

# Policy Advocacy 101:

What You Need To Know to Influence Public  
Policy on Behalf of Children and Families

2015 *Early On* Conference

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November 11, 2015



*Public policy  
in the best interest  
of children.*

# Who We Are

- Michigan's Children is a statewide, independent voice for children and their families. We work with lawmakers, business leaders, and communities to make Michigan a place where all children have the opportunity to thrive.
- We strive to be a trusted, nonpartisan voice working to reduce disparities in child outcomes from cradle to career through public policy change.



# Policy In Context

- **Minimal movement in education outcomes, which is impacted by many factors including:**
  - Growing child and family poverty
  - Growing abuse and neglect
  - Minimal movement in child health outcomes
  - *Lack of support for early intervention*

# Why the Disconnect?

- Lots of competition for fewer dollars
  - Deficit budget for more than a decade
  - Recent revenue bright spots resulting in challenge and opportunity
- Ideology about the role of government
  - Polarization of the parties
- **Policymakers don't hear about issues of concern**

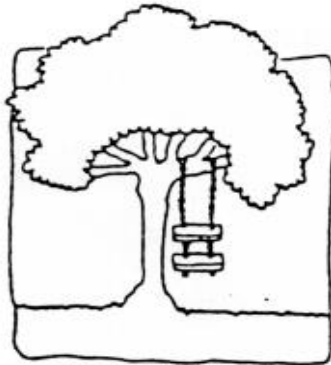
# Becoming a Voice For Your Cause

- Moving concerns into ACTION
- Using influence for CHANGE
- Changing Attitudes and Behavior

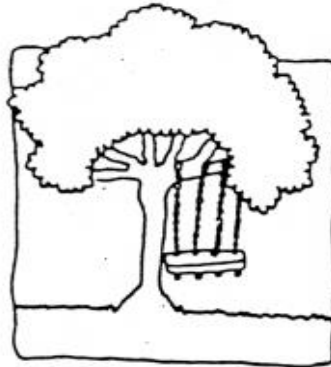
# Why Get Involved/Why Advocacy

- You Can
  - You already have the skills you need
  - It doesn't take that many of us
- You Should
  - There are things we want changed
  - Democracy=Responsibility
  - Decision-makers REALLY need our help

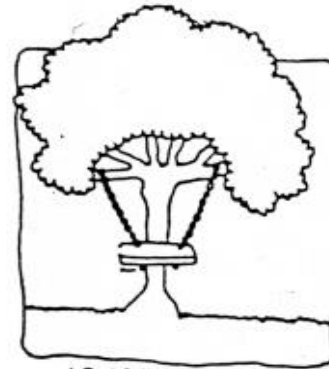
# How a Bill Becomes Law



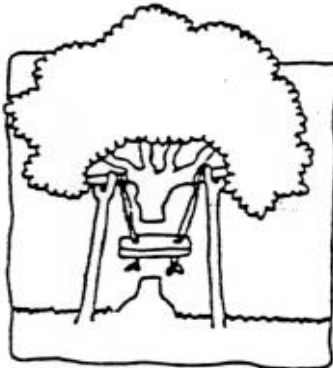
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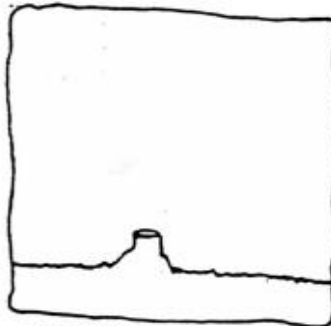
AS AMENDED IN  
COMMITTEE



AS AMENDED ON  
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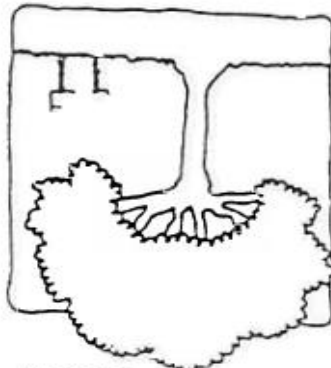
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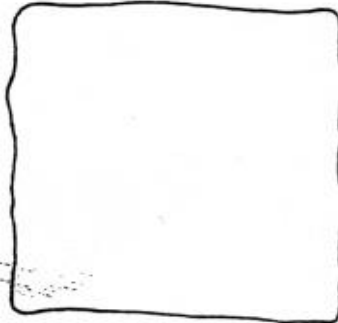
AS FUNDED BY JOINT  
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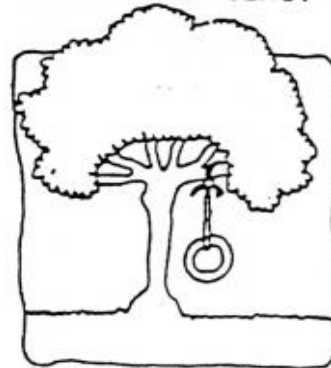
AS IMPLEMENTED BY  
THE STATE AGENCY



AS REPORTED BY THE  
MEDIA



AS UNDERSTOOD BY  
THE PUBLIC



WHAT WAS ACTUALLY  
NEEDED



# How do we make change?

- **Get the attention of the people who can make the change you want**
- Talk to Decision-Makers
  - A concern that you have about your life
  - A concern that you have about their work
- Talk to Other People
  - About an issue
  - About policymaker's views or positions
  - About how to act

# What You Need to Know

- WHAT we are talking about – the issues
- WHO can give us what we want – the players
- WHEN to target them – the process
- HOW to get them to listen – the message

# Know the Issues

- We Know the Issues
- We Are Experts in Life and Work
- Solution as important as the problem

# Know the Players

- Who can make the change
- What influences them
- Who Do We Know
- Who Do We Need

# What Influences You?

# Who/What Influences Decision Makers

- Friends
- Title or position
- Information
- Numbers
- Constituents
- Money

“When you need a friend, it’s too late to make one.”

Mark Twain

# Who Do We Need?

- Relationships
- Information Partners
  - Researchers, Evaluators
- Titled Partners
  - Experts, Professionals
- Constituent Partners
  - Based on Geography and Experience

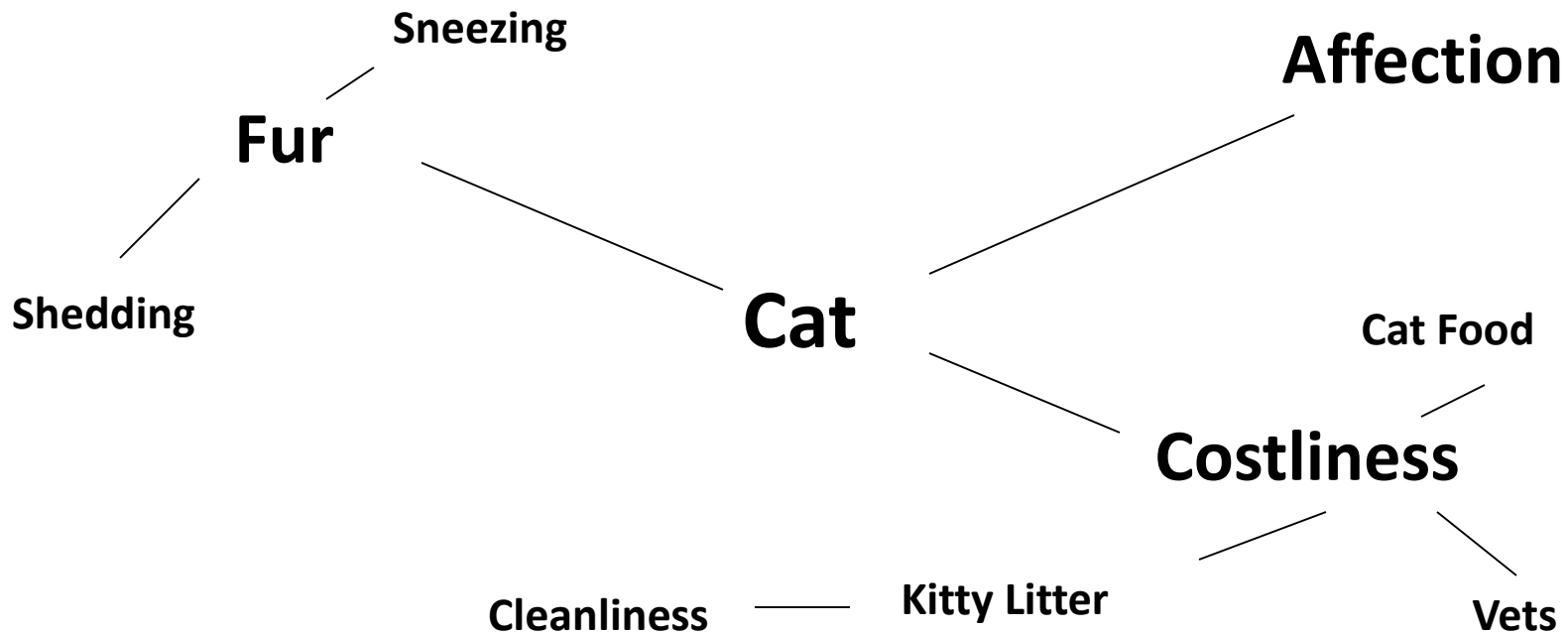


# How Do We Get Them to Listen?

- We use mental shortcuts to make sense of the world
- Based on our life experiences, including the media
- We use “frames” to filter new information



# Cat Frame



# Why Do Frames Matter?

When the facts don't fit the frame, it is the FACTS that are rejected, not the frame.

# How To Find Their Frame

- **Get to Know Them!**
- Simple Research
- Paying Attention
- TALK TO THEM

# Four Critical Numbers

- 2500: Different piece of legislation to be considered EACH YEAR
- 10-20%: Voters who contact elected officials
- 12: Phone calls needed to get attention
- 1: Enough to start or stop a discussion

# Civics 101

- The Clock is Always Ticking
- Always Looking for a Majority
- Two-party System – Majority in Power
- Bi-Cameral Legislature
- The Governor

# How a Bill Becomes a Law

- Bills are introduced
- They are discussed by each chamber
  - Majority party controls the agenda
  - If both agree
- They are presented to the Governor
  - Veto power

# How Do We Get Involved

- Generate an idea
- Help write it down
- Get it discussed by policymakers
- Talk to committee members
- Make sure your elected officials support it
- Convince the administration to support it



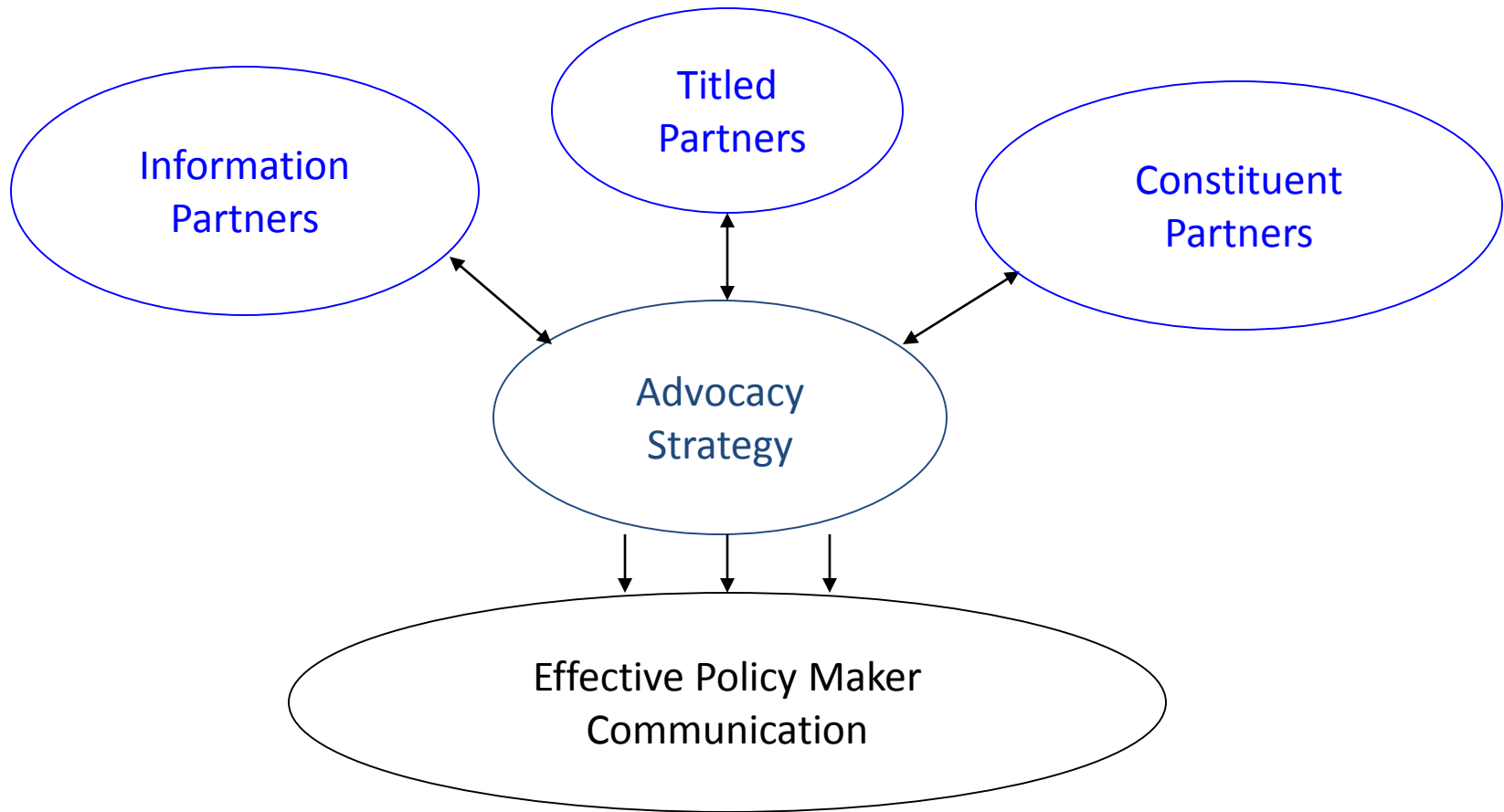
# Democracy in Action

- Four tools for communication
  - Letters/e-mails – 1 page
  - Phone calls – 3 minutes
  - Visits – 10-20 minutes

THEY CAN AND SHOULD VISIT YOU TOO!

  - Testimony – 3-5 minutes
- Be brief and focused, but be sure they hear you

# Successful Advocacy



# Always Keep the Door Open

- If they don't do what you want...
  - Can you blame them? Did they know what you know?
  - Express disappointment, but look for other possibilities
- If all else fails...
  - Don't get angry
  - Get a better person elected/appointed/hired

# Influencing the State Budget

# Opportunities in FY2017

- Utilize learnings from GSRP expansion:
  - Solid research supporting preschool
  - Focused advocacy efforts
  - Legislative legacies
  - Governor's leadership
- Opportunity for other early childhood issues including *Early On* to connect to current legislative and Gubernatorial priorities – i.e. 3<sup>rd</sup> grade literacy.

# Fiscal Year 2017 Process

- Now – December 2015: State Departments Submitted Recommendations
- February 2016: Governor's Budget Recommendations
- February – June 2016: Legislative Committees
- May 2016: Final Revenue Estimating Conference
- June 2017: Final Budget Signed by Governor

# The Elections

- Get to know the candidates
- Educate the candidates on the issues that matter to you.
- Help groups you are involved with understand the candidates' positions. Better yet, invite candidates to those meetings.
- Vote
- Stay engaged after the elections are over.

# What To Do Now

- Sign-up for your legislators' emails.
- Begin or continue to build a relationship with your legislators.
- Educate legislators about *Early On*
- If your legislators sit on key committees – appropriations or education policy – get to know what they are about and find ways to tie *Early On* to the things that they care about. Anticipate that you'll have more than one communication with him/her over the next few months.
- Stay connected to advocacy partners – *Early On* Michigan Foundation and Michigan's Children!



# Breakout Activity

- Using the “Talking to Policymakers” handout, start thinking about how you would approach a decision-maker about *Early On* or any other issue that matters to you. Use the guiding questions to help frame your message.
- Other things to consider:
  - How would you elevate this issue to become a “community” priority? How would you get others from your community involved in action around this issue?

# Group Discussion

- What were some of the strategies you identified to elevate the issue within your community?
- What challenges do you see with getting your community involved?
- What challenges do you see with talking to policymakers?



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