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with intellectual disabilities

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News and views for VOR advocates

VOR Action Center

1. Sign VOR's Petition! (Be patient with the process!)

2. **NEW!** Effective Advocacy Course * Course 1

*This 3-month effective advocacy training e-course is being held by Stephanie Vance and is free to VOR members. This is just one of many [VOR membership benefits](#). [Refer a friend to VOR today!](#)

VOR Action Center

1. Sign VOR's Petition! (Be patient with the process!)

Thanks to all who has signed [VOR's We the People petition](#) which asks the President to reform a system of care in crisis; people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are being harmed.

Some of you have cited with frustration the process involved with "[creating an account](#)," a prerequisite to signing the petition. **Please be patient and persistent!** The problems are likely due to a virtual "traffic jam" because many, many people are trying to access the website at the same time. **Please keep trying!** We have until December 1 to collect as many signatures as possible!

2. **NEW!** Effective Advocacy Course * Course 1

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Effective Advocacy Program

Course 1 * November 11, 2011

Welcome to our effective advocacy program offered by Stephanie Vance, the Advocacy Guru at Advocacy Associates.

As a follow-up to VOR's recent in-person program in June and the related webinar, VOR members will receive a bi-weekly e-mail for three months with tips on how to deploy effective advocacy's secret weapon: **persistence**. We all want to be heard and, more important, agreed with by our elected officials. This course helps you understand how, by providing specific next steps and resources. Happy advocating!

Video Tip from the Advocacy Guru:

[Thou Shalt Have a Purpose](#)

Chat Hour

Join Advocacy Guru Stephanie Vance on Wednesday November 9th at 2:00 pm eastern for a chat session. She'll be available to answer your questions on effective advocacy. Just go to www.join.me and type "advocacyguru" (no quotes) in the join box. Then click on the bubble to chat. It's all free!

VOR Course Materials

Contents / Course 1

- Section One: Messaging for Success
- Step One: Figure out what you want
- Step Two: Tell a Personal Story
- Step Three: Use the message formula

Section One: Messaging for Success

Asking for something specific is sometimes the only way to get an elected official's attention. Your goal is to force someone in the office to think about you and your issues for longer than 5 minutes -- making the "ask" helps you achieve that goal. In addition, it helps you measure success -- if you don't know where you're going, it's really hard to get there. Use the following three steps to make or follow-up on an ask.

Step One: Figure out what you want

There are essentially two kinds of asks: policy and relationship-building.

- Policy asks are oriented around specific legislative or government initiatives. Your association may have some specific policy asks with which you may be familiar. These might include:
 - o Introduce, vote for or vote against legislation
 - o Cosponsor legislation introduced by someone else
 - o Send a letter to an agency about a concern you have
 - o Send a letter to another member of Congress in an influential position
 - o Send a letter in support of a grant application
 - o Help you find research information from federal agencies
 - o Submit a statement to the Congressional Record
- Relationship-building asks are things you ask for that aren't necessarily policy-related but that may help you with policy asks in the future. They include:
 - o Visit something in the community that relates to your ask.
 - o Write an article for your newsletter
 - o Submit a statement for your Web site or participate in an online discussion
 - o Make a speech on the floor about your issues
 - o Submit a statement to the Congressional Record
 - o Attend a meeting or employee luncheon
 - o Hold a town hall or community meeting on your issue
 - o Meet with you and other supporters in the district office

Step Two: Tell a Personal Story

Remember that one of the most important parts of your ask is to back it up with a personal story. Use the following questions to help you develop that story:

- How do the issues you are discussing impact you directly? (Funding for life-sustaining programs? Your health or the health of others? Ability to do your job? Conflict with overall goals?)
- Do you have clients / customers / friends / colleagues that offer a compelling story? Have they benefited from your services?
- How do these people and others connect to the Congressman's district?

Step Three: Use the message formula

The following message formula can be used to articulate your ask. You can also convert this to a written format:

- o Hello, my name is [] and I'm from []
- o I am here to talk to you / I'm writing today about [policy / relationship building ask]
- o Example: cosponsor legislation XYZ or visit X facility in our district
- o This is important to the people I represent because [personal story]
- o That's why we really hope you'll [ask]
- o I look forward to hearing from you and will contact you [timeframe for follow-up]
- o Can I get contact information for all the appropriate people in your office?

That's it! In just three steps you'll have done what many advocates fail to do – make the ask.

Coming Up: Course 2!

About the instructor : *Stephanie Vance, the Advocacy Guru at [Advocacy Associates](#), is a former Capitol Hill staff director and an internationally recognized speaker and trainer on effective advocacy. She is the author of four books including *Citizens in Action: A Guide to Influencing Government* and *The Advocacy Handbook*. Her fifth book, *The Influence Game*, is due to be published by Wiley Publishing in May 2012.*

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