



## **Grassroots Advocacy Network Overview**

There are three main components to a successful advocacy network: policy analysis and lobbying, media/PR, and grassroots advocacy. CCHN has been very successful with policy analysis and lobbying. The development of a strong media/PR campaign, to compliment the lobbying work that is being done, is beginning. Now CCHN needs to develop a broad based grassroots network to complete the advocacy network.

Grassroots advocacy is the process of influencing the actions of elected officials through communications from the electorate. For example, during the CHP+ freeze, CCHN distributed post cards regarding the freeze to CHCs and the Covering Kids and Families (CKF) distribution list. Patients filled these out and sent them to their legislators. This campaign was instrumental in lifting the enrollment freeze.

Both The Children's Hospital and the Colorado Children's Campaign are two organizations that have extremely successful grassroots networks. They are able to organize a large group of people on short notice to support issues of concern to them. As a result, they are very effective lobbying organizations.

**Why Grassroots Advocacy is Important:** Grassroots advocacy brings people together to affect change through action. There is an inherent power in a collective voice. This power is gained through a grassroots network. The power is then channeled into action, which creates change. Legislators must be accountable to their constituents. If they do not hear from their constituents we loose an opportunity to shape their position. CHCs serve over 342,000 patients a year in Colorado and employ 2,400 people. Patients, CHC board members and community members, are untapped resources for a grassroots network.

### **Considerations:**

- Only five calls from constituents can make an enormous difference in the way a legislator will vote on an issue.
- An educated, active grassroots network will give CCHN the ability to mobilize a large group of people around issues effecting CHCs and their patients to effect desired change or stop change from happening.
- Communication will come directly from CCHN rather than being filtered through CHCs Executive Directors. This change will make efforts more timely and the message consistent.
- Through CKF, CCHN has access to a much broader coalition and can include these sister agencies in the network for specific issues.
- A portion of the people mobilized will have a limited understanding of the issues. CCHN will take this into account when developing communication strategies.
- There is an investment of \$2-3,000 per year for the software needed to implement a sustainable grassroots network, plus a one time \$500 set up fee for the service.

**Steps Toward Developing a CCHN Advocacy Network:** There are two main avenues for developing this network: through CCHN and through individual CHCs.

*CCHN's Role:*

- CCHN will write and send action alerts, with specific details on what action should be taken. These will be sent to the network when the lobbyist recommends an alert and the Chief Executive Officer approves the alert.
- CCHN will disseminate information on hot issues to the network on a bimonthly basis during the legislative session and monthly during the rest of the year.
- CCHN will use approximately 10 hours per month of staff time.
- CCHN will utilize the voterVOICE. This is a grassroots-lobbying tool that enables users to quickly and easily organize a grassroots lobbying campaign by using nothing more than a web browser. In addition to NACHC, 4 state PCAs use voterVOICE to manage their grassroots networks.
- With one of the fancier voterVOICE packages, CCHN will be able to follow up with people who have not responded in a timely manner to CCHN's requests.
- CCHN's grassroots network will enhance NACHC's grassroots network. Through voterVOICE CCHN will be able to access Colorado residents active within NACHC's system and NACHC will be able to access CCHN's network.
- Collaborating with NACHC through voterVOICE will reduce the duplication of alerts. NACHC will continue to work on National issues and CCHN will continue to work on Colorado specific issues.

*CHC Role:*

- Designate one contact for state issues, who may also be the NACHC Grassroots Advocacy Coordinator.
- Gain support and get people within the CHC and surrounding community excited about CHC issues.
- Encourage board members, CHC staff and patients to become a part of the grassroots network by signing up for voterVOICE.
- The CCHN Public Affairs committee meeting will have time dedicated to discuss the grassroots network. CHC Grassroots Advocacy Coordinators will be invited to participate in the meetings.