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Get to the Core of It: Best Practices in CIL Core Services—Systems Advocacy

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Presenter:

Stephanie Woodward

Introduction

Systems Advocacy is a core service!

- What is it?
- Can we do it?
- Why would we do it?
- How do we do it?
- What are we going to do?

Learning Objectives

- Explain systems advocacy as a core service that builds community and changes lives
- Describe the five prongs of The Pitchfork Approach to systems advocacy and how it can be used to create systems change
- Describe how social media can be used as a highly effective advocacy tool
- Discuss how to keep your advocates energized, committed, and involved
- Explain strategies for measuring success of a CIL's systems advocacy efforts
- Where are you going to begin and what strategies will you use?

About Stephanie Woodward

- No knowledge of or involvement in the Disability Rights Movement until college
- Interned for Center for Disability Rights in 2008
- Hired as the Transportation Advocate soon after
- Worked for Senator Harkin on disability issues in 2009
- Volunteered with CDR for 3 years while attending law school
- Litigated in Miami for one year
- Returned to CDR as the Director of Advocacy

What Kinds of Advocacy Have I Done?

- Met with Mayors, Senators, other high level government officials
 - Taken over their offices for hours (or days) when necessary
- Advised businesses on how to be accessible and comply with ADA
 - Lead direct actions against inaccessible businesses
 - Sued inaccessible businesses
- Wrote Disability Rights legislation
 - Got arrested fighting for Disability Rights legislation
- Attended meetings at the White House
 - Got arrested at the White House
- Dozens of news stories locally, statewide, & nationally

Systems Advocacy is a Core Service!

- It's fun to do!
- It's required of all Centers!
- You get paid to make the world a better place!
- Results are literally life changing!
- Not the same as lobbying.
- Works hand in hand with individual services.

Why Systems Advocacy?

- Have you ever had a problem...
 - Securing accessible, affordable, integrated housing?
 - Securing needed attendant services?
 - Getting and keeping a job?
 - Getting into or through public venues, stores, government offices, etc.?
 - Finding accessible parking?
 - Communicating with doctors or in court systems due to lack of interpreters?

Why Systems Advocacy? cont'd.

- What can **you** do about these struggles?
 - Accept inaccessibility and discrimination.
 - Conform to the demands of the nondisabled majority.
- OR**
- Mobilize a community wide effort to remove barriers.
 - Pick priorities and fight for them.
 - Educate the community about disabled people and disability rights.

Why do Systems Advocacy? cont'd. 2

- If you're not here to make the world a better place then why are you here?
- Our people have been oppressed & don't know their rights or how to exert them.
- We can teach & empower our people by including them in our advocacy efforts.
- Our people are still oppressed & trapped in institutions. They can't fight for their freedom, so we must.

Why do Systems Advocacy? cont'd. 3

- We are the experts on what we want & need
- If we don't speak for ourselves, others will speak for us. The usual culprits are:
 - Parents
 - Doctors
 - Unions
 - Staff, social workers
 - Service Provider Associations

Why do Systems Advocacy? cont'd. 4

- What happens when others speak for us? They say:
 - Group homes need more funding
 - They need to be 'less burdened' by person-centered paperwork
 - Disabilities are the problem, they need to be cured / eliminated
 - Quality of life with disability isn't really all that good, so why provide health care?

Why do Systems Advocacy? cont'd. 5

- Advocacy is not just for radicals, or loud people, or "other" people.
- Advocacy is for everyone!
 - Anyone can be an advocate and it is crucial to identify each person's skills and utilize them.
- Systems Advocacy & Direct Services are interdependent
 - Direct services identify the barriers
 - Systems Advocacy removes the barriers

Questions and Answers

Let's talk!!

The Systems Advocacy “Pitchfork”

- ADAPT’s Pitchfork of Systems Advocacy
- In no particular order...
 - Media
 - Legal
 - Legislative
 - Administrative
 - Direct Action
- The most effective advocates use multiple prongs

The Systems Advocacy “Pitchfork” Media

What is it? Using the media to educate the public, influence policy, and explain how public policies affect lives of people with disabilities.

Best practices:

- Calling out businesses or entities that discriminate against people with disabilities and using the force of public opinion to make them change their behavior.
- Sending out press releases when good or bad things happen to educate your community about your issues!

The Systems Advocacy “Pitchfork” Media cont’d.

- **Examples:**

- City refused to clear sidewalks of snow. News outlets covered us talking about the issue, the law, and took video of us trying to get through the snow. Then radio stations talked about it the next day!
- TV, Radio, and print news covered our ADA events which helped us get more people to events, and also educate our community about the ADA.
- Sending out press releases before a direct action can get media there sooner, and put a lot of heat on the opposition once they’re in the public eye!

The Systems Advocacy “Pitchfork” Legal

What is it? Use existing anti-discrimination laws to challenge discriminatory practices.

Best practices:

- Sending letters to businesses informing them of the ADA, their violations, and how they can fix it. This can lead them to fix the issues without a lawsuit.
- Filing DOJ complaints or state human rights law complaints.
- Suing businesses or entities that refuse to comply with the ADA.

The Systems Advocacy “Pitchfork”

Legal cont’d.

- **Examples:**

- Letters to local businesses resulted in building ramps, installing doorbells, and removing steps without lawsuits.
- Letters also resulted in businesses staunchly refusing to comply with the ADA, and lead to successful lawsuits.
- DOT complaints lead to an investigation of our local transportation company.

The Systems Advocacy “Pitchfork” Legislative

What is it? Influencing elected officials and their staff in order to affect public policy through phone calls, visits, emails, and social media.*

Best Practices:

- Call-in days encouraging legislators to support disability rights
- Office visits with legislator’s constituents to tell personal stories

*Advocacy and lobbying are not the same thing. Lobbying involves stating or influencing others to state an opinion on specific legislation. Nonprofits are allowed to do a certain amount of lobbying, but NOT with federal funds. Legislative advocacy can and should be a major aspect of your advocacy. See https://www.independentsector.org/lobbying_guidelines_public_charities

The Systems Advocacy “Pitchfork” Legislative cont’d.

- **Examples:**

- Using social media (Twitter & Facebook) to encourage Senator Schumer to introduce legislation that would enforce the right of disabled people to live in the community.
- Bringing constituents to their legislator’s office to discuss why affordable, accessible, integrated housing is needed.
- Encouraging advocates to email their legislators to describe how lever voting machines prevent them from participating in the voting process.

The Systems Advocacy “Pitchfork” Administrative

What is it? Influencing state agencies, businesses, organizations, administrations, and other entities.

Best Practices:

- Submitting comments on proposed laws as to how it will affect people with disabilities
- Testifying at hearings for proposed changes to policies affecting disabled people
- Developing strong leaders with disabilities and helping them get appointed to the agencies/businesses in order to have the disability perspective on the inside.

The Systems Advocacy “Pitchfork” Administrative cont’d.

- **Examples:**

- Testifying when transportation company considered cutting routes which would then cut disabled people off from paratransit.
- Submitting written comments when the NYS Building Codes were going to be amended to decrease required accessibility.
- Training people with disabilities from our Leadership Academy and helping them get into positions of power in other organizations.

The Systems Advocacy “Pitchfork” Direct Action

What is it? Non-violent direct action, such as civil disobedience, street theater, and rallies can be used to bring about systems change.

Best Practices:

- Street theater outside of an inaccessible restaurant
- Holding signs & chanting outside of a discriminatory entity
- Rally outside of a government office that is violating/not enforcing disability rights.

The Systems Advocacy “Pitchfork” Direct Action cont’d.

- **Examples:**

- Rally outside of the Department of Justice for failing to investigate DOJ complaints regarding Olmstead violations.
- Holding signs, chanting, passing out flyers, and blocking the entrances of a new Goodwill store to educate about their subminimum wage practices.
- Taking over the Governor’s rotunda and singing a disability version of “12 Days of Christmas” to secure funding for attendant services.

The Systems Advocacy “Pitchfork”

- Each fork can be used individually or together
- Great for creating “Good Cop, Bad Cop” situations to push disability rights
- The Pitchfork can be just as effective with community building as it can be with more assertive, targeted advocacy.

How to do Systems Advocacy

- Putting the Pitchfork into action
 - What's the issue?
 - What are your goals?
 - What are your strategies?
 - How do you know when you've won?
 - What's your exit strategy?
 - How do you celebrate your victories?

How to do Systems Advocacy cont'd.

- Know your issue! You must define the issue in order to change it!
- People in the community must care about the issue!
- Know how the outcome will positively impact people when you win.

How to do Systems Advocacy cont'd. 2

- **Build a Strategy!** Tips adapted from Shel Trapp:
 - Will the people accept it?
 - Will it dramatize and build the issue?
 - Will it throw the opposition off balance?
 - Will it personalize the opposition?
 - Will it be fun for the people?
 - What alternatives must be planned?
 - Will it get us to the bargaining table?

How to do Systems Advocacy cont'd. 3

- **Develop an Issue Group**—More tips from Shel:
 - Identify the issue
 - Test the issue
 - Find a leader or leaders
 - Hold leadership meeting
 - Hold meeting
 - Win the issue
 - Move group to another issue

How to do Systems Advocacy, cont'd. 4

- Some other tips to remember:
 - Anyone can be a leader
 - Create leaders through praise and constructive feedback
 - Invest people by using their strengths
 - When you have the choice to fight **for** what you want or fighting **against** what you don't want, choose to fight for what you want.

Questions and Answers

Let's talk!!

Social Media and E-advocacy

- Where should we start? How do we do it?
 - Facebook
 - Twitter
 - LinkedIn
 - YouTube
 - Instagram
 - Others...

Social Media and E-advocacy: Facebook

- Great for spreading messages & garnering public support
- Best when used with images
- Great for connecting to media professionals
- Amazing for getting community members hyped and involved

Social Media and E-advocacy:

Twitter

- Use to hit targets & affiliates (@business or @senator)
- Catch media/public attention (@mediaoutlet)
- Always create a hashtag for your event or issue (#ADA25 or #CIA4ADA)
- Hashtag your area for retweets (#ROC)
- Hashtag the movement (#disabilityrights)

Social Media and E-advocacy: Get Organized

Organize days to do social media hits

- Create the hashtag in advance for people to use
- Create sample tweets for people
- Create memes to spread on Facebook
- Tell people who the target is, what the message is, and let them have fun!

Use social media during direct actions!

Social Media and E-advocacy: What We Have Accomplished

- Department stores becoming accessible
- Airlines repairing broken wheelchairs faster
- Senators passing bills
- Businesses getting shamed for using accessible parking
- Community donating financial support
- Governor and other legislators meeting with us

Social Media and E-advocacy:

Facebook stats

- The Facebook page for the Center for Disability Rights (CDR) has 6,738 fans as of 7/15/2015
- CDR has 11,400 followers on Twitter
- Retweets of action alerts
- People report complaints to us on Facebook and Twitter

Social Media and E-advocacy: YouTube

- YouTube
 - Zillions of videos, short and lengthy
 - Create your own channel, get subscribers
- Create your own propaganda on:
 - Voting for people with disabilities
 - Interacting with people with disabilities
 - Deinstitutionalization

Social Media and E-advocacy cont'd.

- Capwiz and other E-advocacy tools
 - Quick and easy
 - High quantity, low quality
 - Tools are evolving quickly to improve quality of constituent contact
- You MUST Remember this...
 - Social Media is dialogue, reciprocal
 - It is not your one directional propaganda machine
 - Engage people, ask questions, answer questions
 - Say and do interesting things

Questions & Answers

Let's Talk!!

How to Keep Advocates Involved!

- Your consumers are your advocates!
- Get them to buy into advocacy!
 - Work on issues they care about, then work on your issues!
- Create confidence and they'll want to keep the momentum going!

How to Keep Advocates Involved! cont'd.

- Use **all** of your people, different skill sets make for stronger advocacy!
- Always go home with a win.
- When you win big, give them the credit! They deserve it!
- Happy advocates come back for more!

Why Measure Success?

- Some states require systems advocacy successes
- Board wants to know
- We're responsible to our consumers and members

Measuring Success cont'd.

- Establish attainable goals
- Goals need to be in line with community priorities
- Quantify what can be quantified
- Know your goals!
- Monitor progress regularly
- Celebrate the victories
- Create a win wall & look at it often!

What is the first thing you will do as a result of this training?

Questions and Answers

Let's talk!!

Contact Information

- Stephanie Woodward – swoodward@cdrnys.org

Evaluation

Please click the link below to complete an evaluation of this program:

<http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/2237502/CIL-NET-Webinar-Evaluation-August-19-2015>

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