



---

ADVOCACY GUIDE



## Contents

Preface .....	<i>i</i>
Bethesda Voices .....	1
Advocates: Agents for Action .....	3
Building Relationships .....	5
Contacting Your Legislators .....	9
Partnering with Media .....	13
Legislative Process .....	17
Bethesda's Regional Contacts .....	20
Legislative Terminology .....	21
Appropriate Language .....	25

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Since 1904, Bethesda Lutheran Homes and Services, Inc. has been a leader in the field of developmental disability services. Founded in Watertown, Wis., we provide Christian services and supports to children and adults with developmental disabilities through a variety of service offices nationwide. From its inception, Bethesda's religious education programs have been the cornerstone of its ministry. Bethesda works with people to help them locate welcoming congregations in their community and provides Bible studies at its facilities and in the community as requested. It also works with people and congregations worldwide to help them educate others on the spiritual needs of people with developmental disabilities. Bethesda's Parish Ministry Consultants help pastors and families start or enhance their own religious special education programs. These services are free of charge and are supported by donations.

As a non-profit, faith-based organization Bethesda Lutheran Homes and Services, Inc. turns to people like you to help support its ministry. It is critical that individuals with developmental disabilities and others who support them speak out on behalf of others. Our elected officials need to hear from self-advocates, families and supporters of people with developmental disabilities. This voluntary program is an ideal way to ensure that the voices of individuals with developmental disabilities are heard.

With generous support from our donors, we begin our second century of pursuing our mission.

To teach and share Christ's love while  
providing supports and services for people  
with developmental disabilities.

Thank you for all the support you show Bethesda and the people with developmental disabilities who receive services through our organization, and hope you will continue to keep us in your thoughts, prayers, and actions.

Warmest regards in Christ,



David Geske, Ph.D.  
Bethesda President and Chief Executive Officer

## Bethesda Voices

*A program of Bethesda Lutheran Homes and Services, Inc.*

Bethesda Voices (Voices) is the national grassroots advocacy program of Bethesda Lutheran Homes and Services, Inc. (Bethesda). Voices exists to mobilize support for improved and sustained federal and state funding for developmental disability programs and supports. Voices is a group of self-advocates, concerned parents, and others who are willing to protect the rights of people with developmental disabilities.

The goal of Voices is to support and encourage volunteers to become more informed about developmental disability issues, to teach volunteers how to educate representatives in Washington, D.C. and state capitals throughout the country, and how to mobilize community members.

As a Voices advocate, you will add your voice to the debates over issues that can directly improve or add challenges to the day-to-day lives of people who live with developmental disabilities. In many cases, these people have a limited ability to communicate in ways that are most effective for persuading legislators and other policy makers to make decisions that favor people with developmental disabilities. This is where Voices volunteers step up to do the good, challenging and extremely meaningful work that they do. We welcome you to the cause.

Bethesda is a Lutheran organization, and accordingly all our efforts are grounded in a firm faith in God. Bethesda's core values reflect the Lutheran theology.

- ▶ People with developmental disabilities are people for whom Christ died.
- ▶ Christ's leadership and love direct every aspect of service.
- ▶ People with developmental disabilities and the people who support them have intrinsic worth.
- ▶ People with developmental disabilities should direct their supports and services.
- ▶ People with developmental disabilities positively impact the communities in which they live.
- ▶ Our Lutheran identity and our relationship with the church, its congregations and agencies are critical to our mission.
- ▶ Continuous quality enhancement is essential to services for people with developmental disabilities.

## Why Grassroots Advocacy Matters

Members of Congress respond in an immediate and personal way to their constituents. Grassroots advocacy, such as Bethesda Voices, helps legislators understand how budgeting decisions and policy making affect the citizens of their districts. Bethesda plays an important national role in advocacy efforts by coordinating and activating volunteers on issues important to our ministry.

Members of Congress rely on credible organizations such as Bethesda as sources of expertise to inform them about policy issues effecting people with developmental disabilities, and the ramifications of policy decisions on the communities that these members represent.

## Components of Grassroots Advocacy

There are three components to a successful grassroots advocacy program:

- ▶ **Structure:** Create a structure that establishes an ongoing grassroots advocacy program for public policy.
- ▶ **Relationships:** Develop ongoing relationships with critical policymakers and key community leaders.
- ▶ **Action:** Put your structure and relationships to work.

2

## Points to keep in mind during your service as an advocate

- ▶ Advocacy is confrontational.
- ▶ There will be people with opposing views who feel as strongly on this issue as you do.
- ▶ Dealing with people in power can be an uphill struggle.
- ▶ Advocating for others enhances objectivity, which can help clarify the facts.
- ▶ This is a long process and will not happen overnight.
- ▶ Always be looking for other people or groups that agree with you on the issues.

For more information about Bethesda Voices, contact:  
Mark Hagen, Corporate Director of Outreach and Public Policy  
1-800-383-8743 ext. 4439  
mhagen@blhs.org  
www.blhs.org

## Advocates: Agents for Action

*Advocacy is a set of targeted actions directed at decision makers in support of a specific policy issue.*

We advocate because the democratic political process of the United States is one in which the policies should represent the views of its citizens. Our elected officials are employed by their constituents and can only retain their jobs with the approval of these constituents. This gives the American public a great deal of power, but also an enormous responsibility. It is each person's responsibility to convey to his or her elected officials the policies that should be enacted. Through the use of letter writing, phone calls, face-to-face meetings, and other advocacy tools, you can communicate your ideas to your representatives. This step is an absolutely critical part of the legislative process.

Everybody can do it. There is a common misperception that advocates must be "important" or "influential" people. Though it is certainly helpful to have educated experts in a field to approve and support your issues, many of the most successful advocacy movements have been led by "ordinary people" who are well-informed, committed and affected by an issue or situation.

You can get involved. In this manual you will find guidance for writing letters to your representatives, making effective phone calls, and directions for arranging and completing face-to-face meetings.

3

### Education

Before you can be an effective advocate, you must educate yourself. You must truly know your issues. By learning about the developmental disability program funding issues and the legislation surrounding them, you will build a knowledge base and in turn become a more effective advocate.

Learn the facts and hear the stories.

Educate others. Tell your family and friends what you have learned and how to get involved. Share your knowledge with the world.

*Our staff at Bethesda is a resource for information about developmental disability advocacy.  
If you need more information, please contact us.*

## Mastering the Issues

The most important part of the education process is coming to understand the issues concerning developmental disabilities for which you are fighting. It is best if you know both sides of the issue. Know both the pros and the cons so that you are better prepared. If you know what the other side is arguing, then you will know how to react.

It is important that you keep all the facts as they should be. Do not stretch or fabricate the truth to make it fit your argument. Not being truthful will almost certainly hinder your ability to achieve your goals.

You should research solutions for your issue to make sure that they are feasible. Giving a solution can greatly strengthen your argument and it will tell the policy makers exactly what outcome you are seeking.

There are many resources for getting information about developmental disabilities, public policy and lawmakers. Libraries and the Internet are good places to begin. Always take care to ensure that information retrieved from the Internet is from a creditable source. Neglecting to do this might lead to our approaching a Member of Congress with information that is out of date or incorrect.

4

Listed below are some national websites that could assist you in your research. You should also check your state's website for more localized information about public policy and developmental disabilities.

### Key Research Websites

U.S. House of Representatives.....	www.house.gov
U.S. Senate.....	www.senate.gov
Congressional Information.....	www.congress.gov
Congressional Records.....	www.access.gpo.gov
Library of Congress.....	www.congress.gov
Bethesda Lutheran Homes and Services, Inc.....	www.blhs.org
Advocacy for People with Disabilities.....	www.ancor.org
National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities.....	www.cdc.gov/ncbddd
Information on Your State.....	www.statelocalgov.net

Once you have gathered your research material, double-check it to make sure all aspects are correct. Mistakes and exaggerations make it harder for legislators to believe you. If you have incorrect information or fabricated information it will damage the reputation and effectiveness of the Bethesda Voices program.

## Building Relationships

*Building a network of contacts and relationships is very important. These contacts should include legislators, employees, board members, community leaders or anyone else who is influential in public policy.*

### Policy Makers You Should Know

#### Members of Congress

Be sure you know the names and basic facts about your state's two U.S. Senators and your state's member(s) of the U.S. House of Representatives. Some things you should know include: political party, committee assignments, hometown, former profession, year of next election, religion, and key staff members.

It is also very important to know your Members of Congress' staff members. Here are some examples of commonly used titles for staff members.

**Chief of Staff/Administrative Assistant:** This person reports directly to the Member. The person is responsible for evaluating the political outcomes of legislative proposals and constituent requests.

5

**Legislative Director/Senior Legislative Assistant/Legislative Coordinator:** Person that usually monitors the legislative schedule and makes recommendations. Some members of Congress may have more than one Legislative Director and responsibilities are assigned to staff with more expertise in certain areas.

**Press Secretary/Communications Director:** Person responsible for building and maintaining effective lines of communication. This person is usually knowledgeable about how to most effectively promote the member's views or position on specific issues.

**Scheduler/Personal Secretary/Appointment Secretary:** Person is responsible for allocating a member's time among their many demands. This person may also be responsible for making travel arrangements, arranging speaking dates, and visits to the district.

**Caseworker:** The caseworker helps with constituent requests by preparing replies for the member's signature.

All these people could be very helpful members of your network of contacts, but do not forget about local and state government officials. Other people or groups that are also interested in issues concerning developmental disabilities are a great way to network as well.

## Engaging Your Member of Congress (MC)

Advocacy at its core is about creating a relationship with a Member of Congress (MC) and his or her staff. This section will set out a “road map” for creating a strong relationship, for inspiring the MC, and sparking their leadership on our issues.

### What is it like to be an MC?

Their days are filled from morning to night with meetings, hearings and public speaking. In between, they must consider and vote on legislation constantly being brought up in committees and on the floor of Congress. They can have 20 or 30 appointments a day.

Imagine being so busy that you are briefed for your meeting as you walk back from a vote in the Capitol because you do not have time to read the briefing your aide wrote for you that morning.

Imagine working 16 hour days and being so busy you are not even sure what you are voting on a lot of the time until your staff briefs you.

6

### Your Plan of Action

Developing a plan of action for each of your members of Congress enables you to identify who your MC is, how the MC could lead on your issues, and what steps you can take to move him or her to act in your favor.

- ▶ Knowing your MC is as important as knowing the issues. There are many sources available for learning about your MC.
- ▶ Find out what committees and subcommittees they are on.
- ▶ Read their biographies in *Politics in America*, a book commonly found in public libraries.
- ▶ Visit the MC's Web site.
- ▶ Interview their aides: what issue does the MC care about? Which colleagues in Congress do they respect and or work with?
- ▶ Study their voting records.
- ▶ Ask the MC why they ran for Congress; what issues are they passionate about?
- ▶ Read about them in local newspapers.
- ▶ Find out who their friends and contributors are.
- ▶ Read their campaign literature.

### **Build relationships with an aide and MC**

*Building a relationship with an aide or MC is the most important step in advocacy.*

Establishing a relationship takes time. Investing the time to cultivate good relationships will yield dividends over time.

The best way to establish a relationship with someone is through personal communication. In other words, get to know each other.

- ▶ Become a familiar face.
- ▶ Call without making a request.
- ▶ Work on their campaigns.
- ▶ Send thank-you's to both the aide and the MC after each meeting. Acknowledge aide's efforts with their boss.

### **Educate the aide and MC**

- ▶ Before they take action, MC's and aides need to know and understand our issues. Your goal is to make your issues real to the MC.
- ▶ Generate lots of constituent letters and phone calls to their office.
- ▶ Provide plenty of background material to help them learn about issues.
- ▶ Help them make a connection between our issues and their passionate issues.
- ▶ Arrange for them to meet with people who have benefitted from favorable legislation.
- ▶ Invite them to speak at community events.
- ▶ Provide speaking points.

7

### **Engage their Participation**

What powerful requests can you make of your MC? How can we make our requests relate to his or her personal commitments? How can you get your MC speaking publicly on our issues? How can you raise awareness within your community?

- ▶ Ask them to sign a congressional sign-on letter.
- ▶ Ask them to co-sponsor our legislation.
- ▶ Ask them to speak with or write to a committee chair.
- ▶ Arrange for them to speak to a community group.
- ▶ Arrange for an op-ed piece to be published.
- ▶ Ask them to post something about our issues on their Web site, and then help prepare the information.

**Acknowledge their efforts**

One of the best ways to reach an MC is to acknowledge what they have done. Simply noticing the positive actions they have taken and thanking them can be very powerful for members, who often feel overworked and unappreciated. Another way to emphasize your “thank-you’s” is to make them public. Members of Congress want to be held in high regard. They are sensitive to the press they get, and thanking them with a letter to the editor, editorial, or op-ed is a great way to impress upon them the difference they make to us, and also the influence we have in the community.

- ▶ Send thank-you notes.
- ▶ Arrange for thank-you’s from community leaders.
- ▶ Have a significant number of constituents calling in support of their actions.
- ▶ Write letters to the editor in support of their actions.
- ▶ Send them success stories that their efforts help make possible.

## Contacting Your Legislators

*You are now ready to contact decision makers and lift your voice for people with developmental disabilities.*

### Ways of Contacting Legislators

#### Writing a letter/e-mail

Well-written correspondence can be an effective way to keep your legislators informed about your concerns and how their decisions are effecting your life. Writing a letter is usually the first step toward building relationships with your legislators. To locate the address of your state's members of Congress, go to [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) or [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov). The following format is the proper way to address your letter:

The Honorable (First Name Last Name)  
U.S. House of Representatives (or Senate)  
Building, Room Number  
Washington, DC 20510

When writing to the Chair of a Committee, it is proper to address him or her as: 9  
Dear Mr./Madam Chairman/Chairwoman, and the Speaker of the House as Dear Mr. Speaker.

State the purpose of your letter in the first paragraph and reiterate it at the close of your letter. If the issue relates to a specific piece of legislation be sure to identify it (House bill: H.R.\_\Senate bill: S\_). Give reasoning for your concern and if possible tell them about your own personal experiences dealing with the developmental disability issue. Describe how it has impacted your life, family and community. Ask questions about where the person stands on the issue. Be positive in your letter; express your concern in a way that is not judgmental.

Always send a thank-you for any reply you receive.

### Tips for Effective Written Communication: e-mail, regular mail and FAX

- ▶ Be personal. Express knowledge, experience and heartfelt emotion.
- ▶ Type your letter, including your name, return address and the member's contact information.
- ▶ Be courteous, concise and to the point.
- ▶ State your position in the first and last sentences.
- ▶ Address only one issue per letter and limit it to one page.
- ▶ Refer to specific legislation if possible.
- ▶ Make a well-reasoned argument, including key information, relevant data, statistics and powerful real-life stories.
- ▶ Be positive, conciliatory and avoid harsh criticism.
- ▶ Encourage others to join you in a letter-writing campaign.
- ▶ Ask the representative to respond with his or her opinion.
- ▶ Follow up with a quick call to confirm that he or she received the letter and to thank the member again.
- ▶ Avoid form letters. The more effort you put in, the more sincere you will appear.

**In your written communications with elected officials, you will likely not have the benefit of photographs to enhance your policy requests. Include personal stories, however; that can connect the bill you are advocating to men, women and children who need our support.**

10

### Telephone Calls

You can find your Senator's or Representative's phone number in the phone directory under the U.S. government section or through the offices' web pages ([www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) or [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)). You may also call the Washington D.C. Capitol switch board, 202.224.3121, and ask for the person you wish to contact.

It is likely that when you call most Senators and Representatives their secretaries will answer. If you are not able to connect to the policy maker, then ask to speak to the aide who handles the developmental disability issue that you are concerned with. Tell the aide your position on the issue and your reasoning behind it. If there is a certain bill concerning the issue make sure to mention it. Be precise. Make it easy for them to understand you.

When you are asked a question and are unsure about the answer, do not make something up. Instead tell the person that you are unsure, but would like to call them back after doing some research. It is better to not answer, than to give an answer that is incorrect.

### Face-to-Face Visit

The most effective method to make your voice heard in the political process is to meet directly with your elected official or one of their staff members. This is not as difficult a task as you might think. The following pointers will assist you with scheduling and making personal visits.

#### Call to make an appointment:

- ▶ Be courteous and patient when requesting a meeting with the Member.
- ▶ If you are on Capitol Hill, you will usually meet with the staffer, but if you are from their District, the Member may try to meet with you personally and his or her staff will normally be present.
- ▶ If you want to visit the DC office, say that you are from their District (if you are), and that a group of you (if that is the case) will be in DC and would like to meet with the Member for a few minutes.

#### The meeting:

- ▶ Be on time and wear business attire. Have the office phone number handy so if you are running late, you can call to let them know. Members and staff schedules are very tight, so keep that in mind.
- ▶ Be prepared! Establish your agenda and goals beforehand, so that you can make a clear request. Bring materials and visual aids.
- ▶ Once you are in the meeting, be friendly. It is acceptable to talk about personal connections you may have with the Member, and then give a brief overview of where you are from and why you are there.
- ▶ If there is a specific piece of legislation that you want the Member to support, know the bill number, who the co-sponsors are, key points of the bill, where it is in the process, whether it will be heard in committee anytime soon, and why you think he or she should support the bill.
- ▶ Know how the Member stands on your issues.
- ▶ It is a good idea to bring a written document with your requests to your meeting. You should leave this written account with whomever you are meeting.

### Testifying Before a Committee

It requires preparation to testify before a committee. You need to find out when the committee that will most benefit your efforts will be meeting, the leaders of the committee, as well as the members of the committee. Know the people who are on the same side of the issue as you are, not only policy makers on your side, but community groups and organizations as well.

When preparing for the meeting, have facts and data to support your view. Be prepared, have everything written out and practice your testimony. Make sure your testimony lasts only a few minutes. This allows the legislators to stay focused on your issue and allows them time to formulate and ask questions. Also identify what you would like the committee to do and why it is important.

Before you attend your first meeting, it is important that you know the protocol of the meeting and how people are addressed. In most cases, the committee chair will ask if there is anyone who would like to speak either in favor of or opposed to the bill that is being considered. This is your chance to stand up for your view of the issue. You should stand, state your name and then very briefly state your position. The proper way to address a legislative committee is to stand when the chair recognizes you and then say: “Mr. Chairman/Madame Chairman and members of the committee, my name is \_\_\_\_\_” and then state your view on the issue.

## Partnering with the Media

*Using the media effectively can awaken incredible advocacy efforts by reminding people of their own latent opinions and beliefs, changing certain attitudes, and moving them to action.*

The media, in all its forms, is a significant means of facilitating communication between the government, advocates and average citizens. It is a powerful force for educating the public about current events and issues. Through partnering with the media, advocates can achieve visibility and credibility. Using the media effectively often leads public officials and other policy-makers to take action themselves. The power of the media to shape the opinions and actions of the public cannot be overstated. No one contests that developmental disability issues are important. The media, however, can help to remind us all and to give these realities the attention they deserve, supplying a voice for our issues with the strength necessary to promote real change.

### Print Media

#### *Newspapers*

The newspaper is a great way to influence people in your area. Get to know the different people at the newspaper. Writing newspaper opinion editorials can be an effective way to engage politicians and constituents in the area.

13

#### *Church Bulletins*

This is a great way to get members in your congregation to join the efforts to stand up for people with developmental disabilities.

#### *Magazines*

Get to know people at the publications, giving them leads on the issue with a human interest angle.

#### *Columnists*

Inform columnists about the issues and the interest around the impact of the public policy effecting developmental disabilities.

#### *Newsletters*

Use newsletters to express the issue in broad terms, describe your point of view, and the reasoning behind your opinion.

#### *Editors*

Inform them of the issue, your view, and the reason this is important for the area. Writing a letter to the editor is a great option, because a well-crafted letter will state your views in a clear way, address countervailing opinions, and issue a call to action on behalf of people who have developmental disabilities.

## Electronic Media

### *Radio*

Airtime on the radio can generate a lot of movement in the community. Airtime comes in a variety of forms: being a guest on a radio talk show or call-in show, writing or reading a public service announcement, or enlisting an on-air personality to join in your cause. If you have the opportunity to talk on-air, make sure you talk about the benefits surrounding your view on developmental disabilities. As a public service, some stations do give free airtime to issues concerning public policy.

### *Television*

Contact various stations in your area, providing them with a video, a list of contacts, and a list of photo opportunities. Generate interest by expressing the impact the issue will have on the community, and the leadership role the station can play.

### *Internet*

Create a website or explore other websites concerning the issue. This is a way to recruit other people to become Voices advocates for people with developmental disabilities.

14

## **Tools for Transmitting Our Message Through the Media**

### The Press Release

Press releases give you the opportunity to package the news--the event, report or general issue--as you want the public to see it. It should be released to reporters at an event, then faxed and e-mailed afterward to those media contacts that did not attend.

A Press Release Should Include:

- ▶ The who, what, where, when and why of the issue or event.
- ▶ Succinct information and plain language: no longer than two pages with short paragraphs.
- ▶ A powerful, revealing headline.
- ▶ The name of your organization (use letterhead if possible) and the name and phone number of one contact person.
- ▶ Strong quotes, placed within the first three paragraphs, from spokespeople at your event or figures involved with the issues.

- ▶ The release time: “For Immediate Release” or “Embargoed Until [date]” at the top of the page.
- ▶ A “###” to indicate where the story ends.
- ▶ Proofread, check facts, then proofread again. Don’t proofread your own work.
- ▶ Follow up by phone to make sure the release was received.

### **The Letter to the Editor**

The letters section of the newspaper is popular, and can be an excellent way to get a point across not only to the public, but also to members of Congress and their staffs. When seeking a publication for expressing your views, keep in mind national newspapers as well as local dailies and weeklies. Your letter can be in response to a previous story, or simply play off a relevant issue or event.

Remember:

- ▶ Keep it brief. Use previously published letters as examples.
- ▶ Respond immediately, without any delay.
- ▶ Refer to other stories, editorials or letters from the publication.
- ▶ Write consistently and without grammatical errors.
- ▶ Use facts and striking statistics to back a strong opinion.
- ▶ Use engaging language surrounding one specific point.
- ▶ Include contact information with your name, address, e-mail and phone number.

15

### **The Media Advisory**

Advisories can be used, along with phone calls, to alert journalists about upcoming newsworthy events. The advisory should be simple, straightforward and supply all of the basic information—answering the who, what, where, when and why of the event or issue. It should include little more than the names of the relevant organizations and speakers and the location, date, time, and purpose of the event. This key information should appear in boldface type. Most importantly, the advisory should tell the media why this event is significant and why the press should cover it. Always include the name and phone number of your media contact. As always, a strong headline is important. Send advisories in advance, one week before, and then again two days before.

**The Op-Ed**

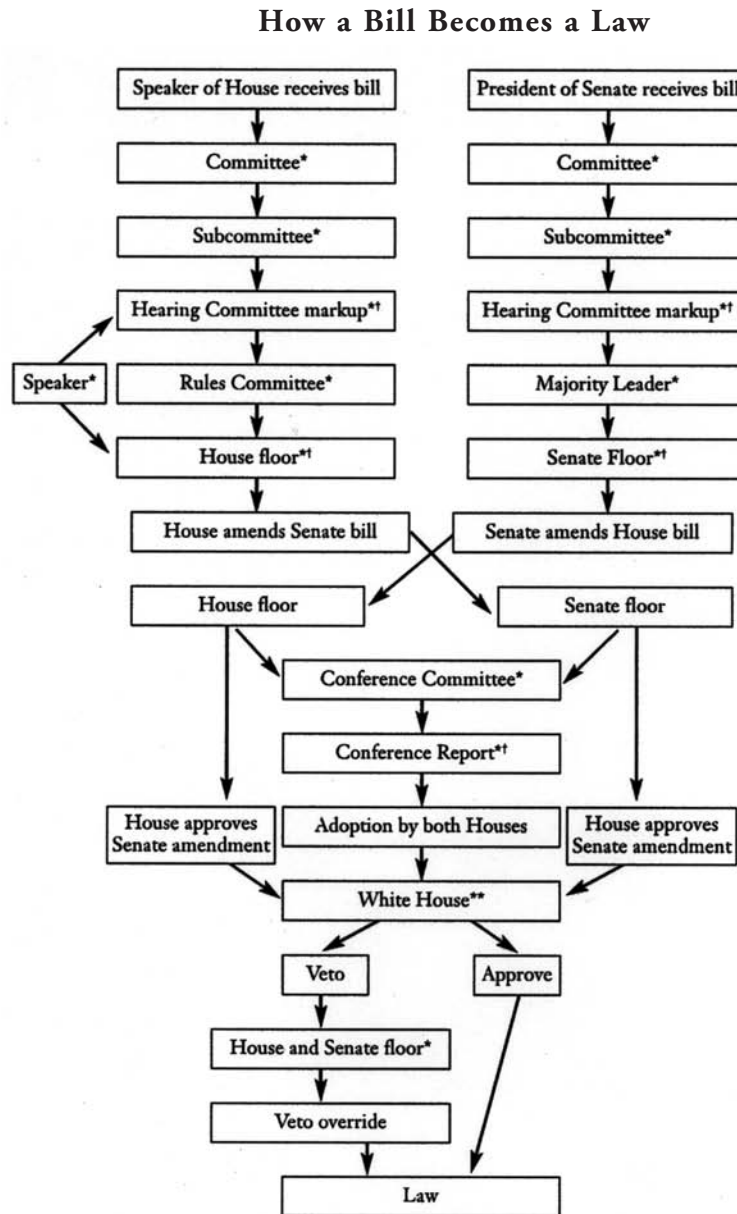
Opinion articles offer an opportunity to present an extended argument on a specific issue. Op-Eds can offer a side of the story that a news story may leave out and unlike editorials, are written by members of the community. These letters carry more weight and are therefore more difficult to publish than letters to the editor. In national papers, they are usually written by well-known public figures, so you should focus on local newspapers, magazines and campus media. You should target a particular policy and time the Op-Ed accordingly. It may be helpful to call and ask the editorial page editor for submission guidelines or arrange an appointment with the editor to discuss your qualifications, organization and issue.

Your local library will have two important reference books that may help you with your media outreach: *Editor and Publisher Yearbook* and *Broadcasting Yearbook*. Both list, by state, all the media outlets and their addresses, phone numbers and even the beat reporters' names.

# Legislative Process

*In order for Federal legislation that benefits people who have developmental disabilities to become a law, it must pass through each of the steps below.*

As Bethesda Lutheran Homes and Services, Inc. works with our advocates and Congressional members to increase awareness and attention to developmental disability issues, we strive to affect the views of members at each step of the process. The chart on this page will help illustrate the order of these steps.



*\*Points at which bill can be amended.*

*†Points at which bill can die.*

*\*\*If the president neither signs nor vetoes the bill within ten days, it automatically becomes law.*

## Action at Each Stage of the Process

The legislative process is made up of various stages, and it is critical to make your voice heard at each stage of the process. The stages are listed below with a discussion of how to get involved, and stay involved along the way, in support of a strong developmental disability agenda.

Keep in mind that there are several days every month that Congress is in recess. These days include most major holidays and the entire month of August. During this time, senators and representatives are often in their respective districts, so this is a good opportunity to meet with them locally, but not the time to write or call them at their Capitol Hill offices.

The Library of Congress maintains a user-friendly website called “THOMAS” that catalogues legislation. This website is a useful resource for obtaining bill text and tracking legislation. You can access THOMAS at <http://thomas.loc.gov>.

### BILL INTRODUCTION

- ▶ Call, write or visit your legislator to urge him or her to co-sponsor legislation.
- ▶ You do not have to wait for a legislative proposal to go to committee; contact the relevant legislators early to tell them how you feel about a piece of legislation.

### SUBCOMMITTEE/COMMITTEE LEVEL

- ▶ Contact subcommittee and full committee members to convey your approval or disapproval for the bill that is being debated.
- ▶ If you are an expert on the issue, contact a representative on the committee to offer yourself as an expert for testimony.
- ▶ Write a “letter to the editor” or op-ed for your local newspaper about the issue. Encourage people to get involved by writing to their representative.
- ▶ Since amendments are being proposed at this point, you should make sure in each of these methods to indicate which portion(s) of the bill you agree/disagree with.

### WHILE THE BILL IS ON THE FLOOR

- ▶ Contact your representatives. Indicate if the bill should receive general support, opposition or additional amendments.
- ▶ If there are amendments that you would like to see added to the legislation, find members who would support you.

### CONFERENCE COMMITTEE ACTION

- ▶ Contact members of the conference committee to tell them which bill you support more--the House or Senate version.
- ▶ Begin contacting the White House to express support or opposition to the bill.
- ▶ Continue contacting members of the full Congress to make sure that the final version is approved once the conference comes up with a final bill.

### PRESIDENTIAL LEVEL

- ▶ If the bill is vetoed, contact members of Congress again to urge support of an override. If the bill is signed into law, contact your members to thank them for supporting the legislation.

## Legislative Contacts

*Keep this ready reference list in a convenient place. Grassroots advocacy frequently requires action with little notice.*

### U.S. Representative

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

### Governor

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

### U.S. Senator

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

### State Representative

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

19

### U.S. Senator

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

### State Senator

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

District: \_\_\_\_\_

If you would like to contact Bethesda concerning issues in your state, your first call should be to your region's contact person. Listed below are Bethesda's Regional Contacts.

**Central Region**

Kathleen A. Eulitz, Regional Director  
 607 W. Chicago St., Suite 204  
 Plainfield, IL 60544  
 1.800.699.6133  
 815.230.2221 (fax)  
 keulitz@blhs.org

**Gulf Region**

Pete Henning, Regional Director  
 Good Samaritan Campus  
 P.O. Box 729  
 Cypress, TX 77410  
 1.800.220.0423, ext. 4022  
 281.516.4022  
 281.351.5897 (fax)  
 phenning@blhs.org

**North Central Region**

Debborah Zubke, Regional Director  
 700 Hoffmann Drive  
 Watertown, WI 53094  
 1.800.383.8743, ext. 3321  
 920.261.3050, ext. 3321  
 dzubke@blhs.org

**Northeast Region**

Shonn Patrick Foy, Regional Director  
 6600 North Clinton St.  
 Fort Wayne, IN 46825-4996  
 1.800.570.7151  
 260.452.2225 (fax)  
 sfoy@blhs.org

**Good Shepherd Communities Region**

Good Shepherd Communities Corporate Offices  
 26489 Rancho Parkway South  
 Lake Forest , CA 92630  
 (949) 855-8056 or (888) 298-1588

**Central California Region**

Cheri Taylor, Regional Director  
 119 North Main St  
 Porterville, CA 93257  
 (559) 791-2003

**Southern California Region**

Cyndee Albertson, Regional Director  
 26489 Rancho Parkway South  
 Lake Forest , CA 92630  
 (949) 855-8056

**Colorado Region**

Glenn Hagen, Regional Director  
 5630 S. Curtice St.  
 Littleton, CO 80120  
 (303) 795-2061

**Northwest Region**

Kelly Thran, Regional Director  
 831 SW 17th Avenue  
 Portland, OR 97205  
 (503) 261-0255

## Legislative Terminology

*Working with law makers can be made easier if you speak the same language.  
A more comprehensive glossary may be found at [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov).*

### **Act**

Legislation that has passed both chambers of Congress, been signed into law by the President, or passed over his veto, making it a law.

### **Amendment**

A proposal of a member of Congress to change the language, provisions or stipulations in a bill. An amendment is usually printed, debated and voted, as you would a bill.

### **Bills**

A proposed law. Bills are designated H.R. if they originate in the House of Representatives and S. if they originate in the Senate, then by a number assigned in the order that it was introduced during the two-year period of a Congressional term.

### **Bills Introduced**

In both the House and Senate, a number of members introduce a bill. The first member listed is the sponsor of the bill, and all members' names following his or her name are the bill's co-sponsors.

21

### **Caucus**

An informal meeting of members of the House or the Senate, or both, that exists to discuss issues of mutual concern. It could also be to perform legislative research and policy planning for its members.

### **Chairman**

The presiding officer of a committee or subcommittee. The chairmanship in the Senate, is based on seniority, but a Senator may not chair more than one standing committee.

### **Chamber**

The meeting place for either the House or Senate. It is also referred to as "the floor."

### **Cloture**

Method used to limit debates or end a filibuster in the Senate. For a cloture to take place, two-thirds of the Senators must vote in favor of it.

### **Conference Committee**

A temporary panel composed of House and Senate members that is formed to reconcile differences in legislation that has passed both chambers. Conference committees are convened to resolve bicameral differences on major and controversial legislation.

**Congressional Record**

Printed record of that day's proceedings in both the House and Senate. The record highlights legislative and committee action.

**Congressional Terms of Office**

Terms usually begin January 3 of the year following a general election. The terms are two years for Representatives and six years for Senators.

**Consideration**

To "call up" or "lay down" a bill on the Senate floor. This takes place before the full Senate for debate, amendment, and voting. Usually comes before the Senate by the Majority Leader.

**Co-sponsor**

A Senator or Representative who sponsors a piece of legislation, but is not the one who introduced the legislation. The more co-sponsors that have signed on a bill, the better the chance the bill has of getting passed.

**Disagree**

To reject an amendment that the other chamber passed.

22

**Division of a Question for Voting**

A member of Congress demands a division of an amendment. The amendment is divided and the individual parts are voted on separately. Each part is presented as a separate proposition. If one part is rejected than the other parts can stand-alone and move on in the legislative process.

**Filibuster**

A time-delaying tactic in an effort to slow-down, modify or defeat a bill or amendment that probably would pass if voted on directly.

**Floor Amendment**

An amendment offered by a Senator from the floor during consideration of a bill or other measure.

**General Debate**

The period of time at the beginning of proceedings in the Committee of the Whole to debate a measure.

**Hearings**

Meeting of committee or subcommittees for taking testimony from witnesses. The public and press may attend open hearings, but are barred from closed or "executive" hearings. The vast majority of hearings are open to the public.

**Hopper**

Box on House clerk's desk where members deposit bills to be introduced.

**Insert**

Amendment to add new language to a measure or another amendment.

**Insist**

Motion by one chamber to reiterate its previous position during amendments between the chambers.

**Joint Session**

When the House and Senate meet together to conduct formal business or to hear an address by the President of the United States.

**“Lame Duck”**

When members of Congress or the President will return for this session but will not be in the next Congress.

**Legislative Session**

The part of the Senate's daily session where it considers bills.

**Majority Leader**

In the Senate, the Majority Leader directs the legislation schedule for the chamber. In the House, the Majority Leader is second to the Speaker in the majority party's leadership, and serves as that party's legislative strategist.

23

**Markup**

Members of a committee or subcommittee who after a hearing examine a proposed piece of legislation line by line to determine what additions or deletions should be made.

**Measure**

Term embracing bill, resolution and other matters on which the Senate takes action.

**Minority Leader**

Leader of the minority party in the House or the Senate.

**Open Rule**

Permits general debate for a specified period of time and allows any member to offer an amendment that complies with the standing rules of the House.

**Override a Veto**

If the President vetoes a bill passed by Congress, the bill can still be made law if two-thirds majority of the House and Senate votes for the bill.

**Passed**

The approval of a bill and joint resolution.

**Petition**

A request or plea sent to one or both chambers from an organization or private citizens' group asking support of, or opposition to, a piece of legislation or favorable consideration of a matter not yet receiving congressional attention. Petitions are referred to the appropriate committees.

**Point of Order**

An objection by a member of Congress on a pending matter or proceeding that is in violation of the rules.

**Precedent**

Previous ruling by a presiding officer that becomes part of the procedures of a chamber.

**Public Laws**

A public bill or joint resolution that has passed both chambers and been enacted into law.

**Recess**

A temporary interruption of business.

**Session**

The period during which Congress assembles and carries on its regular business. Each Congress generally has two regular sessions.

**Subcommittee**

Sub-unit of a committee established for the purpose of dividing the committee's workload. Recommendations of a subcommittee must be approved by the full committee before being reported to the Senate.

**Whip**

Senators or Representatives who serve as internal lobbyist.

## Appropriate Language

*Understanding the importance of appropriate language is the first step toward recognizing that people with disabilities are, first and foremost, people who should not be defined by their disability. Advocates must master appropriate language.*

### Language Usage Concerning Developmental Disabilities

Terminology in the field of developmental disability services is continually changing, and as a provider of such services, Bethesda Lutheran Homes and Services, Inc., encourages everyone to stay informed and sensitive to current terminology. Terminology is much more than simply the words we speak. It is a reflection of our thought process and attitudes.

When talking about the field of developmental disabilities, there is a need to be sensitive in several key areas:

- ▶ It is accurate to state that Bethesda serves people who live with developmental disabilities.
- ▶ Mental retardation more specifically describes the type of developmental disability that people have.
- ▶ If clinical distinction is not necessary, the preferred term is developmental disability.
- ▶ Bethesda prefers, whenever possible, to refer to individuals as “people” or “individuals.” (E.g., “People who receive supports from Bethesda,” “Bethesda provides services to people who have developmental disabilities,” etc.)
- ▶ Examples of correct terminology when talking about “care”:
  - a. We provide caring support to people through our services.
  - b. We care about the people whom we serve.
  - c. Bethesda's caring, Christian attitude is reflected in its high quality of services.
- ▶ Be careful using the term “special”. It can be easily used and often misunderstood. People do not become “special” when they have a disability; rather, they, like all of us, have special needs. We seek to help those with needs related to their disabilities.
- ▶ “Special” is acceptable when it is part of a program’s title, e.g. Special Olympics or Special Education.

## People-first Language

How you use language really does matter. Using the right kind of language when discussing people with developmental disabilities can help communicate acceptance and understanding. Using the wrong kind of language can add to the stereotype of people with developmental disabilities. People with developmental disabilities are people first and foremost. They do have a disability that is part of their life, but this disability should not define the person. People-first language puts the person before the disability, and it describes what a person has, not who a person is. By placing the person first, the disability is no longer the primary, defining characteristic of an individual but one of several aspects of the whole person.

When speaking about a person with disabilities, use people-first language. Say “a person with a disability”, instead of saying “a disabled person.”

It's easy to use correct terminology if you remember to always put the person first. When referring to the people we serve, we say, “people who have...” rather than “disabled people” or “mentally retarded people.” By putting people first, we reflect an active role for everyone. “John went for a walk with Cindy” is acceptable and reflective of the people first mindset. “Cindy took John for a walk” is unacceptable because John is portrayed as passive and in a custodial role.

26

Beware of other terminology that portrays the people with developmental disabilities as anything less than people. For example, people eat; they are not fed. Remember to recognize a person at his or her appropriate age level. People have names by which they prefer to be called (John, Tony, Jim, etc.). Do not call John, who is in his 20s, “Johnny,” unless this is his given name or the name that he and/or his family prefer. Do not use labels. It is unacceptable to say “the retarded,” or “the deaf.”

Choose your words with sensitivity. Focus on the person and his or her ability rather than his or her disability. It is best to use non-judgmental terms and phrases that portray an image of dignity and respect.

Bethesda

**Lutheran Homes and Services, Inc.**

600 Hoffmann Drive, Watertown, WI 53094

1.800.369.4636 | [www.blhs.org](http://www.blhs.org)