Hello CAN Coordinators!

It's time to practice our writing skills! Advocating comes in many forms but one of the more classic ways is through writing. Writing is an effective way to express views, information, stories and the like, especially to your elected officials and network. Below we will give multiple examples of ways in which you can influence via writing, why it is so important to write for the purpose of advocacy, and best practices to consider when you are in the process of writing.

Types of Advocacy Writing

There are many ways in which writing is used for public policy advocacy. Some common types of advocacy writing include:

* An Op-Ed piece (opinion piece on a newspaper's editorial page)
* A press advisory or press release
* A letter to the editor
* A letter to a legislator, administrator, or other policy-maker
* A letter of complaint, or requesting an investigation by an oversight agency
* Public testimony before a legislative or regulatory hearing
* An investigative report (facts, analysis, conclusions, recommendations)
* Letters to inform, mobilize and organize your constituency, allies, and the general public
* A notice of a meeting, training, forum, or action.

Purpose of Advocacy Writing

Although advocacy writing involves portraying facts and information in the most understand way possible, it ultimately serves one main purpose: to persuade, to convince your readers to think the way you do about a subject, or influence them in some way that will affect change. In short, effective advocacy writing contains facts that effectively support the writer's opinion, and presents them in a way that convinces their readers. The ticket to successful writing skills for public policy advocacy is to be clear about what you want to say and about how it will be received. Your choice of words, the length of sentences, the tone of language you use, all reflect the relationship you want to create with your reader or audience. When you have finished writing a piece, make sure you proofread carefully as well as allow others to read and edit for quality purposes.

Consider these questions when you are writing for advocacy.

* Who is your main audience? Who is the writing intended to influence?
* What is the issue you are addressing? What message or information are you trying to present?
* When are your opportunities for conveying the message? When will you be presenting the information?
* Where will you be conveying the message in terms of location and median style?
* Why are you writing? Why is this topic important?
* How can you most effectively convey your message?

Tips for Effective Advocacy Writing

* Keep it short and sweet!
* Organization is key, use correct grammar and punctuation; jargon is deadly.
* Do your research, know the intended recipients of your message.
* Know your goals, know why you are writing.
* Be sure you know what you are trying to convey.
* Catch their interest in the beginning. If you don’t, they may never get to the middle or end.
* Summarize/introduce, then explain with data, information, and examples, then summarize/conclude.
* Always have someone read your work and give you their opinions and suggestions.

Editing and proofreading helps you check your writing to make sure that you have tied up any loose ends and clarified all your important points. Rereading your final draft aloud will help to assure it is written clearly and legibly. Replace any words, phrases or sentences that are awkward or confusing. Prepare a final copy of your writing, and then have one final proofread before submitting or sending it.

Writing to your elected officials? Don’t forget to utilize CEC’s Legislative Action Center where you can find contact information and other helpful information.

Questions? Contact Rosie Haller-Kaplan: rosehk@cec.sped.org or 703-264-9498