



UPPER MIDWEST ALLIANCE OF YMCAS

ADVOCACY TIPS FOR YMCAs

Real Citizens are Powerful Lobbyists

A well-chosen personal story, a member or community participant whose life is changed, or a business thriving with your help, is the most powerful type of advocacy contact. Ask yourself why you choose to devote your time and effort to a YMCA, and tell that story.

Relationships Matter

The best advocacy starts by building and sustaining YMCA relationship before you need them. Attend legislative events, invite legislators to your Y, and make regular contacts. A close relationship means the legislator seeks your input at crucial moments. You become a link between the legislator and their constituents.

There's No Substitute for Inviting Legislators to your YMCA

Every legislative visit to a Y is a powerful opportunity. YMCA events, classroom tours, conversations with staff and volunteers keeps legislators connected and part of your Y community.

Know Your Senator

Among other things, legislators are also parents, students, taxpayers, employers, and community members. Get to your legislators' backgrounds and interests. Are they a member of a Y?

You Need Not Know Everything

Be clear, concise, and above all, accurate. If you don't know, offer to track down information and follow up—it is an opportunity to make reinforcing contact later.

Rapid Change Hurts Advocacy

The faster an organization evolves, the harder it is for even well-informed officials to know that organization. Someone who knew you 5–10 years ago does not understand what you do today. Educating legislators is a continuous process.

Y Programs Progresses Economic Development

In difficult fiscal times, it's easy for policymakers to see education and childcare as a cost, instead of an investment. Remind them that YMCAs provide a documented return on investment for communities and employers, changing lives locally while supporting the state's overall economy.

Make a Strong Ask

If you want support for a specific proposal, ask for their vote. Ask them to be a champion for you with their colleagues. Ask what you could do in order to earn their support.

Speak with One Voice

Prepare for legislative meetings and ask questions, to ensure you are on the same page as the YMCA Alliance, your board and your CEO. When speaking on behalf of your Y, have a focus and unified message. That is our most powerful tool for winning over the Legislature.

