Advocacy 101

The key to success in changing government policies and funding is through grassroots advocacy. Our Advocates are the Arthritis Foundation’s chief resource for making positive changes in our government. Advocacy is often thought of as intimidating, inaccessible and complicated. This toolkit will show you that it’s easier than you may think and that elected officials want to hear your story!
Whether you are attending Arthritis Foundation’s Advocacy Summit in Washington, DC, or meeting with your state officials, advocating for arthritis issues throughout the country is essential to making medications more affordable, funding new research and ultimately finding a cure.

**Types of Advocacy**

**PERSONAL**
Represent and speak up for yourself and your loved ones. Be informed about the issues and take an active role in positively impacting policy that will allow you and your community to live a healthy, productive life.

**COMMUNITY**
With your help, we can work together to build the strongest community possible. You can be the voice for the interests and concerns of your neighbors. A great way to get your community involved is by asking your neighbors to sign up to be an Arthritis Foundation Advocate or to participate in a local Walk to Cure Arthritis or Jingle Bell Run event.

**MEDIA**
Use your local communication channels to increase public awareness and influence public interest in arthritis issues through publication letters, social media, interviews and other communication platforms.

**LEGISLATIVE**
Reach out to elected officials at the local, state or federal level, to educate and influence them on important legislative decisions. Every American has a constitutional right to have his or her voice heard by elected decision makers.

**POLICY**
Influence laws, regulations and rules that have an impact on your well-being. This can be as lofty as a federal regulation or as simple as a rule at your workplace.
As a citizen of the United States of America, it is your right and responsibility to take an active role in our government. You can do so as an Arthritis Foundation Advocate! Your first step is understanding the basic structure of our civic system. There are three levels of government you can engage with:

**FEDERAL**
If you want to engage at the federal level, you should contact your Representative in the U.S. Congress and your two U.S. Senators. You can find your members of Congress by visiting house.gov or senate.gov. You can also reach out to the President of the United States, who heads the executive branch of the federal government.

**STATE**
If you want to engage at the state level, you should contact your state legislators. Every state (except Nebraska) has a bicameral legislature with both a House and a Senate. The Governor of each state heads the executive branch.

**LOCAL**
If you want to engage at a local level, you can notify your local elected officials, like your town’s mayor or council member.

Elected officials at all levels of government represent the members of their community called *constituents*. As a constituent, you have specific elected officials based on where you live. You can find your elected officials and learn more about their policy positions by visiting votesmart.org or by visiting the elected official’s website.
Advocacy: Where to Begin
You have an important story to tell, and you’ll need to figure out how to frame your story to have the biggest impact possible. With your compelling story, you have the power to help shape public policy.

1. **CLAIM YOUR TITLE**
   Use this guide to determine the best way for you to join our advocacy army, what title might work best for you, and what your responsibilities will be in our grassroots network.

2. **IDENTIFY YOUR ISSUE**
   Use these prompts to help you determine the priority issues you will use to tell your arthritis story when advocating.

3. **BUILD YOUR ADVOCACY PLAN**
   Outlining your goals and developing a strategy to achieve them is an essential part of advocacy. These guidelines will help you get there.

4. **TAKE ACTION!**
   Once you have completed these prompts, you will be ready to take action. Together we will conquer arthritis!

5. **PREPARATION TOOLS**
   The Arthritis Foundation Advocacy and Access team is here to help you! We have prepared materials available on our website, ready for you to use whenever you need them!

**Claim Your Title**
The first step is easy. Sign up to join our army of 149,000 Advocates and Ambassadors. When you join us, you’ll have access to the tools and resources that help you tell your story and stay up to date on advocacy news and events. There are many ways to advocate, so your first step is determining the right title for yourself.

**ADVOCATE**
Advocates help improve the lives of people with arthritis and are the backbone of our grassroots network. Advocates:
- Receive the bimonthly Advocacy in Action newsletter
- Participate in our exclusive Advocate Webinar Series each month
- Engage with elected officials through periodic Action Alerts when important arthritis-related issues are debated on Capitol Hill
AMBASSADOR

Ambassadors are volunteers who serve as pivotal links between the Arthritis Foundation and members of Congress. Ambassadors:

• Receive the same benefits and resources as Advocates
• Develop relationships with elected officials and their staff
• Complete Ambassador assignments that help strengthen relationships with elected officials and advance legislation
• Attend the online Ambassador Briefing every other month for an advocacy news update, special guest presentations and new Ambassador assignments

JUNIOR AMBASSADOR

Junior Ambassadors are teens, between 13 and 17 years old, who raise awareness and represent the nearly 300,000 kids in the U.S. who have arthritis and other rheumatic diseases by sharing their arthritis story. Junior Ambassadors:

• Receive advocacy training
• Help raise awareness with policymakers
• Receive the Junior Ambassador newsletter

PLATINUM AMBASSADOR

Platinum Ambassadors are our top-line Ambassadors who complete extra activities and raise funds to support the Foundation’s mission. Platinum Ambassadors:

• Fulfill the requirements of Ambassadors
• Complete four bonus activities throughout the year
• Raise $1,000 or more for the Arthritis Foundation

Identify Your Issues

YOU AND ADVOCACY

What motivates you to advocate for arthritis? What role does arthritis play in your personal story?

• Do you or a loved one live with arthritis?
• What issues do you face as a result of arthritis? High cost of medicines? Narrow networks for your insurance providers? Step therapy or fail first requirements?
• Are you unable to work or live fully on a daily basis because of arthritis or a related condition?
• Do you want to find better treatments and a cure for arthritis?

Your story can impact legislation and policies that affect people with arthritis. Your elected officials need to hear your story and learn about the issues you face due to arthritis. When you share your story, our country’s leaders are better able to represent your needs when major policy decisions are being made.

NOW THAT YOU’VE DECIDED TO TAKE A STAND AND LEND YOUR VOICE TO PARTICULAR ISSUES, YOU HAVE TO DETERMINE WHAT TO DO NEXT AND WHO YOU NEED TO ENGAGE.
Build Your Advocacy Plan

Advocacy can be challenging. It’s difficult to pass bills into law. It helps to form a group of like-minded individuals and work together to advance your cause. Without your voice, elected officials have no way of knowing about life’s daily challenges for people with arthritis.

Now that you have identified the issue for which you want to build an advocacy campaign, outline your goals and list the steps you will take to be successful. You can start with outlining an advocacy plan!

Policy changes and enacting new laws take time, so be patient. You can make the greatest impact on policy with a thoughtful, planned approach to advocacy. While a full plan might include dozens of steps, building yours can be as simple as the following example:

Example Advocacy Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISSUE: High Costs of Medications</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOAL: Increase access to affordable medications</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACTION: Advocate for legislation in my state that will increase access to medications by limiting copays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRAINSTORM TACTICS:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- ✔ Reach out to state-based patient advocacy organizations and select provider groups, like the state rheumatology organization that focuses on chronic diseases. Volunteer to work with them on the issue.
- ✔ Determine which members of the state legislature care about access to medications and form relationships with them by sharing your story.
- ✔ Find out if other legislation has been passed that limits copays. If so, share them with elected officials who may be interested in introducing a similar bill.
- ✔ Research arthritis statistics specific to your state, including how many people have arthritis (children and adults), as well as how much money it costs the state per year. You can find this information in our Arthritis Foundation State Fact Sheets located on our website under Advocacy Tools and Resources. These fact sheets make great leave-behind materials for your elected officials. Print out a copy of your home state’s fact sheet today!
- ✔ Reach out to the media to cover the issue of access to care for people with arthritis and other chronic diseases. Tell your personal story and try to place at least two articles regarding your issue in the press, maybe as a letter to the editor or an op-ed. The more visibility your issue gets, the better!
- ✔ Work with local stakeholders, including members of the legislature and nonprofit organizations, to hold a briefing at the state legislature on your issue.
Take Action!

Now that you have your advocacy plan prepared, you’ll need to prepare your pitch for elected officials! Putting as many pieces of the puzzle together yourself before approaching your elected officials increases your chance of success. Elected officials want to have as much information as possible so they can make an informed decision about your request.

Your pitch should include answers to the following questions:

- What issue(s) do you care about and want your elected officials to address?
- Why do you care about the issue(s)? Do you have a personal connection or story?
- Why should your elected officials care about this issue? How does it affect the health and well-being of their constituents?
- Is there data to back up your issue (particularly for your district/state)?
- How does this issue affect your district/state/community?
- Is there legislation at the state or federal level addressing this issue? If so, which elected official introduced it and who signed on as co-sponsors?
- Are there other Advocates or organizations that support or oppose this issue? If so, why?
- Will it cost money? If so, how much, and where will that money come from?
- What is your “ask” or your suggested solution? Do you want your elected officials to support or oppose a piece of legislation, provide additional funding for a cause, or stay informed about a certain issue as they make decisions moving forward?

HELPFUL HINT: PREPARING A ONE-PAGE DOCUMENT OR “LEAVE-BEHIND” FOR YOUR ELECTED OFFICIAL THAT SUMMARIZES YOUR POSITION AND HOW YOUR ISSUE AFFECTS THEIR CONSTITUENTS REALLY MAKES A GREAT IMPRESSION.

REMEMBER

You can have the greatest impact on policy when you do your homework.

Do some research on your elected officials so that when you have the opportunity to meet them, you are prepared to make a good impression. Make sure while you’re preparing your pitch that you know the answers to the following questions:

- Who are your elected officials?
- What political party do your elected officials belong to?
- Which committees do your elected officials sit on? Could these committees be helpful in your advocacy plan?
- How do your elected officials tend to vote or lean on certain issues?
- What issues are most important to your elected officials?
- How does your issue affect people who your elected officials represent?

Now it’s time to take action by presenting your pitch to elected officials! Whether you call, email, write a letter or meet with your elected official (or their staff) in person, remember that you want to educate and persuade them by sharing your story. There may be obstacles along the way — don’t give up. You have an important story to tell that can make a positive impact on legislation and policy.
Preparation Tools

Don’t forget, the Arthritis Foundation’s Advocacy and Access team wants to help you be the best Advocate possible! We’ll work with you in making preparations to take action. Simply visit our website and look through our resources or email advocacy@arthritis.org with any questions or concerns. Here are some sample materials we’ve prepared to make your job easier.

HELPFUL HINT: Preparing a one-page document or “leave-behind” for your elected official that summarizes your position and how your issue affects their constituents really makes a great impression.

State Fact Sheet

Our State Fact Sheets present constituent specific data for your elected officials in an easy-to-read format.

We also want to hear your feedback once you’ve met with your elected officials! Complete this reporting form and send it to advocacy@arthritis.org so we can work together to conquer arthritis.

Sample Petitions

Our Sample Petitions allow you to collect signatures from others to show your elected officials that your community cares about particular issues.

You can find all of these resources at arthritis.org/advocate/advocate-tools-and-resources
How Will You Advocate?

The following activities are examples of different ways in which you can be an Advocate. All of these efforts are personal, because you are taking the initiative to improve your own wellness and create healthier communities. Many of these strategies incorporate other types of advocacy and overlap with one another as you will see below.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Personal</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Legislative</th>
<th>Policy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recruit your friends and family to become Advocates</td>
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<td>Understand how repeal and replacement of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) impacts you and your family</td>
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<td>Write a letter to the editor</td>
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<td>Contact your elected officials in support of legislation</td>
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<td>Encourage your employer to provide a wellness policy</td>
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<td>Collect signatures for a petition to your elected officials</td>
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<td>Encourage family, friends and neighbors to take care of themselves</td>
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<td>Write an op-ed piece</td>
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<td>Stay up to date on arthritis-related legislation at state and federal levels</td>
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<td>Start a team for your local Jingle Bell Run</td>
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<td>Work with your local government agency to develop hiking and bike trails</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stay up to date on news stories and utilize social media to educate others</td>
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“Advocacy is a core part of the Arthritis Foundation’s efforts to help people with arthritis live the lives they envision for themselves. Building a comprehensive and effective advocacy program means not only working with state and federal legislators, but also expanding our work with employers and insurance payers and providers who are a critical part of this conversation. The Arthritis Foundation is in a unique position to lead the fight for optimal care on behalf of people with arthritis and to help ease their health care burdens so they can reach their goals.”

- K. Andrew Crighton, Chair, Advocacy and Access Committee, Arthritis Foundation Board of Directors