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Except as otherwise noted, the advocacy toolkit is adapted from Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities Department of Administration's "Making Your Case." (2001).

Introduction

You Can Make a Difference You Can Make an Impact

Kids in Kansas can do better. But for kids in Kansas to do better, we have to do better for our kids.

All of us have the power to make a difference for Kansas children. As parents we have the power to teach and model values, establish boundaries, and create moral and achievement expectations. As neighbors we have the power to become personally involved with children and work with others to create communities that support families and nourish children. As owners and managers of businesses, we have the power to make the workplace family- and child-friendly. As policymakers, we have the power to make children a priority. As citizens, we have the power to ensure elected officials understand that children *must* be a priority.

Policymakers at the national, state, and community levels need to hear from you to make good policy decisions. Sometimes lobbying or advocating is carried out by experts or professional lobbyists. However, you don't need to be an expert; you just need some passion and a clear understanding of the process to implement changes.

Whether you are new to the child advocacy arena or a skilled professional, this publication can help you understand not only the process, but also the keys to becoming an effective citizen advocate. You can make a difference.

The most effective advocacy comes from a groundswell of public support. As a citizen advocate, you play a vital role in generating support for your particular cause. Milestones that mark the development of community advocacy and its impact on policymakers are:

- ◆ **Presence:** You and your issue must be visible. Multiple indirect and direct contacts with decision makers are critical to establishing your presence.
- ◆ **Knowledge:** You must know your issue, the policymaking process, and the players involved.
- ◆ **Respect:** Your engagement with the policymaking process should be conducted with integrity.

To be successful in your advocacy efforts, you need a core set of tools. This toolkit will provide you with the basics of knowing the legislative process, knowing the players, and knowing how to effectively engage in the process and keep informed.

What is Advocacy?

Integrity is Essential

Whether you are a professional lobbyist or someone who is simply planning to advocate for an issue to which you are committed, there are certain traits that are essential to functioning successfully in the legislative environment. Without these traits, any other techniques you may have perfected or expertise you may have developed will be quite worthless. First and foremost, *BE TRUTHFUL*. You do not want to jeopardize your credibility in any way. Therefore, do not be tempted – even slightly – to embellish the information you present to legislators or to exaggerate your “facts” in testimony. The legislative process is sustained by trust, and part of that trust involves truthfulness.

WE GET THE MESSAGE: LIES ARE OUT

A veteran legislator said he had been lied to by lobbyists only twice in the 20 years he had been in the legislature. He said he remembered vividly the dates and circumstances surrounding these lies and, even though they had taken place many years ago, he had made it a point never to speak to either lobbyist ever again.

The Kansas Legislature consists of two chambers, the House of Representatives (125 members) and the Senate (40 members). Representatives and senators are elected from single-member districts prescribed by law. Representatives are elected for two-year terms, and senators are elected for four-year terms. These terms begin on the second Monday in January of the odd-numbered year following the election.

A majority of the elected and qualified members of each chamber is required for passage of any bill. For submission of a bill to the governor this requires 63 votes in the House and 21 votes in the Senate. Certain actions require a two-thirds majority, such as attempts to override a governor's veto or the passage of a Constitutional amendment.

Unlike many other states, Kansas has no procedure to allow voters to directly submit changes to the Constitution or statutes. The procedure to change the Kansas Constitution requires legislative initiative approved by two-thirds of the members followed by a majority vote of the electorate. Changes in statutes can only be initiated by the legislature.

The executive branch in Kansas comprises the following elected officials: the governor and lieutenant governor (elected as a team); the secretary of state; the state treasurer; the attorney general; and the commissioner of insurance. Although this toolkit focuses on the legislative process, the rules of conduct that apply to influencing various activities of the executive branch are much the same.

Know the Process

Doors Can be Closed as Easily as They Can be Opened

For the professional lobbyist, knowing the process means knowing a multitude of formal rules and procedures of the legislature. If you are a citizen advocate, you must have a familiarity with the rules and procedures, or know where to find them if you are not familiar with them.

Understanding the rules. Part of knowing the process involves having an understanding of the rules. When you understand rules, you will function with more confidence and will work comfortably in an environment of “bills, amendments to bills, committees, floor actions, vetoes,” and much more. In addition, you will have developed a vocabulary that allows you to communicate meaningfully in this environment. (See *Glossary*)

Knowing the network.

Roles & Responsibilities

- ♦ Become familiar with the roles and responsibilities of legislative leaders, information about and interests of legislators, and the responsibilities of key staff.

Function, Availability & Location

- ♦ Know the function, availability, or location of the following: the governor and other constitutional officers; key state agencies and their leaders; the research library and information offices; capitol tours; parking spots; restaurants; and social gathering spots of legislators and other movers and shakers.

Conducting Yourself.

- ♦ *BE POLITE* in all your dealings with legislators and staff. It is easy to drift over the boundary when you feel strongly about an issue. Don't be too aggressive, too forward, or too pushy.

REMEMBER: Doors can be closed to you just as easily as they can be opened.

Just as there are certain traits that you must have to advocate successfully, there are also behaviors that will not serve you well. Among these are the following:

Threatening a legislator. Threats are rare, but they do occur. Usually the threat goes something like, “I'll get you in the next election.” Anyone who makes such a threat will lose that legislator's support. News of a threat will spread quickly along the legislative grapevine and more credibility will be lost.

Exhibiting inappropriate behavior. Sexist or racist remarks are too offensive to need further comment here. However, there is a more subtle type of inappropriate behavior. When a legislator is meeting with another legislator or with his/her staff, they should not be interrupted. Know their boundaries and respect them.

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Know the Process

Making disparaging remarks about legislators who oppose your position. It is often stated but bears repeating: Today's opponent may be next week's supporter. You need them more than they need you. Be sure not to "burn your bridges."

Coming in with last-minute requests. Legislators realize there are times when these requests cannot be avoided. An amendment to a bill may not be ready or a fiscal note may be incomplete. However, if you choose for whatever reason to do little or nothing throughout the legislative session, legislators will be very irritated with last-minute "I gotta have your help" requests. A better way to ensure your bill progresses through the legislative process is to be involved and prepared throughout the session, not just in the closing days.

How a Bill Becomes a Law

There are eight basic steps through which a bill normally passes before it becomes a law in Kansas.

1. Drafting and bill introduction. Only individual legislators, interim or special committees, and standing committees can introduce a bill. The governor cannot introduce a bill and neither can you. It is important to invest time in understanding this process. Each committee chair follows different procedures on what is required to request a bill introduction, all of which involve working with the revisor of statutes.

2. Reading and reference of bills. The introduction of a bill constitutes its formal presentation in its chamber of origin – either the House of Representatives (“House”) or Senate. At this time the title of the bill is read and the bill is printed for general distribution. On the day of introduction or on the next legislative day, the bill is referred to a committee.

3. Consideration by standing committee. The committee meets, holds hearings, discusses the bill, formulates recommendations, and then prepares a committee report for submission to the full House or Senate (Committee of the Whole, see step #4).

4. Consideration by Committee of the Whole. If reported favorably, the bill goes next to the Committee of the Whole under the calendar heading of General Orders. Eventually, the bill is debated and may be recommended for passage with or without amendments. The majority leader in both the House and the Senate determine which bills are scheduled to be considered by the Committee of the Whole. You cannot assume that passage of a bill by a standing committee will assure it receives consideration by the Committee of the Whole. Any member of the body may offer amendments and speak for or against the bill. *(Steps #3 and #4 are sometimes omitted in order to expedite consideration of a measure.)*

5. Final action. If recommended for passage by the Committee of the Whole, the bill is placed on the calendar under the heading of Final Action. A roll call vote is taken to determine if the chamber will pass the bill.

6. Action by the second chamber. Having passed the first chamber (chamber of origin), the bill is sent to the second chamber where the same procedure as before is followed. If the second chamber passes the bill without amendment, it is “enrolled” (i.e., printed in its final form for consideration by the governor). If the second chamber amends the bill and the first chamber concurs (agrees to accept the amendments), the bill also is considered finally passed. If the first chamber disagrees with the amendments, a conference committee usually is appointed to work out an agreement. When both chambers have approved the report of the conference committee by a majority of all members on a roll call vote, the bill is considered finally passed.

7. Action by the governor. Within ten days after passage, the bill must be signed by the presiding officers of each chamber, the chief clerk of the House, the secretary of the Senate, and then presented to the governor. The governor has ten days after receipt of the bill to act on it. If

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How a Bill Becomes a Law

the governor does not act on it during the ten-day period, the bill automatically becomes law. The governor approves most bills passed by the legislature. However, the governor may veto a bill by refusing to sign it and returning it the chamber in which it originated, together with a statement of reasons for the veto. In appropriation (funding) bills only, the governor may veto some of the items and approve the others by signing the bill. This is referred to as a line-item veto. The legislature may override a veto by a two-thirds vote of both chambers.

8. Publication of laws. An act of the legislature is not in force until the enacting bill has been published so that the public has proper notice that it is law. Publication notice occurs in the session laws (on or before July 1) unless the legislature desires the law to take effect sooner. In this event, it is printed in the Kansas Register. The secretary of state publishes the Kansas Register weekly. It contains a variety of information regarding activities of state government required by law to be noticed or incorporated therein.

Source:

Kansas Legislative Research Department (November 2002). Legislative Procedure in Kansas. Topeka, KS.

Meeting with Legislators

- A** personal visit is the most effective means of communicating with a legislator. It provides you with the opportunity to:
- ♦ “Read” his/her reaction to your request for support;
 - ♦ Respond immediately – something that cannot be accomplished as well by letter, telephone call, or other means; and
 - ♦ Become acquainted, an experience that may prove helpful in future contacts as well.

REMEMBER: You definitely should make an appointment in advance.

Making an appointment. Only certain legislators have a staff. Members in leadership positions have a staff, including a secretary who keeps their schedule. Other Senate members, have secretaries who keep their schedules. House members generally keep their own schedule.

Introduce yourself. Give your name, address, and the organization you represent or with which you are affiliated, if applicable. Do not overdo your comments about the worthiness (or the clout) of your organization.

Remain focused. Although you probably gave a reason for your visit when you scheduled your appointment, briefly reiterate. If you are visiting on a particular bill, have an extra copy to share. This saves time. Acquaint your legislator with the status of the bill and include any significant committee action that has taken place.

Explain why you support the bill. You may use either objective information or data and/or anecdotal information. Convey this in a way that shows you are knowledgeable and committed.

If someone is joining you in this visit, make sure your time is well spent by not repeating each other. Decide in advance who will say what. It is particularly helpful if you can relate personal experiences based on provisions in the bill and what the bill will accomplish.

Allow time for questions and be prepared to respond. If you do not know the answer, say so. Follow-up with the answer at a later time.

NOTE: In the course of any day, legislators are confronted with numerous issues, often-times emotional ones. Therefore, be patient if a legislator interjects his/her feelings or opinions on an issue unrelated to yours. You may have to shorten your comments (or even schedule another appointment); however, there are times such as this when being a good listener may be to your advantage.

Ask the legislator whether or not he/she will support the bill. Although you may be hesitant to do this, you need to do so to determine the extent of support the bill has. Tell supporters how much you appreciate their stand. Opponents need to know that, although you

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Meeting with Legislators

disagree with them, you respect their stance and even understand their wish or need to oppose your position in some cases. For those who won't give their position, ask whether you can provide additional information to help them make a decision. Whatever you do, do not burn bridges. Today's opponent may be next week's supporter and vice versa.

Conclude and extend your appreciation for the opportunity to visit, no matter what the outcome. Never leave on unfriendly terms.

Write a follow-up thank-you letter. Include any responses to questions that were asked during the visit which you did not have an answer for at the time.

Testifying Before a Committee

*How will I know they're listening?
And, if they are, will they really care?*

Although some skeptics say that committee testimony is nothing more than window-dressing and that the real case for your position should have been made with individual committee members prior to the meeting, this is not necessarily true. Personal contacts prior to the meeting can greatly strengthen your case, and you should make every effort to do this. However, whether or not you have made these personal contacts, the point is this: testimony is always helpful. At times, it is indispensable. Committee meetings, or hearings, are the public forums for public comment on the public's business. You need to be there to show support for the bill that is being considered at that time. If you are the only or primary interest that has requested a bill, it is your responsibility to generate support necessary to even secure a hearing. Once you are aware that a hearing has been scheduled, begin to prepare for it.

Consider the following as you prepare:

- ◆ Determine what you need to emphasize to make an impact on the committee. Members generally like to have some expert testimony and some anecdotal testimony. The former focuses on technical provisions of a bill (if there are any) and the latter on how passage of the bill will affect people on a personal basis, including how the present law has presented difficulties or has not addressed concerns. Anecdotal testimony by a person who has experienced the conditions firsthand can be particularly compelling.
- ◆ Because public speaking can be threatening, do not “force” people to testify if they do not wish to do so even if you believe they have information that would strengthen your position. Select your witnesses carefully.
- ◆ You must call ahead to secure a place on the agenda.
- ◆ Hold a mock hearing. This is especially important for persons who do not appear before committees on a regular basis. Give your presentation and answer questions you anticipate members of the committee will ask. With this exercise, you and other supporters will feel more comfortable about the upcoming committee hearing.
- ◆ Arrive 15 to 20 minutes early on the day of the meeting, especially if this is the first time you have visited the capitol or the building where the hearing is scheduled. This will give you an opportunity to get a good seat and check the agenda to make sure you are on it. Early arrival also allows time for holding any last-minute conversations with fellow supporters or, on occasion, legislators or staff.
- ◆ Know the committee protocol and style of the chair. “Mr. Chair” or “Madam Chair” are the most acceptable forms of addressing the chair of the committee. “Senator X” or “Representative X” are the most acceptable forms of addressing other members.

The chair of the committee sets the tone of the committee. Some chairs conduct meetings in a very formal manner; whereas others keep a very informal atmosphere. You may consider the formal style too restrictive and rigid, or the informal style too undisciplined. Either is

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Testifying Before a Committee

acceptable and must be adapted to.

Incidentally, our capitol and surrounding areas are rich in state history, art, and architectural design. Free tours are available throughout the day. You may find that exposure to the legislative environment will enhance your desire to participate in the process.

When the chair calls on you to present your testimony, remember the following:

- ◆ You must, in nearly every instance, provide written testimony with sufficient copies for the committee members. The committee secretary can tell you the number of copies you will need. However, DO NOT read your testimony. Use it as a guide in providing your oral remarks.
- ◆ After addressing the chair, introduce yourself. Give your name and address (city or town only). If you are representing an organization, give its name and a very brief description of the organization. Be cautious not to spend too much time talking about your organization hoping to convince the committee that the support of the particular organization is as important as substantive remarks.
- ◆ Keep your remarks short (usually three to five minutes will do unless it is a complicated bill). Tell the committee why the bill is needed and how it will change current law, if it does. An appropriations or finance committee also will want to know how much enactment of the bill will cost to implement. A policy committee may or may not wish to delve into cost. Either way, if this information is requested you should share if it is available.
- ◆ Tell the committee who will be directly affected by the bill. Share anecdotes, or better yet, personal experiences that show the need for the bill.
- ◆ Indicate your willingness to respond to questions and when asked a question, respond calmly. Do not wander off by commenting on matters that are not a part of the question. Do not let a hostile question upset you. If you do not know the answer to a question, say so. Tell the committee you will attempt to get the answer, and then do so.
- ◆ Thank the chair and members for having had the opportunity to testify and indicate a willingness to respond to questions.

Letters to Legislators

Letter writing is probably the most widely used means of communicating with legislators, and they do pay attention to their mail. Legislators readily acknowledge that a good letter – particularly from a constituent – can make an impact. That is why it is so important that your letter is powerful.

Letters to your own senator or representative are especially important. You have three federal legislators (two senators and one representative) and two state legislators (one senator and one representative). To find your legislators go to: <http://capwiz.com/kschildren>. Select “My Elected Officials.” Type in your address and city.

Ensure that your letter will have maximum impact:

- ♦ The letter should be brief, preferably one page. Even if you feel strongly about the issue, resist the urge to tell the “whole story” in a long letter. A short, concise letter is much more effective. If you have a long story to tell, close with, “If you need additional information, please let me know.”
- ♦ A form letter, preprinted card, or other superficial means of communication has little effect. Generally, these are treated as one “contact,” and run the risk of annoying decision makers, rather than influencing them.
- ♦ If you are writing about a specific bill, include the bill number and a brief statement on the subject matter at the beginning of the letter. Because thousands of bills are introduced each session, it is impossible for individual legislators to track all of them.
- ♦ Discuss only one bill or issue in your letter. This makes it far easier for legislators or staff to track. If you wish to comment on several issues, write separate letters.
- ♦ Your letter should be neat and your tone sincere and polite. Guard against complaining or being overly negative. Do not threaten or belittle.

Your letter should contain the following components:

- ♦ A brief statement (ten words or less) on the subject and the bill number if you are writing about a specific bill.
- ♦ An introduction of yourself which tells why you are interested in or concerned about an issue or bill.
- ♦ A personal anecdote about how the bill will affect you, your family, your community, your business, your job, your school, etc.
- ♦ Some facts, including supporting information and data to support your position.
- ♦ An invitation to contact you to discuss the bill.
- ♦ A request for a reply if you need one.
- ♦ A statement of appreciation for consideration of your position.

Email to Legislators

Email is a fast, usually efficient way to contact your legislator. However, individual legislators receive email differently. Some prefer email above all other forms of communication; some do not read email for days or not at all. It is a good idea to call your legislator's office first and simply ask, "Does Senator Jones check email? Would that be a good way to send information to him?"

By using the guidelines for effective letter writing, your email will gain the attention of your legislator and his/her key staff. It is particularly important to use the letter writing guidelines because the number of emails sent to legislators is increasing and, unfortunately, some email senders use a "too informal" style that does not get across the message the sender desires.

Also, be sure to put your home address and telephone number in the body of your email. Most legislators wish to know who sent the email. Your email address is not sufficient.

Some legislators still maintain that there is no substitute for a well-written letter; however, most now see email as an acceptable means of communication.

Telephone Calls to Legislators

Will They Answer the Ring?

Telephone calls can be an effective means of communicating with legislators if the calls: (1) convey a meaningful message with helpful information, and (2) are made in a timely manner.

Calls from constituents are the most effective; “telephone blitzes” are the least effective. Other calls are somewhere in between.

It is important to remember that, during the legislative session, legislators usually are attending committee meetings, conducting other legislative business such as meeting with staff, drafting legislation, preparing for bill presentations, lobbying other legislators, or participating in formal legislative work in the Senate or House chambers. Therefore, it is likely that a legislator will not be available to take your call. If that is the case, do not hesitate to leave your message with the legislator’s secretary. Trust the staff to get your message to the legislator. Leave your address so they know you are a constituent. If you are calling a member of leadership, request to speak with their policy director prior to leaving a message.

If you request a return call, you can usually be assured of getting one if you are a constituent. Non-constituents *may* get a return call. Remember that there simply are not enough hours in the day for legislators to return all calls, particularly if there is an organized blitz underway. It is important to make your call brief and come quickly to the point. Always be polite.

In conveying your message, do the following:

- ♦ Identify yourself with your name and your city or town of residence.
- ♦ If your call is regarding a specific bill, give the bill number and subject matter.
- ♦ State your support (or opposition) to the bill and a brief reason for your position.
- ♦ Request the legislator’s support (or opposition) to the bill.
- ♦ Indicate your availability to discuss the issue further.
- ♦ Leave your telephone number.
- ♦ Express thanks.

Your call will have the most impact when received within a week of the bill’s being heard in committee. It is even more effective if the legislator serves on the committee hearing the bill. Another appropriate time, but usually not nearly as effective, is shortly before the entire legislative body hears the bill.

Finally, there is the call that may or may not have impact – it all depends. This is the call that is part of an organized campaign or blitz. Usually these calls are part of an organized effort to simply overwhelm a legislator’s office. The calls do not provide much in the way of helpful information. Be careful with blitz calls. They tend to irritate legislators and staff because they take up valuable time that most believe could be put to better use. In spite of their dubious value, these calls are not totally ignored. However, you can be sure of one thing: a blitz is seldom, if ever, the main reason for the passage or defeat of a bill.

Legislative Staff

They are the Gatekeepers, Treat Them Well

Secretary. This person is among the first people with whom you will come in contact. At a minimum, a secretary's responsibilities include scheduling appointments, answering telephone inquiries, and opening and prioritizing mail.

Committee Secretary. A committee secretary sets up committee meetings, reserves rooms, gets legislators' folders and name tags in order, keeps minutes, and prepares committee reports. This is the person who also keeps in touch with constituents and may advocate for the constituents, knows when bills are scheduled and where they will be heard and understands the nuances of the legislative process.

Legislative Research. The Kansas Legislative Research Department (KLRD) performs non-partisan legislative research and other duties as directed by legislators. The KLRD provides staff services, both general research and fiscal analysis, to special committees, select committees, and most standing committees during the legislative session and during the interim. Examples of specific duties performed by the KLRD include assisting committee chairpersons in planning the work of the committee and in preparing agendas; formulating questions for committee chairpersons and members; preparing various memoranda and reports; preparing supplemental notes (explanations) for bills reported by committees to the house (except for bills reported adversely); assisting legislators in researching topics and in responding to requests from constituents; analyzing agency requests for appropriations and the fiscal impact of proposed legislation; and participating in revenue and expenditure forecasting.

Revisor of Statutes. The Office of the Revisor of Statutes drafts bills, resolutions, and other legislative documents and provides legal consultation and research services for all committees and legislators. The office provides legal staff for special interim committees, select committees, and standing committees. The office edits and publishes the *Kansas Statutes Annotated* (KSA) and annual supplements thereto. The Kansas Statutes can be accessed at <http://www.kslegislature.org/cgi-bin/statutes/index.cgi>.

Legislative Services. The Legislative Services Office is a general assistance office generally geared to provide administrative services to legislators. However, this office is responsible for scheduling most events in all committee rooms that you may reserve for special presentations or lunch briefings. It is also the office that maintains the official legislative social calendar. If you want to schedule after-hours events, this is the first place to find a time with a minimum of conflicts.

Whether you have much contact with legislative assistants or other legislative staff, treat them with courtesy and respect at all times.

REMEMBER: Never throw your weight around. Nobody will be impressed, but they will remember.

Important Players

*People Who Impact the Legislative Process:
Knowing Where They Fit in Will Help You Fit In*

Legislative leadership

On the first day of each legislative session, members are formally elected for legislative leadership offices. In the House, these officers are the speaker, speaker pro tem, majority leader, minority leader, and other party or caucus officers. In the Senate, these officers are the president, vice-president, majority leader, minority leader, and party or caucus officers.

In the House, the speaker (or the speaker pro tem) calls the House to order. The speaker appoints the standing and other committees and refers bills and resolutions to the appropriate committees.

The presiding officer of the Senate is the president, and of the House, the speaker. In the Senate, the member elected to preside when the regular presiding officer is not in the chair is the vice-president. In the House this person is the speaker pro tem.

In the Senate, the president (or the vice-president) calls the Senate to order. The Committee on Organization, Calendar, and Rules appoints members of the standing committees. The president refers bills to committees and appoints members of special committees and conference committees.

The majority and minority leaders and other party officers of both chambers play an important role in organizing and coordinating the activities of their party members with regard to items under consideration.

Governor

Although the focus of lobbying during the session is on the legislature, do not forget the governor. The governor makes the final decision on a bill by either choosing to sign it or to veto it. If you have any indication that the governor might veto a bill, contact the Office of the Governor immediately following final passage of the bill by the legislature – you may write, call, email, or send a fax.

Timing is important because following passage of a bill, the governor has only a limited time in which to sign or veto. Your input during this time is vital.

State departments

On behalf of the governor, state departments and agencies submit both budget and non-budget proposals to the legislature.

Department staff devote considerable time and resources in their lobbying efforts to get their proposals into bill form, find authors, guide the bills through the process, and get them passed.

Departments also are called upon by the legislature to complete fiscal notes on bills that carry an appropriation (cost money), comment on bills that are being heard in committee, and provide other information on the activities and programs of their particular department. Support of the cabinet secretary or state agency head can be key in generating support in passage of legislation.

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Important Players

If you plan to lobby on a regular basis, get acquainted with department staff. They can provide information which you may be unable to get from any other source; and, on occasion, their support of your bill is helpful.

NOTE: There also are occasions when a department's support is not helpful. Know when this is the case.

Rule makers

When a bill becomes law, it may only be the beginning of the implementation process. In many instances, rule making is the next step. The legislature has granted significant authority to state agencies to adopt rules that respond to the what, when, where, and how of specific laws. Rules that evolve from this process have the "force and effect" of law.

If you are interested in or concerned about how a bill you supported is going to be implemented, contact the appropriate agency about its rule making process. Because the process is designed to be fair and impartial, public comment is welcome.

Courts

The Judicial Branch is composed of the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, and District Courts. One of the powers of the court is to interpret laws. Thus, if there is a question on meaning or application, citizens may turn to the courts for assistance.

Interim Activities

*A Little Known Truth: The World does not Stop
Just Because the Legislative Session Ends*

When the legislative session ends, legislators seldom take an extended break. Many return to jobs which they hold in addition to their work as legislators. Others consider themselves full-time legislators and continue to be involved in various interim projects. Either way, all devote considerable time to legislative activities during the interim.

Activities in the district

Whether or not it is an election year, legislators do their best to be involved and accessible in their districts. If you live in the district, every effort will be made to respond to your request or inquiry. Individuals, businesses, and organizations in the district usually get quick attention.

Legislative committee work

Interim committees typically meet monthly from June through November to study proposals assigned to them. Be sure to get on the mailing list for interim committee meetings. In addition to meeting at the capitol, committees often meet in locations throughout the state during the interim. Plan to attend those in your area that are relevant to the issue(s) in which you are interested.

Much of the groundwork for the upcoming session is laid in interim committee deliberations. Attending interim meetings also gives you the opportunity to keep up contacts and show your ongoing interest.

Campaigns

Senators are up for election every four years and Representatives every two years. Elections are held in even-numbered years. Campaigns start early and take an inordinate amount of time and energy. Therefore, if you plan to visit with a legislator during the interim of an election year, you may have some difficulty because he/she may be campaigning.

However, if you do need to contact a legislator during this time, make an appointment well in advance. Unless you are attempting to meet or contact legislative leadership, the most effective way to contact legislators during this time is with the home or business contact information contained in the legislative directory or the previously mentioned web sites.

REMEMBER: The primary focus in an election year is the campaign.

Your preparation for the upcoming session

Preparation for the session includes meeting with legislators to discuss your proposals, researching those proposals, and strategizing with the legislators who will be authoring the legislation you support. Initiate these pre-session contacts early in the fall. Mid-September to mid-December is the best time period in which to begin and finalize these pre-session activities.

Understanding the Appropriations Process

The Budget Cycle: Timing is Everything

Knowledge of the budget cycle is a key component to a successful advocacy effort related to requests for increased funding.

JUNE

The first revenue estimate is made for the budget year that begins on July 1 of the following year.

State agencies receive allocations from the Division of the Budget based on these revenue estimates and direction from the governor. This establishes budget targets that most state agencies must meet when they submit their budgets. Generally, two specific allocations are provided, called current service and reductions. Dollars above these allocation levels are now considered “enhancements.” At this point, various agencies may be treated differently. For example, K-12 education may not be asked to submit budget reductions while others are.

JULY 1

The current fiscal year begins. The year begins based on appropriations from the last legislative session. Actual expenditure and receipt information begins to become available further defining the budget outlook.

AUGUST

State agencies are preparing budget requests. This is the time for advocacy from professional staff to begin (executive director, governmental affairs director, or contract lobbyist.)

SEPTEMBER 15

State agency budget submissions are due to the Division of the Budget and the Department of Legislative Research. Included are requested revisions to the current fiscal year and the requests for the budget year.

This is the time for effective advocacy to begin for the upcoming budget year. It is vital that organizations recognize the importance of beginning grassroots advocacy work based on agency budget submissions.

DECEMBER

The first official estimate for receipts is made for the upcoming fiscal year and the estimate for the current year is revised. These estimates, along with state ending balance law, dictate the amount the governor can recommend for the upcoming year.

Caseload estimates for selected Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS) programs, estimated enrollments for the Kansas Board of Regents’ universities, and estimates for current law requirements for school finance are agreed to by the Executive and Legislative Branch.

The governor makes budget decisions. This is done by early-December for the vast majority of issues. Advocacy for the governor’s budget must be complete by the end of November for the initial recommendations.

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Understanding the Appropriations Process

- JANUARY** The legislative session begins. Subcommittee work begins on the budget. The first round of budget decisions are made by the legislature between now and the first adjournment in late March/early April.
- APRIL** Revised estimates are made for all variables including revenues, school finance requirements, SRS caseloads and Regents' fees. The governor prepares revisions to the initial recommendations. These are referred to as Governor's Budget Amendments.
- The Division of the Budget and Kansas Legislative Research Department certifies the amount of general fund spending that can occur to meet the ending balance law.
- The legislature reconvenes. This is known as the Omnibus or Veto Session. Consideration of costs resulting from legislation that has passed, new information, and the Governor's Budget Amendments are considered.
- The legislature approves the Omnibus bill. This is the last spending measure for the session and approved budgets for the next fiscal year are final. The legislature adjourns *sine die*. This is Latin for "without another day" and marks the close of the legislative session.

The Budget Process: Knowing the Lingo

The two committees responsible for reviewing the state budget are the House Committee on Appropriations and the Senate Committee on Ways and Means. These committees function through standing subcommittees unlike other committees of the legislature. Subcommittees make recommendations on their areas of the budget to the full committee for approval. The budget process operates with its own language. If you are going to be involved in advocating for spending priorities you need to know the basics.

Fiscal years. It is important when reading the budget to consider which fiscal year is being discussed. The state *fiscal year* runs from July 1 to the following June 30 and is numbered for the calendar year in which it ends. The *current fiscal year* is the one which ends the coming June. The *actual fiscal year* is the year which concluded the previous June. The *budget year* refers to the next fiscal year, which begins the July following the legislature's adjournment. Finally, *outyears* refer to the years beyond the budget year. In the *FY 2005 Governor's Budget Report*, the actual fiscal year is FY 2003, the current fiscal year is FY 2004, and the budget year is FY 2005.

Financing of state spending. Frequent reference is made to *State General Fund* expenditures and expenditures from *all funding sources*. Expenditures from all funding sources include both State General Fund expenditures and expenditures from special revenue funds. All money spent by the state must first be appropriated by the legislature, either from the State General Fund or from special revenue funds.

The State General Fund receives the most attention in the budget because it is the largest of the "uncommitted" revenue sources available to the state. It is also the fund to which most general tax receipts are credited. The legislature may spend State General Fund dollars for any governmental purpose.

Special revenue funds, by contrast, are dedicated to a specific purpose. For instance, the legislature may not spend monies from the State Highway Fund to build new prisons. The State Highway Fund, which is the largest state special revenue fund, can be used only for highway purposes. It consists primarily of motor fuel taxes, federal grants, vehicle registration fees, a dedicated one-fourth cent sales tax, and a transfer from the State General Fund. Other examples of special revenue funds are the three state building funds, which can be used only for capital improvements; federal funds made available for specific purposes; and the Board of Accountancy Fee Fund, which can be used only to support operations of the Board.

Revenue estimates. The tool used by both the governor and the legislature to determine State General Fund revenue is the “consensus revenue estimate” prepared by the Consensus Revenue Estimating Group.

The consensus revenue estimate is important because both the governor and the legislature base their budget decisions on it. The estimate is categorized by major revenue source and covers a two-year period: the current year and the budget year.

The Consensus Revenue Estimating Group is composed of representatives of the Division of the Budget, the Department of Revenue, the Legislative Research Department, and one consulting economist each from the University of Kansas, Kansas State University, and Wichita State University. The Director of the Budget serves as unofficial chairperson of the group. The Consensus Revenue Estimating Group meets each spring and fall. Before December 4 (typically in November) of each year, the group makes its initial estimate for the budget year and revises its estimate for the current year. The results are reported to the governor, the legislature, and the public in a joint memorandum from the Director of Legislative Research and the Director of the Budget. The group meets again before April 4 to review the fall estimate and additional data. The group then publishes a revised estimate which the legislature may use in adjusting expenditures, if necessary.

Budget balancing mechanisms. This term refers to KSA 75-6701 to 75-6704. The purpose of the law is to ensure an adequate operating balance in the State General Fund. The practical effect of this provision is to target the ending balance in the State General Fund to be at least 7.5 percent of authorized expenditures and demand transfers in the budget year.

The “spending lid” statute requires that *The Governor’s Budget Report* and actions of the legislature comply with its provisions. An “Omnibus Reconciliation Spending Limit Bill” must be the last appropriation bill passed by the legislature. The purpose of the bill is to reconcile State General Fund expenditures and revenues by reducing expenditures, if necessary, to meet the provisions of the “spending lid.”

The final provision of the “spending lid” act allows the governor to reduce State General Fund expenditures in the current fiscal year, when the legislature is not in session, by an amount not to exceed that necessary to retain an ending balance in the State General Fund of \$100 million. The governor must make the reductions “across-the-board” by reducing each line item of expenditure

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Understanding the Appropriations Process

by a fixed percentage. The only exceptions are debt service obligations, state retirement contributions for school employees, and transfers to the School District Capital Improvements Fund.

The State Finance Council must approve the reductions. In addition to the “spending lid” act, the governor has the authority under a statutory allotment system to limit expenditures of the State General Fund and special revenue funds when it appears that available monies are insufficient to cover expenditure obligations. This authority applies to agencies of the executive branch but not the legislature or the judiciary. Allotments can be made on a case-by-case basis and do not have to be across-the-board. Agencies have the right to appeal any allotment amount and the governor makes the final determination. The allotment system had not been used for 30 years; however, budget problems in FY 2003 required reductions to be made twice under this law.

Omnibus Appropriation Bill. Traditionally, this has been the last appropriation bill of the session. It contains any appropriation necessary to carry out the intent of the legislature that has not yet been included in another appropriation bill. Since the advent of the statutory requirement for an Omnibus Reconciliation Spending Limit Bill to be passed at the end of the session, the Omnibus Appropriation Bill has served as the reconciliation bill.

State Finance Council. The State Finance Council is a statutory body that provides a mechanism for making certain budgetary and personnel adjustments when the legislature is not in session. The council consists of nine members: the governor, the speaker of the House, the president of the Senate, the House and Senate majority leaders and minority leaders, and the Ways and Means and Appropriations Committee chairpersons.

The governor serves as chairperson of the finance council. Meetings are at the call of the governor, who also prepares the agenda. Items are eligible to receive council consideration only if they are characterized as a legislative delegation to the council. Approval of finance council items typically requires the vote of the governor and a majority of the legislative members.

Adapted from the Kansas Division of the Budget and the Kansas Legislative Research Department (2004).

Building the Base: Effective Advocacy Coalitions

What is a coalition? A coalition is an alliance between typically diverse organizations with their own agendas, working together for a common advocacy goal. Coalitions can be formal or informal and are often limited in time and purpose.

Why are coalitions important? For efforts to build support for an issue you are trying to address, coalitions are critical to your work. In essence, coalitions help you to gain a broad range of support and draw attention to the work you are trying to accomplish. Coalitions are able to:

- ♦ Gain strength from numbers. The more people delivering the message, the more likely it is to be heard.
- ♦ Get attention and support from policymakers.
- ♦ Ensure that advocates are allies.
- ♦ Ensure that advocates with competing needs and interests are well informed.
- ♦ Better coordinate effective action from multiple groups trying to do similar work.
- ♦ Help policymakers distinguish the numerous and competing priorities.
- ♦ Gain resources and expertise not readily available for smaller interest groups that are available through partnership of multiple organizations.
- ♦ Give voice and power to individuals and organizations that had been previously disenfranchised or had not shared proportionally in community resources.

Who makes up a coalition? Coalitions are typically composed of representatives from organizations that volunteer their time because the organizations are interested in or somehow impacted by the issue at hand. Often recruited by word of mouth, coalitions typically consist of a core group of organizations with additional members who may change over time.

Questions to ask when you are thinking about building a coalition:

- ♦ What would the issue(s) be?
- ♦ Who are the organizations that would be potentially interested and/or impacted by the issue(s)?
- ♦ How does the issue(s) tie into these organizations' interests?
- ♦ What resources and expertise could come from these organizations?
- ♦ How will the different agendas and cultures of the partnering organizations potentially influence the ability of the coalition to accomplish its goals?
- ♦ What obstacles might you encounter?
- ♦ What will need to be done to bring and keep these different organizations together for the common issue(s)?

Guidelines for successful coalition building:

1. Be strategic. Building coalitions requires a good strategy. Which organizations you ask, who asks them, in which order to ask them are all questions to answer.
2. Recruit a diverse membership for your coalition. The more powerful coalitions represent a broad range of interests that the public and decision makers cannot ignore. "Unlikely alliances" make decision makers and the public take notice – if organizations that typically disagree actually agree on your issue, people are more likely to think that the issue merits some attention.
3. To ensure consistency, have organizations send the same representative to each coalition

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Building the Base: Effective Advocacy Coalitions

- meeting. These individuals should also be decision-making members of the organizations they represent.
4. Have a small group of leaders who are deeply committed to the issue of the coalition direct the coalition.
 5. When possible, assign a full-time person to head up coalition activities. The most successful coalitions have someone to carry out tasks such as scheduling meetings, confirming appointments, and following up on assignments.
 6. Develop a distinct coalition identity that is separate from the identity of any one organization. A separate identity provides a broad umbrella for its members, making it easier for organizations who publicly disagree to work together on a unifying cause.
 7. Choose unifying issues. The most effective coalitions come together around a common issue. Make sure the development of group goals is a joint process, rather than one or two group representatives deciding the goals and then inviting others to join.
 8. Formalize coalition operations. It is best to make explicit agreements. Make sure members understand their responsibilities, rights, and how decisions will be made. Being clear can help prevent conflicts.
 9. Develop a common strategy. The strength of a coalition is in its unity. Work together to develop a strategy that makes sense for all members. The tactics you choose should be ones that all the organizations can endorse. If not, the tactics should be taken by individual organizations independent of the coalition.
 10. Clearly state the goals and objectives of the coalition, while acknowledging potential differing self-interests of the member organizations.
 11. Clearly define coalition tasks and responsibilities and divide assignments as equitably as possible.
 12. Understand and respect each organization's self interests and internal processes (e.g., chain of command for decision-making, values, history, structure). Respect for and interest in their unique agendas and how the organizations tie into the coalition can help keep them motivated.
 13. Be patient and agree to disagree. Because diverse organizations with often different orientations and agendas are coming together, getting agreement on even minor objectives can be difficult.
 14. Give and take. It is important to build on existing relationships and connections with other organizations. Don't just ask for or expect support; be prepared to give it.
 15. Recognize that contributions vary and appreciate all contributions. Each organization is important and will have something different to offer. Acknowledge them all, whether they are volunteering, providing the meeting space, funding, copying, providing publicity, leafleting, passing resolutions, or providing other resources.

Sources:

Rubin, B. R. (2000). *A citizen's guide to politics in America: How the system works and how to work the system*, pp. 131-148. M.E. Sharpe. *Voices for America's Children and NGLTF's "Comprehensive Manual for Campus Organizing"* (Shepard, Yeskel, Outcalt - 1995) and materials from the United States Student Association's Grassroots Organizing Weekend (GROW) Program.

Utilizing the News Media

The news media, and particularly the print media, are some of the most powerful tools available to influence decision makers.

Most people get their information through the media. Child advocates and community-based groups have successfully used the media to inform the public and build support for important objectives. Getting coverage of an issue in the papers or on the airwaves can help move people to not only support a cause, but also to take positive action.

Know the local media. Read the paper, listen to the radio station or watch the television program in which you want your story covered. Find out what kind of stories they usually cover, and what kind of angle they like on stories. Some have particular audiences or formats to which you might need to tailor your message or approach.

REMEMBER: reporters are looking for stories and like ones that are easy to write. The more complete the picture you provide, the more likely it is to be printed.

Build relationships with the media. It is much easier to get your story printed or on the air if you have built a relationship with the media contacts before you need them. One way to do this is to establish yourself as a credible source of information and leadership on an issue.

Determine your objective. You should have a specific objective each time you seek media coverage. Examples include calling attention to an issue, calling for action on the part of an elected representative, or making the public aware of an upcoming event. While it is important to plan how to get media attention, don't forget to keep in mind what you want to say.

Opinion pages and editorials. Sometimes a "news event" might not be the best way to reach your goals. The opinion pages of a newspaper can provide great opportunities for advocates. With editorials from the newspaper, letters from readers, and columns from professional writers and community members, it is often the most read section of a local newspaper. This is even the place where policymakers often turn to investigate what the hot issues are among their constituents. Request a meeting with the editorial board, or write an op-ed piece or a letter to the editor. Even a short piece will get your name and ideas in print.

Buy advertising. Sometimes the best way for an advocate to have definitive control over the content and timing of a media message is to buy advertising space or airtime. This allows for a specific and narrowly targeted message. However, the benefits of paid advertising have to be weighed against the cost and limited reach of the ads.

Write good news releases. If you decide to do a news release, it is important to produce a professional looking and quality document. Answer the five W's – who, what, where, when, and why, and follow a standardized form. Keep in mind not only the reason for seeking media coverage but also the purpose of the news release. Are you inviting them to a news conference or are you giving them enough information to write a story from your release?

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Utilizing the News Media

Don't rely solely on your news release. Even a well-crafted and perfectly executed release can easily get misdirected or misplaced in a newsroom. Make sure that you follow up the release with a phone call to the reporter or editor.

Know your material and purpose. Remember your objective and that you are the expert on the topic. Let the interviewer or reporter rely on your expertise and learn to re-direct their questions. If they ask you something off topic, you can say, "That's a good question, but what I really want to emphasize...."

Don't be afraid to say you don't know. Although it helps to anticipate possible questions, you can't always be prepared to answer everything. Instead of replying with vague or incorrect information, simply state you need to verify your answer and that you would be glad to supply them with the information. You can also offer to put them in contact with another person. Your integrity and credibility are more important than a quick answer.

Don't forget to use newsletters, community calendars, and bulletins. How do you find out about issues and events? The local newspaper, radio station, and/or television station are not the only "news outlets" in your town. Get your message out whenever and wherever you can.

Passion. Child advocates should not be daunted when trying to attract media attention. Our stories are often inherently newsworthy because they deal with important issues that have serious effects on large numbers of people. You have strong feelings about your work; use that emotion to your advantage. Sometimes passion is contagious!

Sources:

The Advocacy Institute. (1997). Blowing Away the Smoke: A Series of Advanced Media Advocacy Advisories for Tobacco Control Advocates, Advisory No. 5. Washington D.C.; The Benton Foundation and Center for Strategic Communications. (1998). Strategic Communications for Nonprofits. Washington D.C.; Association for Children of New Jersey. (1996). Community Education Toolkit. Newark, NJ.

Political Campaign Work

Come on – Do a Little Grunt Work!

Political party affiliation is particularly important to legislators at two times: (1) when organizing the legislature, at which time the majority party takes control and members of the majority and minority have a voice in selecting their leaders and setting the direction and focus of their party; and (2) when running for election or reelection.

For the most part, the former is an internal process in which you will have little, if any, impact. The latter, however, presents an opportunity for you to become fully involved.

If you have a strong political point of view, plan to work on the campaign of a candidate who will support and articulate your point of view.

Surprisingly to some, campaign work (both for the candidate and for volunteers) involves a lot of grunt work. Stuffing envelopes, dropping literature, door knocking throughout the district, making telephone calls, and helping with fundraisers are just a few of the tasks. However, the anticipated victory and camaraderie usually make it all worthwhile. And do not forget to make a financial contribution if you can afford it. Even a modest contribution is always appreciated.

During the campaign, you will have established a positive relationship with the candidate, and when he/she takes office, this relationship will allow you greater access. Legislators remember their supporters and workers.

Financial Contributions

In recent years, states have begun passing legislation that provides for oversight of campaign contributions, particularly contributions made by registered lobbyists or the organizations they represent.

The primary purpose of this oversight is to let the public know who is contributing to whom and how the money is being spent. Under our system of representative government, it is very important to maintain a high level of confidence in our political system. People need assurance that large contributors, who definitely are in the minority, do not control any political agenda through their contributions and that ours is truly a government of the people.

You, as a citizen lobbyist, more than likely will not be affected by the laws relating to campaign finance. Therefore, following your review and approval of a candidate's qualifications and proposals, you should seriously consider making a financial contribution. Call any candidate's campaign headquarters for the address to which the contribution should be sent. In local races, it is usually appropriate to call the candidate's home to get this information.

Fundraising events for incumbents are also important events to attend. Outside of a metropolitan area, they are often inexpensive and casual events. Whether you share a political party or philosophy with the legislator is not important. Issues do not need to be discussed in this setting. Just get the name and your organization's name connected for future follow-up.

REMEMBER: Even a small contribution will be received with open arms by a grateful candidate!

Vote!

As a citizen, your most basic individual responsibility is to cast your vote on election day. Do not neglect the one task that, with minimal effort, makes you a participant in our democratic process. Become an informed citizen and vote.

The U.S. Constitution sets some limitations on who is qualified to vote; however, most qualifications are set by the states. For example, qualifications for pre-registration and registration for absentee and election day voting are set by the states. In Kansas, you can obtain complete voting information from either the Office of the Secretary of State or your local county election officer.

In a 1938 speech, Franklin D. Roosevelt stated, “Let us never forget that government is *ourselves* and not an alien power over us. The ultimate rulers of our democracy are not presidents and senators and congressmen and government officials, but the voters of this country.”

Where to Find Legislative Information

The Internet has revolutionized the way in which you can access and use information. As an Internet user, you can move easily and swiftly throughout the legislative process.

Legislative committee schedules, including time, place and agenda are posted as soon as the meeting has been scheduled. This saves time for both you and legislative staff.

You will be able to involve yourself in considerably more legislative activity without having to be present at the capitol or in other locations from which you need information. Your trek from office to office to obtain daily journals, bills, and amendments will not be necessary. The Internet will make the trek for you!

In addition, you will be able to access other extremely useful information such as statutes, rules and regulations, news releases from both the executive and legislative branches of government, bill summaries, and much, much more. These resources will prove valuable to you in many ways – from merely “becoming acquainted” to conducting serious research.

Due to the Internet, legislative operations have realized both time and financial savings. For example, the number of requests for paper bills (hard copy bills) has been greatly reduced. These savings have freed staff to offer additional assistance to those who do not have use of the Internet.

There are a number of places to obtain information concerning legislators, staff, and legislation. The following is a list of the most requested types of information. Actual titles of publications are underlined. The Information Network of Kansas also operates the Kansas Legislative Services’ website which can be found at <http://www.kslegislature.org>.

Kansas State Library, 300 SW 10th Ave., Room 343-North, Topeka, (785) 296-3296,
<http://skyways.lib.ks.us/KSL>

- ◆ A toll-free HOTLINE [1-800-432-3924] operates during the Legislative Session.
- ◆ During the session, either the regular phone number or hotline number will connect you to staff that can provide information on the status of any bill and agenda information for committee meetings. After the session adjourns, the regular library number can be used to get the final status of a bill in the last session, plus the history and content of the bill.
- ◆ The Document Room (see next page) is only in operation during the regular legislative session. During other times of the years, the State Library provides access to these documents.

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Where to Find Legislative Information

Legislative Administrative Services, 300 SW 10th Ave., Room 511-S, Topeka, (785) 296-2391, <http://skyways.lib.ks.us/kansas/government/las/index.html>

- ♦ Legislative Telephone Directory
- ♦ A directory of legislative staff serving the Kansas Legislature
- ♦ A calendar of events sponsored by lobbyists
- ♦ Email addresses of state legislators
- ♦ Interim Legislative Committee Schedule (requests to be on the list are taken in May).

Document Room, 300 SW 10th Ave., Room 145-N, Topeka, (785) 296-4096

- ♦ Subject Index Reports: Available every Friday during the session; includes the status and title of all bills introduced.
- ♦ Free copies of legislative bills (up to ten copies of each bill).
- ♦ Senate and House Calendars for each day of the session (schedules of committees and the order of bills to be debated).
- ♦ Senate and House Journals for each day of the session (proceedings of the sessions from the previous day).
- ♦ Folding pocket cards of legislators' room numbers, phone numbers, and committee assignments.

Legislative Research Department, 300 SW 10th Ave., Room 545-N, Topeka, (785) 296-3181, <http://skyways.lib.ks.us/kansas/ksleg/KLRD/kldr.html>

- ♦ Interim Committee Reports: Available on the first day of the Session after Legislators receive their copy.
- ♦ Annual Summary of Legislation: Available in June, date varies.
- ♦ Budget analyses and appropriations committee reports.

Division of the Budget, 900 SW Jackson, Suite 504, Topeka, (785) 296-2436, <http://da.state.ks.us/budget>

- ♦ The Governor's Budget Report
- ♦ The Governor's State of the State Address
- ♦ Governor's Budget Amendments

Legislative Division of Post Audit, 800 SW Jackson, Suite 1200, Topeka, (785) 296-3792, <http://www.kslegislature.org/postaudit>

- ♦ Completed Performance Audits, Financial Compliance Audits, and Compliance and Control Audits.

Secretary of State, Elections & Legislative Matters, Memorial Hall, 120 SW 10th Avenue, First Floor, Topeka, (785) 296-4564, <http://www.kssos.org>

- ♦ Directory of legislative lobbyists
- ♦ Legislative Directory which includes home and business addresses and phone numbers of elected officials
- ♦ Enrolled bills

Quick Guide: Finding, Understanding, and Using Data

Don't be intimidated by data! A few basic skills are all anyone needs to find, understand, and use statistical information regarding children and families. With county, state, or national demographic and basic program data, child advocates can wield a powerful tool for improving the well-being of children in Kansas.

Finding Reliable and Useful Data. Finding national, state, and county data on child well-being is easier than ever with the help of agencies and their websites. Although data sources are numerous, the following list can get you started on your search for useful information.

AVAILABLE DATA SOURCES			
TYPES OF INFORMATION	LEVEL	SOURCE	ADDRESS
Child abuse/neglect	National, State	Natl. Clearinghouse on Child Abuse & Neglect	www.calib.com/nccanch
Child care	State, County	KS Assoc. of Childcare Resource & Referral Agencies	785-823-3343
	State, County	Bureau of Child Care Licensing & Regulation, KS Dept of Health & Environment	www.kdhe.state.ks.us/bccclr
Child Welfare	National, State	Natl. Child Care Information Center	www.nccic.org
	State	KS Dept of Social & Rehabilitation Services	www.srskansas.org
Communities That Care Survey (student info)	State, County	Greenbush Institute	www.ctcdata.org www.greenbush.org
Court (Juvenile)	State, County	Office of Judicial Administration	judicial.kscourts.org
Crime	State, County	KS Bureau of Investigation	www.kbi.org
	National, State	US Federal Bureau of Investigation	www.fbi.gov
Early Prenatal Care	State, County	Office of Health Care Information, KS Dept of Health & Environment	785-296-5644
Education	National, State	Natl. Center for Health Statistics, CDC	www.cdc.gov/nchs/data
	State, County	KS Dept of Education	www.ksbe.state.ks.us
Free/Reduced School Meals	National, State	Natl. Center for Education Statistics	nces.ed.gov
	State, County	US Dept of Education	www.ed.gov
Head Start	State, County	KS State Dept of Education	www.ksde.org
	State, County	US Dept of Agriculture, Office of Analysis, Nutrition, and Evaluation	703-605-0482
Health	State, County	KS Head Start Association	913-422-1700
	State, County	Office of Health Care Information, KS Dept of Health & Environment	785-296-5644
Health – Med. Providers	National, State	Centers for Disease Control & Prevention	www.cdc.gov
	National, State	Kaiser Family Foundation	www.statehealthfacts.kff.org
Hunger	State, County	KS Health Care Data Governing Board	www.accesskansas.org/hcdgb
Immunization	National, State	US Dept of Agriculture	www.reeusda.gov
	State, County	Epidemiologic Services & Bureau of Epidemiology & Disease Prevention, KS Dept of Health & Environment	785-296-8156
Income (e.g., Family)	National	Natl. Center for Health Statistics, CDC	www.cdc.gov/nchs/data
	State, County	Fannie Mae	www.efanniema.com
Infant Mortality	State, County	Office of Health Care Information, KS Dept of Health & Environment	785-296-5644
	National, State	Natl. Center for Health Statistics, CDC	www.cdc.gov

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Quick Guide: Finding, Understanding, and Using Data

AVAILABLE DATA SOURCES			
TYPES OF INFORMATION	LEVEL	SOURCE	ADDRESS
Labor, Workforce	National, State State	US Dept of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics KS Department of Human Resources	data.bls.gov laborstats.hr.state.ks.us
Low-Birth-Weight	State, County	Office of Health Care Information, KS Dept of Health & Environment	785-296-5644
	National, State	Natl. Center for Health Statistics, CDC	www.cdc.gov/nchs
Multiple Types of Info Census Data	National, State County	US Census Bureau	www.census.gov quickfacts.census.gov/qfd
Federal Statistics	National, State	FedStats	www.fedstats.gov/qf/states
Child Statistics	National, State	Child Trends Data Bank	www.childtrendsdatbank.org
Poverty	State	Natl. Center for Children in Poverty	www.nccp.org
Taxes	State, County	KS Dept of Revenue	www.ksrevenue.org/stats
Teen Births	State, County	Office of Health Care Information, KS Dept of Health & Environment	785-296-5644
	National, State	Natl. Center for Health Statistics, CDC	www.cdc.gov/nchs
Teen Death	State, County	Office of Health Care Information, KS Dept of Health & Environment	785-296-5644
	National, State	Natl. Center for Health Statistics, CDC	www.cdc.gov/nchs
Well-being – KIDS COUNT	State, County	Kansas Action for Children	www.kac.org

Understanding Data: What Do the Numbers Mean?

Although research often presents numerous types of statistics, the following statistics commonly reported by agencies can provide meaningful information that is easily understandable.

Percentage. The percentage tells you what portion of the total group a particular subgroup represents. It is calculated by taking the number of people in a subgroup and dividing it by the number of people in the total group.

$$\text{Percentage} = (\text{Number in subgroup} \div \text{Number in total group}) \times 100$$

Example: What percentage of the babies born in Kansas were low-birth-weight babies?

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Percentage} &= (2,758 \text{ low-birth-weight babies} \div 39,335 \text{ total babies born}) \times 100 \\ &= 7.01\% \text{ of the babies born were low-birth-weight babies} \end{aligned}$$

Mean. Also called the average, the mean gives you an idea of what the average person looks like. It is calculated by adding up all the data values (e.g., scores) each person in the group has and dividing the sum by the total number of people in the group.

$$\text{Mean} = (1^{\text{st}} \text{ person's value} + 2^{\text{nd}} \text{ person's value} + \dots \text{ last person's value}) \div \text{Number of people}$$

Example: What is the mean salary for child care workers in the county?

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Mean} &= (\$13,700 + \$14,100 + \dots \$42,540) \div 67 \text{ child care workers} \\ &= \$24,760 \text{ is the mean salary of child care workers in the county} \end{aligned}$$

* Numbers used in this example are fictitious.

Median. The median tells you the value or number that 50 percent of the people fall at or below.

If people in a group were lined up from lowest to highest according to their value on something, the median would be the value in the middle of the group. Example: a median family income of \$47,800 in a county means that 50 percent of the families have an income of \$47,800 or less.

Rate. The rate tells you the number of things being measured per a set group size. Common set group sizes include 1,000, 10,000, and 100,000. The rate is calculated by taking the number of people in a subgroup, dividing it by the number of people in the total group, then multiplying by the set group size.

$$\text{Rate} = (\text{Number in subgroup} \div \text{Number in total group}) \times \text{Set group size}$$

Example: What is the rate of teen violent deaths in Kansas?

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Rate} &= (111 \text{ teen violent deaths} \div 206,787 \text{ teens in Kansas}) \times 100,000 \\ &= 53.67 \text{ teen violent deaths per } 100,000 \text{ teens in Kansas} \end{aligned}$$

Percent Change. When data are available for at least two points in time, you can determine if the newest number increased, decreased, or stayed the same compared to the previous number. You can also determine just how much the number changed. Percent change is calculated by subtracting the newest number from the previous number, then dividing by the previous number. If the percent change is a positive number, it means that the newest number has increased compared to the previous number. If the percent change is a negative number, it means that the newest number has decreased compared to the previous number.

$$\text{Percent Change} = [(\text{Newest number} - \text{Previous number}) \div \text{Previous number}] \times 100$$

Example: In the 2003/04 school year, the percent of children in Kansas approved for free school meals was 28 percent. In the base years, 1998/99 to 2002/03, the average percentage was 24.6 percent. Therefore, the change from the base years to the current year is:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Percent Change} &= [(28.0 - 24.6) \div 24.6] \times 100 \\ &= 13.9\% \text{ increase from the base years to the 2003/04 school year in the percent} \\ &\quad \text{of children approved for free school meals} \end{aligned}$$

Ranks and Decile Scores. Rank scores tell you where a given performance stands compared to the rest of the group. For example, according to the National 2003 KIDS COUNT Data Book, Kansas ranked 37th on the rate of teen violent deaths, indicating that Kansas' rate was higher than over half of the U.S. states. The Kansas KIDS COUNT Data Book groups the counties into ten equal groups (decile ranks) to represent the top 10 percent, top 20 percent, and so forth. A decile rank of "one" indicates that the county is in the top 10 percent while a decile rank of "10" indicates that the county is in the bottom 10 percent.

Using Data to Make Your Case

- D**ata used as an advocacy tool can generate public awareness of issues needing attention as well as progress being made. Specifically, they can be used to:
- ♦ Determine where a county, state, or the nation stands on a given well-being indicator.
 - ♦ Compare counties with other counties, the state, the nation, or a goal.
 - ♦ Track changes in well-being over time.

Determining where you stand. Data on various child and family well-being indicators can provide you with information on how your county or state is currently doing. Keep in mind:

- ♦ When determining how you are doing in a well-being area, examine multiple indicators that will shed more comprehensive light on the area. Using multiple indicators increases your chance of gaining a comprehensive and accurate picture. For example, if wanting to know how child care is working in your county, you could look at the education level of the providers, staff turnover, availability, and cost of care.
- ♦ Use caution when dealing with small numbers. Because of the way percentages and rates are calculated, smaller as opposed to larger counties can show large percentages or rates for relatively small incidents.
- ♦ When using rates or percentages, know the raw numbers. For example, if examining the rate per 1,000 children of out-of-home placements for your county, also keep in mind just how many children that rate represents.
- ♦ Look for patterns over time to see if the current performance represents an ongoing pattern or just an unusual year.
- ♦ Look at factors (the numbers representing the factors) that may cause the well-being to be what it is.

Comparing performance. Sometimes you will want to know how your county or state is doing compared to other counties, states, the nation, or some predetermined goal. When you do this:

- ♦ Try to find counties that are similar to your own in terms of factors such as size, rural/urban composition, and economic situation. Using similar counties will allow for a cleaner comparison on the well-being indicator(s) of interest.
- ♦ When wanting to compare county or state performance to a goal, keep the prior performance in mind. Expecting a county to reach a goal that is significantly out of reach may set it up for failure. Instead, focus on whether progress is being made toward the ultimate goal.

Tracking change over time. Often times, you will want to know if issues in your county or state are improving or getting worse. Seeing a *continued pattern* for the better or worse can strengthen your case.

- ♦ Keep in mind that definitions and formulas of certain data sometimes change. If the definition of a well-being indicator changes, odds are that you will not be able to compare data from the former to the current definitions.
- ♦ Use caution when dealing with small numbers. Because of the way rates and percentages

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Using Data to Make Your Case

are calculated, smaller counties will show larger fluctuations from one year to the next. For example, a small county might have no childhood deaths one year, but one the next, which results in a large percent change in its death rate.

- ◆ Although the amount of change over time can be informative, look for patterns in change – has the county continued to increase over the last few years? Looking at patterns rather than just amount of change is particularly important for small counties, where small differences will look like large changes.
- ◆ Use at least three years of data when looking at change over time. The more years you examine, the better chance you have of seeing whether the performance is actually improving, worsening, or staying about the same.

Use data responsibly. Successful advocates build a reputation for competence, reliability, and integrity. Information that is used inaccurately or irresponsibly will detract from your ability to be a credible resource. When seeking data:

- ◆ Use official data sources and cite your sources.
- ◆ Check and double-check your numbers.
- ◆ Use the most recent data available.
- ◆ Make sure you know what the data actually represent and what time period is being reported.
- ◆ Look not only for the problems needing attention but also for the progress being made to address the issues.

Sources:

Kansas Action for Children (2004). Kansas Kids Count Data Book 2004. The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2003). 2003 Kids Count Data Book: State profiles of child well-being. Baltimore, MD.

Glossary

Words That Will Help You Understand What Is Going On

Accede Second house agrees to the request for a conference committee and appoints conferees.

Agree to Disagree Report of the conference committee which is not able to reach an agreement in the conference committee. This allows the second report to be considered with only a majority of the conferees signing the report.

Amendment A change or addition to a bill or motion; must be germane to the subject of the bill or motion.

Author Legislator who introduces a bill; chief author has primary responsibility for passage of a bill which may have additional coauthors, sometimes called sponsors.

Bill The form in which a proposal to create, change, or abolish a law is introduced into the legislature. Bills are considered by the body (Senate or House).

Calendar Bills and/or other items of legislative business listed in the order in which they will be presented in the chamber. The Calendar is very useful to anyone following actions in the chamber.

Caucus Legislators who belong to the same political party and are organized to impact legislative actions; “to caucus” is a meeting of these legislators.

Chamber Place in the capitol in which legislators meet to consider legislation in the House or Senate and/or conduct other business.

Committee A group of legislators, appointed by the leadership, that considers and makes recommendations on bills that have been referred to it. The Senate and House each has its own committee system. A “standing committee” is a permanent committee unless the Rules of the body are changed. Other committees include conference (members of Senate and House appointed to reach a compromise on different versions of a bill); interim (appointed to study a subject after the session adjourns and charged with reporting back to the legislature in the next session); and ad hoc (appointed for a specific purpose; dissolves when task is completed).

Committee of the Whole Senate or House acting as a single committee. When either body meets as a Committee of the Whole, debate is informal and actions are preliminary. Votes are recorded in the Senate when five members demand a vote, in the House when 15 members demand a vote.

Concur First house agrees with the amendments made by the second house. This constitutes a final action.

Conference Committee Report Adopted Conference Committees usually include three members from each house who get together to work out the differences in a bill which has been passed by both houses in different versions. When both houses vote and approve the same report, the bill is ready to go to the governor for signature.

Effective Date The date the bill will become law. Statute Book date is July 1. That is the date the Session Laws are published. Bills also become law upon the date of publication in the Kansas Register or a date may be specified in the bill.

Enroll Printing of resolution or concurrent resolution on parchment with dates of actions and signatures of leadership.

Enrolled and Presented to Governor Process on bills of dating actions, leadership signing the enrolled version of the bill and taking the copy to the governor.

Glossary

Final Action When a bill has been debated and amended, a roll call vote is taken. All members vote Yea, Nay, or Present and Not Voting (pass). These votes are recorded and printed in the Journal with the title of the bill.

First Reading The formal introduction of a bill. Clerk of the legislative body “reads in” the bill; usually the reading of the bill’s title is all that is necessary. Following the first reading, the bill is referred to the appropriate committee.

Floor Area in the chambers where legislators sit and from which they speak.

Gallery Area reserved for the public to observe the chamber.

General Orders The section of the Calendar when the house resolves itself into a Committee of the Whole to debate and amend bills. This allows all members the opportunity to work on the bill, not just those in the committee to which it was referred.

Hearing Committee meeting in which points of view on a bill are presented and votes are taken.

Introduction A member or committee requests a revisor of statutes (attorney) to draft a bill. When it is written, the member turns the bill into the clerk or secretary and it is given a number and read before the House or Senate and that constitutes introduction.

Journal Official record of the actions taken by the legislature. Each body has its own journal. A copy of the journal usually is available the day following the proceedings.

Majority Leader Legislator selected by the majority caucus to direct caucus strategy on the floor; leads the caucus.

Motion A proposal made formally to a committee or to the full Senate or House. Bills and other legislative business are moved through the legislature by motions.

Nonconcur The first chamber does not agree with (or wants to look at) amendments of the second chamber. Bill goes to conference.

Omnibus The final bill approved each session which normally reconciles spending for approved bills and establishes the required ending balance for the various funds.

Quorum Established by rule, it is the number of legislators that must be present to conduct business, generally a majority.

Revisor of the Statutes Office that has the authority to put bills in proper legal form.

Rules Adopted by the legislature, rules regulate the process and actions of the legislature in a prescribed way.

Second Reading Following committee action, a committee report is presented to the legislative body and, following the acceptance of the report, the bill receives its second reading. Next step: the bill is placed on General Orders.

Sine Die Final adjournment of the legislature.

Speaker The presiding officer of the House of Representatives, usually of the majority caucus. Often referred to as “the second most powerful position in state government” (following the governor).

Third Reading Reading of the bill before the legislative body votes on final passage.

Veto Return of a bill by the governor to the legislature without the governor’s signature (which is necessary for a bill to become a law). To override a veto, two-thirds (2/3) majority of the entire legislature is necessary for passage.