article or to influence the content of an article.

# Delivering Your Message: Conclusion

1. Choose your delivery strategies wisely based on your resources, time and goals. Be **bold**, but don't over-commit.
2. Communicate your message clearly.
3. Set specific, measurable goals.

# Delivering Your Message: Conclusion

4. Provide your audience(s) with all the tools and information they need to do what you want them to do.
5. Analyze your results.
6. Celebrate success; learn from challenges and improve.

# Thank you! Questions??

- About crafting your advocacy message?
- About reaching out to policymakers, potential supporters or the media?

# Contact Us

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