



DARE TO GET INVOLVED

How to Take Action to Improve Minority Health: An Advocate's Checklist

Knowledge Is Power: Get Informed!

- Stay abreast of recent health disparities research and policy developments.**
Being informed about the issues is essential to becoming an effective minority health policy advocate.
- Inform your constituents and colleagues** about key health policies and research findings. The more people who know about the issues, the stronger the advocacy potential.
- There is power in numbers—**build and maintain strong relationships** with other health advocates to leverage expertise and resources and share the benefits of “lessons learned.”
- Be innovative and culturally and linguistically appropriate** when you incorporate minority health into your organization's agenda and work.
- Use Families USA as a resource** for all of your minority health policy needs. Look us up online at www.familiesusa.org. Contact us by e-mail at minorityhealth@familiesusa.org or by telephone at (202) 628-3030.






Coalition Building and Community Development

Specific activities could include the following:

- Build relationships** with other key health advocacy groups to leverage expertise and resources.
- Swap strategy ideas** and share “lessons learned” about effective outreach strategies. Pool resources: Together, groups may be able to use more “high-tech” means of communicating, such as videos or video story banking.
- Sponsor town hall meetings** about key health care issues (e.g., sponsor a meeting for senior citizens about the new Medicare law or a meeting for low-income mothers about Medicaid and SCHIP).
- Start petitions** to get local citizens to support important policy recommendations and submit the petitions to the appropriate Congressperson and local media outlets.




Engaging the Faith Community

Specific activities could include the following:

-  **Ask your pastor or minister to raise awareness** about the importance of screening for common health problems, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease, as well as HIV/AIDS testing, prevention, and counseling.
-  **Encourage fellow congregants to participate** in already-existing public health awareness events, such as “take a family member to the doctor” day or “take a friend to have a mammogram” day.
-  **Host a seminar about enrolling in public health programs** in your church and ensure that participants are educated about the importance of Medicaid and the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and the eligibility requirements for those programs.
-  During weeknight events at your church, **invite a nutrition or health and wellness expert** to lead a lecture on health and wellness and the dangers of obesity.
-  **Serve healthier foods** after church services and during church functions.

Media Outreach

Specific activities could include the following:

-  **Help educate** both the minority and mainstream media about minority health policy issues so that these issues get timely and appropriate attention.
 - ✓ Figure out who your audience is and how best to reach it. What kinds of materials would be most likely to make your point, and what kinds of materials would be most useful to your audience?
 - ✓ Translate health care materials into Spanish or other languages spoken by the groups you want to reach, when appropriate. If your group doesn’t have the resources to translate important materials, partnering with another organization might enable you to pool resources—and reach an even broader audience.
-  **Build and maintain relationships** with health care journalists and talk to them on a regular basis.
-  **Build a story bank**, which chronicles personal health care stories, to humanize your issues and more effectively get your story out to the public. (See the *ImPRESSive* newsletter article titled “The Art of Story Banking” on our Web site.)

- ✓ **Take a media training workshop** to learn how to get your messages out to reporters and share your acquired skills with fellow advocates so that many people can benefit from your newly gained knowledge.
- ✓ **Hold press conferences** to announce health policy news to a wide range of media outlets.
- ✓ **Write opinion-editorials** (op-eds) and **letters to the editor** for your local newspapers.
- ✓ **Call local radio talk shows** to discuss racial and ethnic health care issues.
- ✓ If your organization has a Web site, make sure that you **have a minority health policy Web page**, as well as a newsroom (or similar) page. If you cannot build such pages, link to another organization's Web site, such as Families USA's, which has a very informative minority health page and an extensive minority and mainstream media network.
- ✓ **Establish a health policy e-mail house list** that includes members of advocacy groups you want to keep in the loop.

Working with Appointed and Elected Officials

Specific activities could include the following:

- ✓ **Research bills and committee reports online** so that you are aware of pending legislation that could include language that addresses health disparities. (Find information on federal legislation online at <http://thomas.loc.gov>.)
- ✓ **Form strategic alliances** with other advocacy organizations, build consensus on particular health policies and legislative language that could be inserted into a bill, and submit the policy recommendation and language to your state legislator or member of Congress.
- ✓ **Contact your state legislator** about key health policy issues (i.e., make suggestions to your legislator about policies and state budgetary items that will reduce racial and ethnic health disparities).
- ✓ **Contact your federal officials** about key health policy issues. There are several ways to contact officials at the federal level:
 - ✓ Write or call your members of Congress. The phone number for Washington, DC Capitol Hill offices is 202-224-3121.

- ✓ Set up a meeting with your Representative or Senator during one of his or her home visits to discuss your community or organization's minority health policy concerns. Be prepared to provide reasonable and actionable strategies for your Congressperson to consider.
- ✓ Develop lines of communication with congressional staff who oversee the office's health policy and public health initiatives.

For more information on Families USA's Minority Health Initiatives, contact Rea Pañares, Director of Minority Health Initiatives or Briana Webster-Patterson, Program Manager at minorityhealth@familiesusa.org or 202-628-3030.