

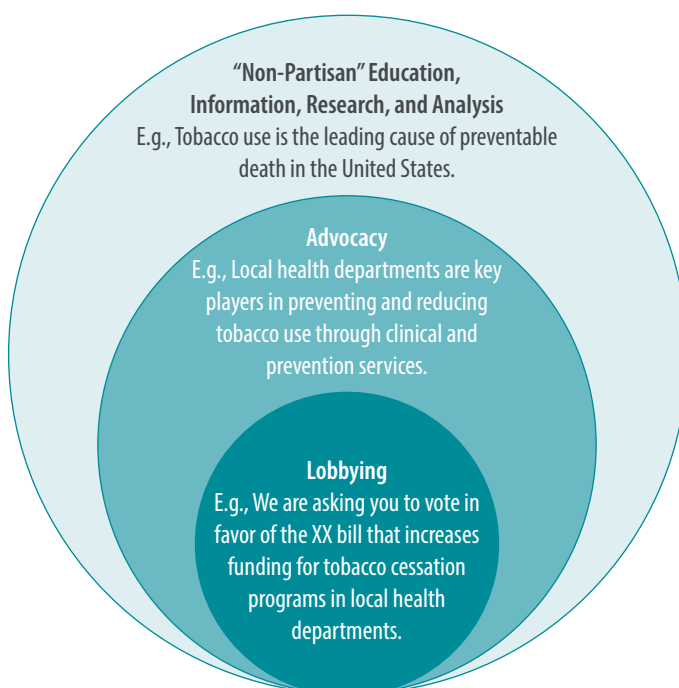
Building Your Advocacy Toolbox: Advocacy vs. Lobbying

Why is advocacy important to public health?

Advocacy is a central tenant of public health. Without advocacy, we wouldn't have seatbelt laws, safe drinking water, and nutrition labeling. It is vital in advancing public health to keep our communities healthy and safe. If public health stakeholders don't speak up and advocate for important public health issues, opposing sides will.

All lobbying contains some form of advocacy but not all advocacy is lobbying. You can communicate in multiple ways with your policymakers about health topics. Local health department leaders and staff should be able to differentiate between advocacy and lobbying because federal funds cannot be used to lobby the federal government.

ADVOCACY VS. LOBBYING



What is the difference between advocacy and lobbying?

Health advocacy—“The processes by which the actions of individuals or groups attempt to bring about social and/or organization change on behalf of a particular health goal, program, interest, or population.”¹ Health advocacy includes educating policymakers and the public about evidence-based policy.

Lobbying—“Attempts to influence a legislative body through communication with a member or employee of a legislative body, or with a government official who participates in formulating legislation.”² Lobbying can include written and oral communication for or against specific legislation.

Grassroots lobbying– Attempting to influence legislation by encouraging the public to contact legislators about legislation.²

Five Advocacy Tips

At the basic level, advocacy is building relationships. The goal is to become a valuable resource for policymakers. No matter who the audience is, you should keep in mind the following:

1. Be confident.
2. Frame your message to answer the question, “So what?”
3. Plan and practice your message.
4. Present a clear and compelling message; less is more.
5. Offer yourself as an expert resource and provide examples from your community; stories are more compelling than statistics.