

What's Policy Got to Do with It?

Translating Policy to Practice in the Field

Kate Audette, MSW

In sum, the absence of social workers from social policy practice is damaging to the identify of the profession and to the clients whose interest they should represent and defend.

Josefina Figueira-McDonough

Policy Practice:

The Neglected Side of Social Work Intervention



**If you're not at the table,
you're on the menu.**

**It's time for field
education to pull up a
seat at the table.**



Agenda & Objectives

- Discuss concrete examples of legislative, budgetary and political advocacy experiences that students can undertake to enhance their learning, develop their social work competencies and advance the mission of their agencies
- Review resources to support the integration of advocacy into MSW field education



Baseline Check In

- Do you, your students and staff know which elected officials represents you, them and the organization?
- Have elected officials done a tour or come to see your agency in action?
- Have you already integrated advocacy experiences into your placement?



Legislative Advocacy

- Monitor legislation
- Write and file legislation
- Testify at hearings and support clients to do the same
- Organize events at the State House
- Letter writing campaigns
- Invite legislators for tours of your organization
- Monitor implementation and evaluation of bills passed into laws and proposed regulations
- Free resources
 - www.wheredoivotema.com
 - www.mass.gov/legis
 - MassterList
 - MA Politico Playbook
 - NASW Social Work Speaks*



Budgetary Advocacy

- MA State Budget Process happens annually
 - January – July
 - Advocates can file amendments and seek support for them
 - Public can observe and live stream budget debates
- FY17 State Senate budget debates begin this week
- Free resources
 - MA Budget and Policy Center
 - MA Taxpayers Foundation
 - www.mass.gov/legis



Political Advocacy

- Voter registration and education
 - Educate clients and staff on their rights
 - Voter registration and updating registration
 - Absentee ballots for clients with mobility challenges, religious exemptions, staff unable to get to the polls
 - **NEW**: early voting starts this year in MA
- Driving clients and patients to the polls
- Institutional positions and education on ballot questions
- Free resources
 - MassVote
 - Nonprofit Vote



But what about lobbying laws and political work at nonprofits?

- State and federal employees and agencies have specific rules against lobbying
- Remaining non partisan at all times in non profits is critical
- Do not give gifts of value to elected officials or members of the administration
- Do not have to register as a lobbyist with the State of MA if:
 - Social worker engages lobbying for not more than 25 hours during a six month reporting period
 - receives less than \$2,500 during the six month reporting period



Key Take-A-Ways

- Don't go it alone, partner with human service and consumer based advocacy organizations and coalitions
- The internet and social media are vital advocacy tools
- Learn who represents your agency, your clientele, your staff and your students
- Effective integration of advocacy into field education benefits students, clients, the agency, the social work profession and the community as a whole



Contact Information

Kate Audette

Kathryn.audette@childrens.harvard.edu

617.919.3062



**Let's pull up a seat at
the table...**

