

FACT SHEET

Being an Advocate for Perinatal Mental Health

WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

Advocacy is raising awareness and providing information about an issue. Definitions include:

- > The act or process of supporting a cause or proposal.
- > Publicly recommending an action or plan.
- > An activity by an individual or group that aims to influence decisions within political, economic, and social institutions.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Effective advocacy raises awareness about a situation and offers a solution to a problem. Advocacy has two important goals:

- > Providing policymakers with information so they can create and implement effective legislation.
- > Raising public awareness about an issue, which in turn provides pressure to address the issue.

Advocates are the **subject matter experts** in a particular issue: they provide information, knowledge, and experience. Advocates are necessary in advancing efforts to address a particular issue or problem.



Perinatal mental health (PMH) conditions are the most common complication of the perinatal timeframe—pregnancy and year following pregnancy—affecting 1 in 5 birthing and perinatal people.

WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF ADVOCACY?

EDUCATE



- Write an op-ed, letter to the editor, or article.
- Meet with an elected official to share information, such as a new study about PMH issues.

SPEAK UP



- Attend a town hall meeting with a local elected official and ask questions.
- Share information on social media.

ORGANIZE



- Organize an advocacy day.
- Form a network of people with similar interests.

TRAIN



- Host a webinar about the impact of PMH conditions in the community.
- Teach others how to advocate.

WHO CAN BE AN ADVOCATE?

Anyone can be an advocate!

The most effective advocates can speak confidently about an issue, highlighting facts and figures while including a person story. Advocates for maternal mental health include:

- Individuals with lived experience with PMH conditions.
- Family and friends of those impacted by PMH conditions.
- Frontline providers and affiliated providers who interact with birthing people and new parents.
- Mental health providers who treat individuals experiencing PMH conditions.

Learn more about the
 Power of Advocacy from the
 American Public Health Association
bit.ly/poweradvocacy

THE BOTTOM LINE: ADVOCACY IS EDUCATION

ADVOCACY & LOBBYING

Advocacy encompasses many different kinds of activities to raise awareness about an issue or promote a cause or idea. Lobbying refers to activities addressing a specific legislative policy.

PMH advocates can and should participate in both advocacy and lobbying. Both are necessary to raise awareness about PMH and to influence programs and policies to help those impacted by PMH conditions.


IMPORTANT TO KNOW

An **INDIVIDUAL** can participate in unlimited advocacy, lobbying, or endorsing.

An **INDIVIDUAL** working on behalf of an **ORGANIZATION**:

- Can participate in any amount of advocacy on behalf of the organization.
- Can participate in some limited amount of lobbying on behalf of the organization.
- **CANNOT** endorse a political party or candidate on behalf of the organization.



	ADVOCACY	LOBBYING
Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy • The act or process of stakeholders sharing information or opinion about a cause or proposal • Activity by an individual or group aiming to influence decisions within political, economic, and social institutions • Arguing in favor of a cause or idea • Speaking up for or against something 	<p>A subset of advocacy that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direct communication to elected official or staff • on a specific piece of legislation • call to action <p>DIRECT LOBBYING: Asking organization members or colleagues to contact elected officials to support or oppose particular legislation.</p> <p>GRASSTOPS LOBBYING: Asking influential and/or connected individuals to contact elected officials on particular legislation.</p> <p>GRASSROOTS LOBBYING: Asking members of the public to contact elected officials to support or oppose particular legislation.</p>
Goal	Ensure people have their voices heard.	Exert influence for a specific piece of legislation in a decision-making body.
Examples	Emailing, calling, or meeting with elected officials and/or their staff to educate them about an issue.	Circulating a sign-on letter asking legislators to support a specific piece of legislation.
BOTTOM LINE	<p>Providing education about an issue</p> 	<p>Encouraging action on specific legislation</p> 