

RULES FOR SUCCESS

An effective advocate is largely determined by how well one can communicate his or her issue(s) or position(s) with policymakers. Numerous communication techniques are available, but there is no one best method to achieve your goals. There are, however, some basic things you can do to enhance your advocacy efforts. These basic rules are mostly common sense, common courtesy, or both.

- **Understand the legislative process.**
- **Realize that most legislators do not know “our” people or “our” issues.**
- **Develop a powerful personal story.**
- **Present your personal story at meaningful times to educate and influence your own legislators -- both at the state and federal levels.**
- **Know how to win -- and lose -- with grace.**
- **Know how to be generous in your thanks and praise.**
- **Work to find issues in common with other people and speak with one voice on the issues whenever possible.**

Persons with disabilities and their interests differ widely, but there are usually some things that you can come together on. It may be the need for funding for more and better services, housing or any number of other issues. Take the time to find out what you have in common with the others. The effectiveness of your message will be greatly increased if you do. Collective action is not an “*all or nothing*” issue. Come together on the things you can collaborate on. Don’t let the areas where you disagree sabotage efforts on the things you can agree about. Remember, it is OK to agree to disagree.