

# WORKING TOGETHER TO NAVIGATE THE LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENT & ADDRESS MISINFORMATION:

## A Tips Sheet for Immunization Programs and PIOs

### IMMUNIZATION PROGRAMS

- **Build relationships with key internal and external partners:** including your department's legislative liaison, your agency communication team, the Governor's office, other state government programs such as WIC and Medicaid, state and local immunization coalitions, your Department of Education and local education authorities, higher education institutions, regional and local health departments, and organizations that share common goals (for example, local AAP chapter, hospital/health care associations, faith-based organizations, etc.)
- **Identify opportunities to educate policymakers.** Share newsletters and fact sheets, sponsor informational briefings, or invite policymakers to visit a local immunization program. Find ways to make the topic relevant to them and their constituents, don't overwhelm them with data.
- **Message your legislative liaison proactively regarding immunization-related policy issues.**
- **Build partnerships in policy education by identifying a win-win value proposition for potential allies** (e.g., increased immunization rates mean less time off from work or school, lower insurance costs, more income, a stronger economy, etc.).
- **Engage with policymakers; be prepared for questions and challenges.** Have data and evidence ready to support your educational points. Make sure you understand your audience and anticipate their concerns.
- **Understand the priorities of your policymakers** so you can find ways to make immunizations relevant to them.
- **Understand your role and potential limitations** when working on policy-related matters. [See CDC guidance to learn more.](#)

**Anti-Lobbying Restrictions for CDC Grantees**

### PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICERS

- **Build a relationship with your legislative liaison,** keep them informed about immunization issues in the media, and ask them to update you on proposed legislation.
- **Work with your immunization program manager** to learn more about the impact of proposed legislation on immunization efforts and policies.
- **Follow policymakers' social media feeds to identify misinformation** they might share and work with your immunization program manager and legislative liaison to educate those individuals.
- **Understand the priorities of your policymakers and agency leadership.**
- **Check with your immunization program manager when crafting immunization-related messages to policymakers.** Immunization science can be nuanced, and checking with the program can sometimes save time and energy later.
- **Understand your role and potential limitations** when working on policy-related matters. [See CDC guidance to learn more.](#)

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### TOGETHER

- **Clarify your collaborative roles during the health policy process:** schedule a meeting with your legislative liaison and discuss how you can work together. Your legislative liaison can guide you on what is allowable under federal and state policies.
- **Utilize your legislative liaison to help you prioritize:** your liaison can distinguish between so-called message bills, which are not likely to become law, and proposals that have momentum and may require a response.
- **Work with your agency leadership to coordinate closely with your governor's office** throughout the policy development process.
- **Work to identify champions in the community who are willing to speak with/contact policymakers or testify at hearings about the positive impacts of pro-immunization policies.** Vaccine opponents are organized, vocal and active; proponents should be, too.
- **Work together to learn who your opponents are and understand their agendas.** Supporters of the anti-vaccine lobby often engage with the health department's social media to distract from pro-vaccine messaging and share those messages with policymakers. PIOs can share what they see on social media with immunization program managers and legislative liaisons and help to work proactively to dispel misinformation.
- **Collaborate to respond to misinformation** by disseminating fact sheets, publishing and disseminating articles and peer-reviewed research on the life-saving benefits of immunizations, or sponsoring a webinar for policymakers that shares factual information.
- **Designate one individual to keep the team up to date with policy activities in your state.** Work with your legislative liaison to understand the pace of the legislative session and opportunities to educate policymakers. **Check out AIM's Policy Toolkit and Connecting the Dots guide** for tools you can use to keep track of the fast-paced legislative session.

[AIM Policy Resource Toolkit](#),  
[AIM Connecting the Dots](#)

### FEDERAL FUNDING PARAMETERS

#### **Permitted** with Federal Funding:

- Working on policy-related matters within your branch of government (e.g., executive branch).
- Education without value judgment or linkage to a particular legislative action.
- Advocacy that conveys general support for a cause, promotes best practice, or supports national recommendations but does not seek a certain policy outcome or decision.

#### **Prohibited** with Federal Funding:

- Direct or grassroots lobbying of federal, state, or local governments.