

What is Advocacy, Anyway?

Advocacy means trying to convince someone to do something or to support something that is important to you. When you try to persuade others, you are being an advocate.

The projects in Generation Fit are about you and your group showing people why healthy eating and physical activity are important to people in your community. In your Action Gameplan, you have already decided how you were going to promote or advocate for these issues. As part of this plan you listed the names of people who could help you. Now it is time to decide how you will persuade these people to help you.

Here are a few ways to advocate for your project:

Meet with individuals in person. If you need to convince a few key decision makers, such as the school principal or a club president, it may be best to meet with them face to face. A telephone call or letter are other ways to ask for support if you cannot meet with the person.

Make a presentation. This method is best if you need to gain support from a group of people, such as the PTA or a committee. This takes less of your time than meeting with many people one at a time. The handout, *Tips on Public Speaking*, can help you put together your presentation.

Join an existing youth group or campaign. You can work with other groups in your community that are interested in your issue to gather materials, raise money, and spread the message. Your teacher has a list of organizations interested in nutrition and physical activity.

Use the media. Write a letter or an article for a newsletter or newspaper. Talking to the media will help the public understand what you are trying to do. This method is best if you would like to tell a specific community about your project. See *Tips on Getting Media Coverage* (pg. 48) for more information on working with the media.

More Tips on Being a Good Advocate

- Be clear and specific about what you want. Focus on a few key messages.
- Find out what is important to the person or group you are trying to persuade. Looking at the issue from their point of view will help you figure out how to gain their support. Point out what your groups have in common, and be willing to compromise.
- Use facts to support your views and explain the need for your project. Your librarian can help you look up facts that are important to your project.
- Share your enthusiasm and commitment.
- Be patient and persistent. Change does not happen overnight. You may not be able to see the results of your efforts right away, but hang in there.
- Follow through on commitments. People will be more willing to support your group's work if they can rely on you to do what you promise. Be on time, respond to questions and requests promptly, and provide people with the information they request from you.