



The National Sexual Assault Coalition Resource Sharing Project

ReShape Newsletter

Working together to end sexual violence.



Coalition Toolkit - Systems Advocacy, Public Policy, and Communications

“By its nature, a coalition is the advocacy organization for the state or territory on issues related to sexual violence.” –

[Yes, You Can Lobby](#)

Advocacy can take many forms. It is one strategy for change amongst many. Systems advocacy refers to working to change the way an organization, company, or government does its work. We use systems advocacy to hold agencies like the state Department of Corrections accountable to survivors’ needs. We use systems advocacy to work with legislators on passing better statewide policies. We use systems advocacy to change media editorial practices around sexual assault coverage.

In this way, coalitions play a vital role in shifting the landscape of support for sexual assault survivors. Taking a statewide or territory-wide approach towards working with systems can make it easier for local programs to provide survivor support in their respective areas. We can change how their governing bodies understand our work and pave the way for better collaboration. In this edition of ReShape, part of a series on the RSP Coalition Toolkit, we highlight the advocacy-related resources in the Systems Advocacy, Public Policy, and Communications sections.

To access the entire toolkit: <http://www.resource-sharingproject.org/coalition-toolkit>

To read other parts of the RSP Coalition Toolkit ReShape series:

- History and Anti-Oppression (Jan 2020):
<http://www.resource-sharingproject.org/reshape-coalition-toolkit-history-anti-oppression-resources-jan-2020>

Systems Advocacy

<http://www.resource-sharingproject.org/systems-advocacy-0>



We use the word “systems” to describe many things. So what exactly is systems advocacy? In this section of the toolkit, a former coalition ED discusses why systems advocacy is one of the most effective strategies for state or territory-wide sexual assault coalitions to engage in. There are also stories of how coalitions make their partnerships with institutional representatives work, how to navigate complex relationships, and how to dive deeper into working with particular systems such as state Departments of Corrections and college campuses.

Public Policy

<http://www.resource-sharing-project.org/public-policy>



Some of the resources in this section require you to sign in to the website for access.

As we continue to see legislators take up proposals around statutes of limitations for reporting, victims’ rights, safety net programs, and more, coalitions are increasingly engaging survivors in campaigns to mobilize voters. And coalitions continue to educate their elected officials about how a multitude of different legislative proposals would impact survivors.

The resources in this section help coalitions sift through what counts as lobbying, how to build supportive relationships with legislators, and a guide for developing a long-term public policy strategy.

Communications

<http://www.resource-sharing-project.org/media-and-messaging>



The battle for our imaginations is often fought through mass media. As Cara Courchesne, formerly of the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault says, “We had always wanted to build relationships because the way the media reports on sexual violence is so important to how we as a culture talk about violence and victims. Media relationships have implications for quality sexual violence prevention and response, and so we decided it would be part of my job to make that a priority.”

For coalitions looking to strengthen their media work, whether they have a full-time communications person or not, this section of the toolkit offers templates and a helpful interview about how Maine developed a proactive media engagement strategy to improve coverage of sexual assault issues in the news.

Wellness Resource:

Systems advocacy is part of the long-game. It is hard work because change is slow. And sometimes systems we advocate with do things in ways that clash with our own beliefs about the world and how it should work. To find ways to support coalition staff wellness, we are also including a link to RSP papers on vicarious trauma and the coalition. These materials are included in another section of the toolkit, but are included as a reminder of ways we can take care of ourselves and each other in this work.

- Vicarious Trauma and the Coalition:
<http://www.resourcesharingproject.org/vicarious-trauma-coalition>
- Organizational Strategies to Alleviate Vicarious Trauma:
<http://www.resourcesharingproject.org/organizational-strategies-alleviate-vicarious-trauma-coalitions>

We want your feedback!

Take our quick, 30-second survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DM9JDDK>

This project was supported by Grant No. 2016-TA-AX-K032 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this program are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.