

*family*

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### Abstract

This is a list in point form of techniques for lobbying bureaucracies, adapted from a list put out by the Co-ordination Council for Handicapped Children, USA, in 1971. Council for Intellectual Disability (CID) has added four of its own and stresses that people who are taking on this kind of work should enlist the support of advocates. **Keyword: Government**

# SOME IDEAS FOR LOBBYING...

To obtain the services desperately needed for people with intellectual disability, we will all need to lobby as strongly as possible. The following may be of help. (Adapted from "How to Organise an Effective Parent Group and Move Bureaucracies" by the Co-ordinating Council for Handicapped Children, USA -1971)

One overarching suggestion we would make is to enlist the support of advocates if you feel you may be victimised for speaking out.

1. Don't feel guilty and insignificant.
2. Don't apologise for asking a bureaucrat to do a job you are paying him or her to do through your tax.
3. Don't apologise for putting pressure on a politician to represent the interests of people with disabilities, it's part of their role as your elected representative.
4. Stop begging for what your son or daughter is entitled to by law or by right.
5. Don't be patient. Patience has never moved a bureaucracy. Only impatience.
6. You must not accept those old excuses: "There isn't any money"; "We need more time"; "We've made a lot of progress", etc.

a) There is never going to be any money unless you demand it. What your tax dollars are spent for depends what taxpayers demand, how loudly and persistently they demand it.

b) Be miserly with the time you give a bureaucracy to get a job done. It is a natural law of bureaucracies that the more time you give them, the more time they will take... and often still not get the job done.

c) If there is still a single child with a disability left unserved, the "progress" is not good enough. If more than half is unserved, there has been no progress ... your area is barely standing still.

You must stop whispering while everyone else is shouting. Your voice will be lost in someone else's uproar. You can win battles, no matter how small your parent group, if you make enough noise. Remember that's how Gideon won the battle of Jericho.

8. You must not be afraid to challenge bureaucrats when:

a) they refuse to provide educational services, which your child is entitled to by law;

b) they refuse to find a proper placement for your child in a state or private facility;

Do not be afraid to complain: to their superiors, your legislators, the mayor, your alderman, the governor, the newspaper, radio, television, and other media.

9. You must get rid of the attitude that "You can't fight governments"; "Nothing can be done", etc. You must believe there is a good chance your problem will be resolved if you are persistent enough and determined enough to see the problem through.

10. You must use mass action. Remember that politicians are dependent on your voice and those of other parents, that all government officials are dependent on public support. This is why organised groups who make noise are so effective.

CID adds four more strategies to the list: -

11. Never go alone. Take a friend, a relative, and a neighbour, who is willing to follow these rules and take notes.

12. Always keep the CID office informed of the issues you are dealing with. We can take action too and if you need them, we can give you a few suggestions from our own experience as advocates.

13. When necessary use the law as it applies to all other citizens and use the various appeals mechanisms available, e.g. Guardianship Board, Public Advocate, Equal Opportunity Commissioner, Anti-Discrimination Board, Human Rights Commission, etc.

14. Send the bureaucrat/politician a copy of the notes made by you and your friend at the meeting. Where possible quote exact promises, reassurances, etc. in inverted commas. Keep a copy for yourself and give CID another.

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