



American
Heart
Association.

MAKING EACH DAY HEALTHIER FOR ALL CHILDREN™



Robert Wood Johnson
Foundation



Voices for Healthy Kids is a joint initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and American Heart Association (AHA) working to make the places live, learn and play healthier for all kids.

ADVOCATING FOR HEALTH EQUITY IS NOT OPTIONAL. IT'S OUR MISSION.

EVERY KID DESERVES A SEAT AT THE TABLE.



**FUNDING
CAMPAIGNS**

STATE AND COMMUNITY
CAMPAIGNS

campaign organizer
non-lobbying tactics
lobbying tactics

**FIELD
CONSULTATION**

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
AND SKILL BUILDING

annual face-to-face
grantee meeting
regional trainings
virtual trainings

**CAMPAIGN RESEARCH
& DEVELOPMENT**

message research
policy analysis
and development
grassroots
media advocacy
science

**COLLABORATION
& PARTNERSHIPS**

leveraging coalitions
power building



Tips for Effective Messaging to Support Public Policy Change



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Start with Values.

Use the Right Words.

Emphasize Options.

Use the Right Messengers.

Education is only ONE 

Alleviate Skepticism

Equity within Policy Language



Language to Emphasize/Language to Avoid

Use This Language	Instead of This Language
✓ Describe the environment that makes it difficult to eat healthy and be active	✗ Describing personal behavior
✓ Clear facts about the magnitude of the problem	✗ “Bombard” “Avalanche” or other words that trigger trauma
✓ Invokes a sense of cooperation and partnership	✗ Imagery that invokes wars, battles, and game playing
✓ People living in the United States	✗ Americans, citizens
✓ Underserved	✗ Poor
✓ Helping children grow up at a healthy weight	✗ Preventing childhood obesity
✓ Focus on the positive outcomes of the change you want to see	✗ Focus on directly challenging the opposition arguments
✓ Eating healthy and being physically active helps prevent diabetes and heart disease.	✗ Eating healthy and being physically active helps prevent childhood obesity.
✓ Clear examples of what comprises neighborhood (school, church, family)	✗ General “community” which means something different to each person
✓ Standards, choices, and options	✗ Restrictions, mandates, bans, and regulations
✓ Focus on what stands to be gained	✗ Focus on what is at risk for being lost
✓ People/kids being physically active, active play	✗ Exercise

TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

for Advocates Talking About Health Equity in Public Policy



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1 Identify Issues and Solutions Together as a Community, Then Customize Messages

2 Be Strategic About Who Tells the Story

3 Use “We” Language

4 Demonstrate Greatest Need

- 5 Then Show How Everyone Benefits
- 6 Use Stories to Show What Gaps in the Community Look Like
- 7 Use—But Don't Overwhelm With—Data
- 8 Anticipate—But Don't Lead With—Details About Economic Costs

Words to Use, WORDS TO AVOID



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Use these words and ideas ...

Us or we (*we're in this together*).

Opportunity for all, available options (*focused on community conditions*).

People/children thrive in communities that ... (*focused on community conditions*).

Communities where the need is greatest, resources are limited, opportunities to be healthy are limited, facing greatest health disparities (*focuses on the community*).

... no matter their income or race.
... regardless of who they are and where they live.

The solution is ...
The impact of making more opportunities available is (e.g. healthy employees, students ready to learn, lower rates of diabetes).

Effective (*keeps focus on intended impact*).

It is important to restore the balance between people who are doing well and people who are struggling.
Government can play a role by making smart investments.

Everyone is affected when one part of our community struggles.



... and avoid these

Us/them (*you're one of us or you're not*).

Choice (*invokes individual responsibility*).

People/children deserve (*can lead to judgment about "who deserves" to benefit based on what they have contributed, which circles back to individual responsibility*).

Vulnerable or at risk, priority populations, impacted communities, low income or poor (*locates the problem in people rather than conditions*).

Historically left behind (*see page 10*).

Communities that receive fewer public resources.

The problem is ...

Cost-efficient (*can lead to short-term or scarcity thinking*).

The government has a responsibility to restore the balance between people who are doing well and people who are struggling.

Society has withheld public resources from low-income communities and communities of color.



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HEALTH EQUITY
IN PUBLIC POLICY

MESSAGING GUIDE FOR POLICY ADVOCATES

FALL 2017



[VoicesForHealthyKids.org/HealthEquity](https://www.VoicesForHealthyKids.org/HealthEquity)