

Policy Work and Public Employees: STD Program Guidelines

Every day, U.S. health departments engage in public policy efforts in order to improve the public health of local communities. While it is true that public employees CANNOT lobby for policy change with local, state, or federal policymakers on official time, public employees CAN* educate on public health issues. Educating policymakers on sexual health issues provides governing bodies the opportunity and information to respond to constituents' needs.

The following guidelines are designed to help public employees understand what policy work they CAN* do with their resources, and how they can safely engage in policymaker education.

*Caution: Make sure you know your department's specific policies on communicating with local, state and federal policymakers. The following "do's and don'ts" are derived from federal guidelines, but more specific department policies may be available. For explicit details on Anti-Lobbying Restrictions for CDC grantees, please visit: <http://1.usa.gov/1R1ZzD>



As a public employee on work time...

You CAN

- ✔ Educate elected officials on your STD program and what your local STD epidemics look like, including the burden of STDs in your area and the public health impact that STD screening and testing has on reducing communicable disease.
- ✔ Share examples of STD prevention best practices or success stories across localities or with the legislature.
- ✔ Share evidence-based policy approaches (including model regulations) to improve sexual health in your community.
- ✔ Provide technical assistance or advice to a legislative body or committee in response to a request (e.g. state legislature's Health Committee).
- ✔ Example: Educating policy makers on their constituency: "Hi I'm Susie from X, and I am here to tell you about STD issues in your community!"

You Can NOT

- ✘ Make a direct appeal to Congress or State Legislature. Advocating for or against a specific piece of state or federal legislation a regulation or a rule is considered direct lobbying.
- ✘ Make a direct appeal to the general public. Encouraging the public to advocate for or against a specific piece of local, state or federal legislation, a regulation, or a rule is considered grassroots lobbying.
- ✘ Request increased funding from local, state, or federal government officials.
- ✘ Example: Directly asking for an action, making a specific ask: "Please support House Bill XX to increase STD program funding; we need you to take action on this issue now."

Know Your Rights

As a private citizen, you have every right to advocate on any issue of concern to you. If your locality is reluctant to let you educate policymakers as a department representative, consider how to advocate on these issues from a personal perspective and on your personal time. Your voice as an individual citizen matters!

Questions? Contact NCSDD's Policy Team

NCSDD has assisted a number of jurisdictions with policy education efforts, and works year-round to educate local, state and federal policy makers on best practices for promoting sexual health and STD prevention. For more information please contact us at: statepolicy@ncsddc.org, or visit www.ncsddc.org.