Peer Advocacy as a Strategy for Resistance and Change

A CIDNY workshop

NYAIL Conference 2017
Advocacy Goals

- To prevent legislation and other policy initiatives that have a negative effect on people with disabilities.
- To train peer advocates who will organize and train others to participate in policy and advocacy actions and initiatives.
- To advance the CIL’s policy agenda.
- To increase the skill levels of people with disabilities who want to take part in advocacy.
Strategies for Resistance & Change

• Hiring a team of peer advocates to organize and train people with disabilities in various tactics to accomplish goals.
• Create a rapid response team to respond to policies and legislation that would affect people with disabilities negatively.
• Teach communication skills.
• Monitor legislative and other policy initiatives and develop strategies to affect them.
• Document activities to create a model for action and advocacy.
What Peer Advocates do

– Identify and organize people with disabilities to take action on our advocacy issues.
– Identify opportunities for advocacy.
– Document successes and failures.
– Use a variety of advocacy skills to impact/change/resist policies that affect people with disabilities.
– Mobilize our participants and others interested in working systemically to improve the lives of people with disabilities.
Rally To Protest Medicaid Block Grants
How does PA Team Works?

The team identifies people with disabilities who want to know about issues related to our agenda:

- Health care
- Housing
- Food
- Transportation
- Voting rights
- Encourages voting and voter surveying
  - Etc.
How the PA Team Works? (cont.)

- Team organizes people with disabilities around specific activities:
  - meetings with legislators
  - public events, like press conferences, demonstrations, town halls, hearings, etc.
  - other types of social, political, and economic pressure to convince those in power to rethink their positions.
How does PA Team Work? (cont.)

• Organize meetings around issues that are important to us. For example:
  – The need for curb cuts
  – Protecting health coverage
  – Elevators at subway stations.

• Develop action agenda on those issues that may include:
  – office visits
  – demonstrations
  – town hall meetings, etc.
Healthcare Rally To Protest Repeal of Affordable Care Act
All PAs are Trained in History and Action Strategies

- 7th-Sense – Disability Awareness
- History of Independent Living Centers
- Advocacy writing
- Positions on our policy agenda
- How to develop talking points for legislative visits, hearings, and town halls
- How to research key legislators and policy positions on our issues
- How to create participants stories that are effective for advocacy and public education.
Vigil To Protest Repeal of Affordable Care Act
All PAs are Trained in History and Action Strategies (cont.)

- Surveying & Documenting Experiences Affecting Policies:
  - Fair Housing Act surveys
  - Poll site surveys
  - Individual Voter surveys
  - Access-A-Ride
- How to run a Phone Bank
- Taking part in demonstrations to ensure our voices are heard
- Recruiting and networking with peers
- Strategies for Civil Disobedience
- Using FOIA to gather key information (NYSBOE)
Protest against Charter Schools and at the MTA Board Meeting for Improved Transportation Services
Social Media

• Using social media including Twitter and Facebook to broaden our reach and organize new participants
• Training participants to tell their stories to the mainstream media (broadcast and print)
• Crafting appropriate messages for each type of outlet
Peer Advocate Tasks

• Create and complete activities grid
  – legislators/agency policy makers
  – events: town halls, rallies, demonstrations, legislative visits, hearings, etc.
  – advocacy participants

• Consumer outreach/networking
  – organizing strategies
  – identify activity preferences
  – activity log
Rally for Improved Access A Ride Service and Opposition To The Proposed American Health Care Act
Peer Advocate Tasks (cont.)

• Monitor policy activity by legislators and sister organizations
  – opportunities for action and advocacy
  – form coalitions with like-minded organizations and groups
Peer-Advocate created a list of participants with information on the resistance grid of what they wish/can do:

- In-Office visits/Sit-ins
- Mass Calls
- Town Halls/Listening Sessions
- Other Public Events
- Enlist participants to recruit across their networks
- Invite everyone who has shown interest to an in-person kickoff meeting
Resistance Grid (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Borough</th>
<th>Villages/Neighborhoods/Zip Code Areas</th>
<th>District Office Address</th>
<th>Phone #</th>
<th>FAX #</th>
<th>Social Media</th>
<th>Email</th>
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Resistance Grid

• Tactics to Use –
  – Advocating with and educating legislators
  – Rallies and marches
  – Town hall meetings
  – Action alerts/letter writing/telephone calls
• Create a list of people that have agreed to take action
Medicaid Beneficiaries Speak Up

"Thanks to Medicaid, I was able to have my liver transplant. And without it, I wouldn’t be able to pay for the anti-rejection treatments that I’ll need for life."

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Participant Outreach

• Getting participants on board involved various strategies:
  – Telephone calls to CIL participants
  – Letters
  – Networking: asking participants for leads to others who may join, organizations with similar issues, other ideas for recruitment
  – Mentoring: working with participants who need extra help in order to participate
    • step-by-step explanations of process
    • extra time explaining policy or advocacy actions
    • extra contact to encourage participation
Activities

• Met with lawmakers at town hall meetings, press conferences. For example:
  – Senator Krueger, Assemblyman Gottfried, Public Advocate Letitia James
• Participated in rallies and protests
  – Medicaid Block Grant Kills
  – Protect our Public Schools
  – Save Our Healthcare
  – Access-A-Ride hearing
Activities (cont.)

• Spoke at forums, panel discussions. For example:

• Shared stories with the media:
  Participants prepared to talk to media and spoke to reporters at rallies and demos

• Social media announcements and reports on activities
What have they accomplished?

- Built greater public awareness of our issues
- Built advocacy and public speaking skills for participants
- Helped prevent damaging proposals by legislators (repeal of ACA, roll-back of NYS health benefits...)
- Formed strong coalitions with other disability organizations, individuals and other groups sharing our issue concerns, such as the Coalition to Protect Medicaid, Rise and Resist.
For additional information visit our website
www.cidny.org

Or contact:
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