

Anti-Hunger Advocacy Challenges in Tennessee

JANUARY 25 2024, 1:00P CT



TENNESSEE
JUSTICE
CENTER



INTRODUCTION

TJC NUTRITION TEAM

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TJC ANTI-HUNGER ADVOCACY

End hunger in Tennessee by protecting and strengthening the federal nutrition programs: SNAP, WIC, Child Nutrition Programs

- Improve access and remove barriers to programs
- Advocate for solutions to systemic issues
- Educate and inform
- Provide policy expertise
- Direct client work



AGENDA

- **OVERVIEW & ADVOCACY 101**
- **PANEL DISCUSSION**
- **QUESTIONS**
- **WHAT NEXT?**



OVERVIEW & ADVOCACY 101

WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

Support, recommend, or argue for a cause

- OR argue AGAINST a cause

Educate, inform, and teach about an issue

Plead or petition on behalf of others

**SEEKING TO CHANGE THE
MINDS OF DECISION-MAKERS**



LOBBYING

Influence elected officials on an issue; often on legislation

- Regulated by ethics boards and registration
- Examples:
 - **Direct:** speaking to legislators in order to influence their vote on specific bills
 - **Indirect:** (aka Grassroots) urging others to do direct lobbying

Anyone can speak to legislators about bills as an individual citizen!



TYPES OF ADVOCACY

Legislative

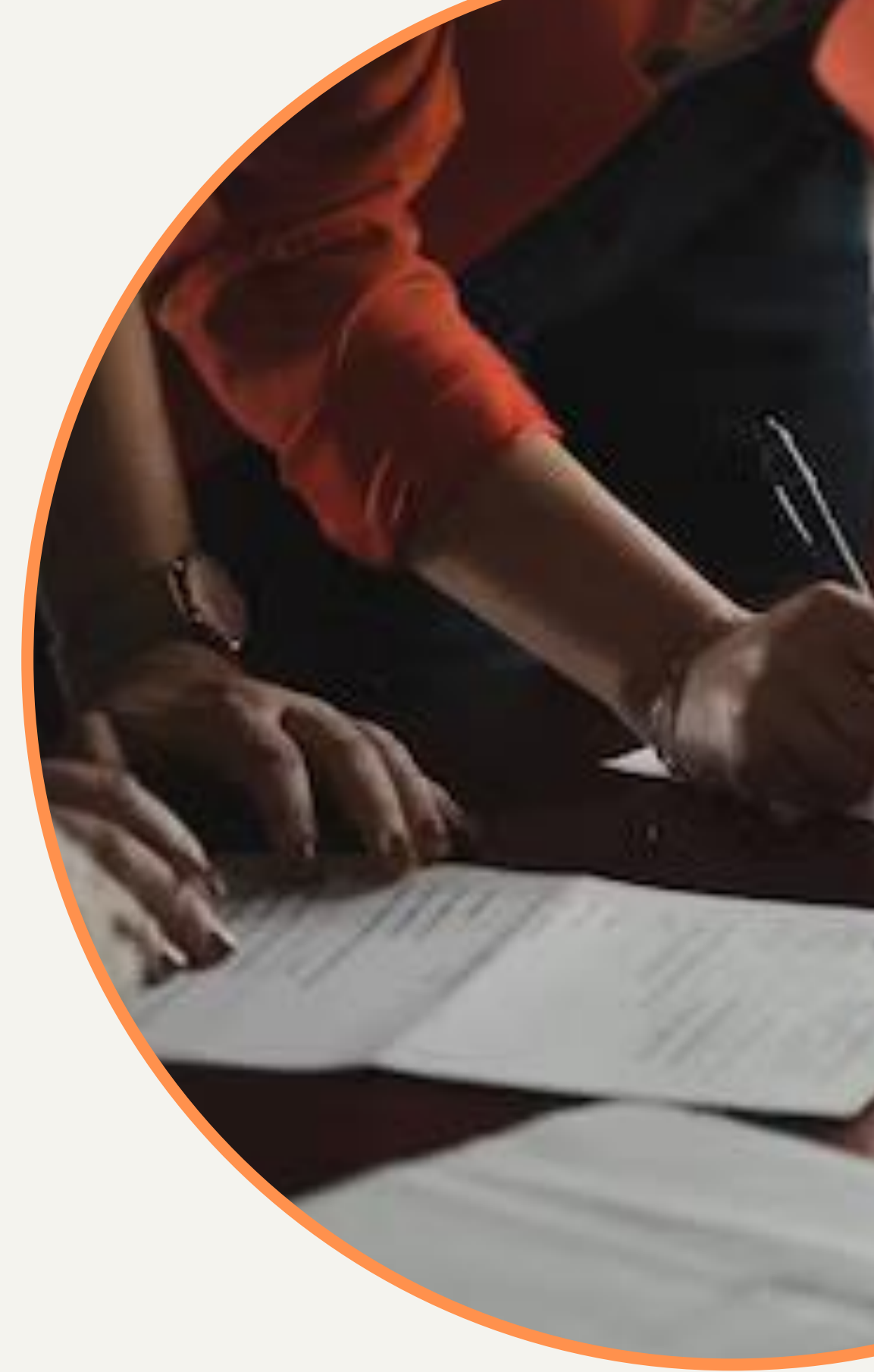
- Affecting change via legislation

Administrative

- Affecting change via agency or administrative policy or practices
- **Does not involve legislation**

BOTH ARE IMPORTANT

BOTH HAVE A PLACE



ADMINISTRATIVE ADVOCACY

Engage decision-makers within state agency administrations

Examples:

- Summer EBT
- Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (SNAP)
- Telephonic Signature
- SNAP State Waivers & Opt-in Options
- Commenting on Proposed Rules

**AVOIDS THE LEGISLATIVE
PROCESS ALTOGETHER**



CHALLENGES IN TN

Ideological Differences

- “Personal Responsibility” narrative
- “Work Ethic” narrative

Feelings over Facts

- Data alone may not be effective

“Why Change Now?”

- Appeal to tradition

Cultural Norms

- Religion, language, deeply-held beliefs, etc.

Many others...



APPROACHES

Data

- Statistics and published resources
- Statements from experts like professors

Narrative

- Lived-experience stories
- News articles

Economic

- How will this affect the economy and jobs?
- What's the return on investment (ROI)?

Socioemotional

- Appealing to the humanity of the decision-maker



HUNGER-SPECIFIC CHALLENGES

Lack of knowledge

- Many decision-makers don't grasp the reality of the situation
- "It can't be that bad..."

Conflict of personal values

- May want to limit aid to those they deem "deserving"

Political takes precedence

- "Will this affect my public standing?"

START WITH UNDERSTANDING

THEIR POSITION



THE 5 "W"'S

Who is/are the Decision-Maker(s)?

- Who are the stakeholders? (voters & citizens)
- This will help determine tactics

What is the goal?

- Administrative or Legislative?

When does it need to happen? (Timeline)

- Time-Sensitive?

Where is the reach? (Federal, State, Local, etc.)

- Could be multiple

Why does this matter?

- Why should the Decision-Maker care?



STRATEGIES

Engage the public effectively

- Media Advocacy
 - Op-Eds
- Public Opinion Campaigns
- Letter Campaigns

Understand your positionality

- Are you the right person to be advocating?
- Is who YOU are a barrier to effective advocacy?

Power mapping

- Learn who the decision-maker listens to and tap them
- “Social Advocacy”



STRATEGIES

Framing the issue effectively

- ex. “No Cost” instead of “Free”

Finding common ground

- How can this benefit mutual goals?
- Weave your issue into their issues.

Educating decision-makers

- You are the expert, which is valuable

Offer Support

- Be a resource and offer collaboration



STRATEGIES

Be ready to combat common rebuttals

- Have talking points that address common narrative concerns
- Do your research!

Be prepared to compromise

- A small win is better than no win
 - “Perfect is the enemy of the good”
- A small win can set the stage for future, more effective successes



STRATEGIES

Give the Decision-Maker an off-ramp!

- No one will change their mind if they are made to feel bad about doing so.
- Give them a way to save face.

Congratulate success!

- Let your thanks for wins be as loud and public as your advocacy.



PANEL DISCUSSION

PANELISTS

Kate Goodin

Tennessee Justice Center
Child Anti-Hunger Advocate

MaKenzie Mosby

EdTrust TN
Senior Manager of Government Relations

Sarah Taylor

Voices for Healthy Kids
Government Relations Director for
Tennessee

Talk briefly about your experience with advocacy.



What is an advocacy win you're proud of?



What is something you have tried that didn't work out as you hoped?



Can you speak to a time you had to pivot strategies while advocating on an issue?



How can people not currently doing advocacy begin and do you have advice for people advocating in Tennessee?



QUESTIONS

WHAT NEXT?

NEXT STEPS

- Find a Buddy
- Start Local
- Learn the Subject Matter
- Educate Yourself to Educate Others
- Make Connections with Decision-Makers
- Grow Your Networks
- Grassroots Meets Grasstops
- Become a Resource for Others

NEXT STEPS

- Write, call, text, email, and visit Decision-Makers
 - Voicemails are very effective!!!
- Organize a “Day on the Hill”
- Create social media campaigns and #hashtags
 - Share and repost things other people are creating
- Write or contribute to Op-Eds
- Create education and awareness opportunities
 - For Decision-Makers AND for their constituents
- Activate others to advocate alongside you
- Create informational toolkits with talking points
- Create PSAs, Billboards, and other awareness campaigns
- AND more!

JOIN US!

Healthy Meals Healthy Kids TN

- Join us to bring no cost school meals to all children in Tennessee!
- First Thursdays at 1:00p CT
- Sign up [HERE](#)

WIC Champions

- Help us increase WIC participation in TN!
- Second Thursdays at 9:00a CT
- Sign up [HERE](#)

SNAP Access

- Improving access to the SNAP program in TN
- Third Thursdays at 10:00a CT
- Email [Geraldine](#)

JOIN US!

College Hunger Quarterly Call

- We are revitalizing this call to address the unique hunger challenges faced on college campuses. Join us to discuss how to ensure no one has to choose between getting an education and feeding their family.
- First meeting: February 14, 2024 @ 1:00p CT
- Sign Up [HERE](#)

CONTACT US

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