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PLANNING A "ROLL" ADVOCACY EVENT



"I HAVE FOUND THAT THE GREATEST IMPACT WE MAKE IS WHEN A GROUP OF INDIVIDUALS ATTEND A PUBLIC MEETING TO SPEAK UP ABOUT THE CHANGE WE WANT."

**BRUCE BLOWER (NY)
UNITED SPINAL ADVOCATE**



"ROLL" EVENT PLANNING BASICS



Understand Your Issue(s). Clearly define your group's issue and your plan to educate attendees as an important initial step. Everyone attending your advocacy day should have a clear understanding of the issue they will be discussing and why.

Create a Budget and Fundraise. Early on, your planning team must lay out a budget for expenses that will incur for your event. Will you be providing food? Transportation? Include printing costs, room or space rental, promotion costs etc.

Schedule Visits. Once you have identified elected officials you would like to meet with, it's time to schedule visits. This can be done by calling the elected official's office or contacting the staffer in charge of scheduling. Once you have a date set for your event, start scheduling appointments as soon as possible.

Develop Talking Points. Make notes that explain your issues simply and make your position on the issue clear. Each advocate should be prepared to talk about why the issue is important to them and your group collectively. It's critical that everyone involved understands your "ask" and what you are requesting from your legislator.

Prepare Materials for Your Visit. Develop a one-page "Issue Paper" (see page 42 for template) and a simple handout explaining a bit about your chapter and the reason for your visit. Include at least one business card or document with contact info for your group.

Attend and Share Your Story. With your confidently prepared advocacy team by your side, speak up to share your experiences and the reason for your visit with the staffer or elected official. Make sure everyone is introduced and consider designating roles for individuals to lead. Before leaving, sum up the issue and make your ask. Designate a notetaker to write down meeting developments.

Follow-up. A thank you note and any information you agreed to provide should be sent soon after your visit. This provides an opportunity to follow-up with your ask directly and in writing. It's a nice gesture to send a thank you letter or email to the scheduler and the office staff expressing your appreciation.

ADVOCATES IN ACTION: ROLLING TOGETHER



IOWA CHAPTER OF UNITED SPINAL ADVOCATES



While the Iowa Chapter of United Spinal Association has been around for 15 years, their advocacy committee began its work in January 2019. Since then, they have worked hard to rally members to join the voices of others in Iowa to create positive policy change.

Members met and rolled together at their Des Moines statehouse to urge legislatures to make changes in the Medicaid benefits that help Iowans with spinal cord injuries and other disabilities live in the community. In 2016, Iowa switched to private management of Medicaid, a decision that has forced some wheelchair using Iowans into long-term care facilities and made finding care more difficult for many others looking to stay in their homes.

Jenn Wolff, Iowa's former Chapter Advocacy Representative and United Spinal Association's former Grassroots Advocacy Manager, said in the arranged press conference, "I think it's time legislators see people with disabilities not as a sick person, not as a person who is home-bound or wheelchair-bound, not somebody who is a drain on the system, but as people who want to give back to the state of Iowa."

The event allowed individuals with disabilities to better understand the importance of their own voice in the legislative process, while increasing awareness for a change their community needs. The Iowa Chapter of United Spinal Association's advocacy committee would like to encourage each legislator to, "Look past their personal and partisan biases and see these issues as they are in our daily reality. To sit at the same table [as people with disabilities] and work together to create a sustainable Medicaid program in Iowa that we all can be proud of." You can visit the Iowa Chapter website at <http://unitedspinaliowa.org/>.