Influencing Prevention Policy Through Effective Communication with Advocates and Legislators

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Influencing Prevention Policy Through Effective Communication with Advocates and Legislators

Abstract

Despite being largely preventable, unintentional injuries are the leading cause of pediatric mortality in the state of South Carolina, USA. Deliberate policy is needed to encourage transformative change in preventing childhood injuries. However, injury prevention advocates across the state have yet to formalize a collective message to effectively engage policymakers regarding injury prevention issues. To address this concern, this study surveyed Safe Kids South Carolina child injury prevention advocates as well as state legislators and legislative staff with the goal of assessing and growing current knowledge of injury prevention and capacity to engage in legislative advocacy. One hundred seventy-four advocates and fifteen state legislators and legislative staff completed a survey of knowledge of injury prevention, perceptions on the importance of various injury prevention issues, organizational capacity to engage in advocacy activities, the impact of advocacy efforts, and legislative action taken as a result of injury prevention advocacy. In addition to the survey, structured interviews of legislators and staff were also conducted, and findings were compiled to inform advocacy and capacity-building activities for Safe Kids coalition members. Activities included a training session on effective advocacy techniques, child passenger safety laws, and legislative talking points for advocates to use during a structured advocacy event at the South Carolina statehouse. From those activities, Safe Kids coalition members received pledges from policymakers to introduce or co-sponsor child passenger safety guidelines.

A child's death or serious injury changes the lives of families and entire communities. But these tragedies do not have to happen. Preventable injuries are just that, preventable. More than 1,598 children have died in motor vehicle accidents in South Carolina over the past decade (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012). In 2013, 50% of motor vehicle-related deaths involved children under the age of six who were not in a safety seat (South Carolina Department of Public Safety, 2013). Legislation is needed to adequately address the problem of child passenger safety to see a significant reduction in child injury and death. Studies have shown that state child passenger restraint laws result in more children being properly restrained in vehicles (Eichelberger, Chouinard, & Jermakian, 2012; Gunn, Phillippi, & Cooper, 2007; National Highway Traffic Safety Administration,

2007; Winston, Erkoboni, & Xie, 2007). In a sample of crashes in 16 states and the District of Columbia, Winston et al. (2007) found that children ages four to seven were 39% more likely to be reported as using a forward-facing child restraint or booster seat in states with booster seat laws compared with children in other states. In Tennessee, booster seat use among children aged four to eight increased from 29% before a booster seat law was implemented to 39% one year after implementation (Gunn et al., 2007). Among five states -- Missouri, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Wyoming -- that increased car or booster seat requirements from age three or four to age seven or eight, car seat and booster seat use tripled, and deaths and serious injuries decreased by 17% (Eichelberger et al., 2012).

Children's Trust of South Carolina is the only statewide organization in South Carolina dedicated to strengthening and supporting public and private prevention efforts that keep South Carolina's children safe. Children's Trust works to prevent child abuse, neglect and unintentional injuries so that every child has the opportunity to thrive in a healthy, nurturing environment. Children's Trust is home to Safe Kids South Carolina, KIDS COUNT South Carolina, and Prevent Child Abuse South Carolina (Children's Trust of South Carolina, n.d.).

Safe Kids South Carolina, one of Children's Trust's signature programs, is an associate of Safe Kids Worldwide. Safe Kids Worldwide is a global organization of more than 600 coalitions and organizations in 23 countries that are dedicated to preventing injuries in children. South Carolina is one of a few states that have a state coordinating office. Children's Trust employs a Safe Kids South Carolina manager who supports thirteen local Safe Kids coalitions across the state. Safe Kids local coalitions lead their communities in reducing child injury through a variety of programmatic activities including education, awareness, and safety device distribution (Safe Kids WorldwideTM, n.d.). In addition, Children's Trust employs research and policy staff, including a community psychologist, to improve programmatic activities and changes for successful social impact.

Safe Kids coalitions see firsthand that even though they are effective, local efforts can only reach a small subset of the population. Additionally, education, economy, taxes, and employment dominate political conversations in South Carolina. Children's Trust needs to position the conversation among state legislators so that it is evidence-informed and one that stresses collective values around protecting children. Injury prevention communications need to not only be recognized as an important issue by legislators, but also ignite their support and direct their actions (Freudenberg, 1981). Additionally, effective communication needs to overcome knowledge deficits or misperceptions about the issue. In this specific context, advocates want to avoid negative stereotypes and misdirected blame on "bad parenting." Instead, advocates want to promote the idea that all children deserve the opportunity to thrive in a healthy, nurturing, and safe environment free from injury.

The Importance of Advocacy

Effective advocacy work can address knowledge deficits, dispel misconceptions, and guide political will around the issue of injury prevention (Balassiano & Chandler, 2009). With accurate information on trends and best practices, advocates play a critical role informing legislators to create responsible policy. Advocates' data-driven influence can ignite legislative action that saves the lives of children across South Carolina.

Influence on legislators can be achieved in a myriad of ways (Jensen, 2007), consequently making it difficult to determine precisely what actions constitute effective legislative advocacy. Evaluation and capacity assessments serve as tools to determine necessary knowledge and skills and appropriate advocacy efforts to influence policy (Egbert & Hoechstetter, 2006; Gerteis, Coffman, Kim, & Martin, 2008; Strong & Kim, 2012). Effective advocacy requires ongoing evaluation to ensure that advocate resources are appropriately allocated in order to

persuade legislators toward policy decisions that prevent harm and keep children safe.

Motor Vehicle Policy

Motor vehicle accidents are the number one cause of childhood injury fatality for children ages 0-19. In South Carolina, more children die on roads than their peers across the United States (a rate of 8.08 per 100,000 versus 4.94 per 100,000 in 2012). With such high numbers and numerous options for targeted intervention efforts, motor vehicle injuries are a top priority for prevention efforts.

With the Children's Trust legislative focus on improving child safety in motor vehicles, advocates are working to achieve the following:

1. Update the current South Carolina Child Passenger Restraint Law to reflect American Academy of Pediatrics and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration standards (Durbin, 2011; National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, n.d.),
2. Pass legislation to ban texting while driving (Safe Kids WorldwideTM, 2014), and
3. Create a stronger graduated driver's licensing law (Safe Kids WorldwideTM, 2014).

In January 2015, the South Carolina Legislature began the first year of its two-year legislative session. Children's Trust worked with legislators to address childhood injury prevention, specifically motor vehicle injury. Additionally, Children's Trust partnered with members of the Safe Kids Coalition to increase their capacity for policy and advocacy activities.

Setting the Stage: Gathering Information from Safe Kids Advocates and Legislators

To improve the chances of effectively passing legislation to reduce unintentional injuries in South Carolina, Children's Trust gathered survey data from Safe Kids advocates, legislators, and legislative staff across four domains: 1) knowledge of injury prevention, 2) perceptions of injury prevention, 3) advocacy capacity/impact, and 4) community involvement (Gottlieb et al., 2003; Radius, Galer-Unti, & Tappe, 2008; Rothenbuhler, 1991; Whaley & Weaver, 2010). Gathering information from these four domains allowed Children's Trust to assess potential knowledge gaps for Safe Kids advocates, legislators, and legislative staff; levels of perceived importance of injury prevention for Safe Kids advocates, legislators, and legislative staff; capacity to engage in advocacy efforts for Safe Kids advocates; impact of advocacy efforts on legislators and legislative staff; and levels of community involvement for Safe Kids advocates.

Children's Trust gathered this information by reviewing relevant academic and research literature (see Gottlieb et al., 2003; Radius et al., 2008; Rothenbuhler, 1991; Whaley & Weaver, 2010). Surveys were then created and pilot tested with staff and key stakeholders. After several revisions, the survey was administered via SurveyMonkey for advocates and SurveyMonkey and paper copies for legislators and legislative staff. Survey sections regarding knowledge of injury prevention were identical for Safe Kids advocates, legislators, and legislative staff. A complete copy of the survey can be requested from the lead author.

Supplemental interview questions were developed from the results of the survey to

empower coalition members with knowledge about effective communication tactics with legislators. Findings from the survey were noted in questions to legislators and legislative staff, who were then solicited for advice to inform advocates moving forward (i.e. District voters were rated as the highest influence for legislators - how does that information or influence get to you from voters in your district?). Interviews were held individually over a period of one month.

Safe Kids Advocate Findings

Safe Kids advocates in South Carolina were solicited to complete the survey via email. A total of 174 (N = 800, 22%) advocates completed the survey; however, the total number of respondents for each question varied (responses were not required). Almost half of the respondents were safety technicians (n = 85, 48.5%) who are nationally certified to install child safety seats in motor vehicles, while 29% were Safe Kids coalition members (n = 51) who are volunteers or partners of local Safe Kids coalitions, and 9% were Safe Kids coalition coordinators (n = 15) who are paid unintentional injury prevention staff for local Safe Kids agencies. Nearly half of the respondents primarily served the Midlands region of South Carolina (n = 71, 46%) followed by the Pee Dee (n = 37, 25%), Upstate (n = 36, 24%), and the Low Country (n = 8, 5%).

Knowledge of Injury Prevention

The survey consisted of 13 injury prevention knowledge questions covering various injury areas (e.g., motor vehicles, all-terrain vehicles, motor boats, safe sleep, and fire arms). The questions also utilized several formats including true/false, multiple choice, and fill-in-the-blank. One hundred and

fifteen advocates completed this section of the survey (66%). More than half of the advocates answered incorrectly for four of the knowledge questions. Of these, three questions were motor vehicle related and one of the questions was motor boat related. The latter asked about a properly fitting life jacket for a child while the former asked about graduated licensing (69% incorrect), distracted driving (79% incorrect), and car seat safety (52% incorrect).

Perceptions of Injury Prevention

Perceptions of importance were assessed in four areas: general injury prevention, texting/cell phone use while driving, child passenger restraint law, and graduated driver's licensing. Across all areas, advocates rated these issues as very or extremely important (n = 118-143, 86-99%). Child passenger safety and general injury prevention were rated as the most important issues while graduated driver's licensing was rated as the lowest (although still very high on the importance scale) issue. The majority of the advocates felt they had a clear understanding of the areas, but felt that legislators had a less clear understanding. Additionally, responses varied on whether or not advocates felt that legislators would pass legislation to address these domains in the next legislative session.

Advocacy Capacity

Advocates responded to seven questions regarding advocacy capacity and challenges of their local Safe Kids coalition. The majority of advocates felt that their coalition had the necessary infrastructure and knowledge to effectively engage in advocacy. Additionally, advocates reported that their local Safe Kids coalitions had plans to engage in a wide variety of advocacy-related activities

including media/public awareness raising (91%), coalition building/networking (65%), monitoring policy implementation (28%), grassroots organization (23%), issue research (22%), and lobbying (17%). Finally, advocates reported advocacy-related challenges facing their coalitions. The most commonly reported challenges included collaboration (e.g., Form a better partnership with local agencies), personnel (e.g., Enlisting volunteers to help), the general public (e.g., Increasing community awareness and support), and time (e.g., Time to be involved outside of regular responsibilities).

Community Involvement

Advocates were asked questions related to processes and approaches to community involvement. Process questions included keeping up with the news, having ideas for improvements, getting together with others who keep up with news, and working with others to bring about change. Approach questions included attending public meetings, interacting with politicians, signing petitions, joining a protest or demonstration, and participating in religious, sporting, outdoor, neighborhood association, seniors group, or school-related activities. In the last section, advocates were asked about voting status and frequency. The majority of advocates keep up with the news (n = 118, 92%) and have ideas for improvements (n = 102, 80%), while slightly fewer get together with others who keep up with news (n = 99, 77%) or work with others to bring about change (n = 82, 64%). Advocates reported participating in a wide range of approaches to community involvement with the highest being religious activities (n = 94, 73%) and the lowest being joining a protest or demonstration (n = 11, 9%). Finally, the majority of advocates

felt they had an opportunity to vote for a candidate they trusted (n = 109, 87%) and slightly less voted in their last local election (n = 98, 76%).

Implications for Safe Kids South Carolina

While Safe Kids coalition advocates are expected to be experts in the field of child injury prevention, the survey findings suggest knowledge deficits in the area of child passenger safety. Advocates rated child passenger safety as one of the two most important injury prevention issues, but consistently lacked knowledge regarding best practices for ensuring the safety of children in motor vehicles and motor boats. Their reported neutrality regarding the potential introduction of legislation in these domains may be related to the knowledge deficit. Effective advocacy will require greater expertise in these areas. More information should be gathered from advocates regarding their preferred learning format to ensure that future training in child passenger safety truly yields increased knowledge.

Advocacy effectiveness could also be increased through more efficient linkages of Safe Kids coalitions with other nonprofit organizations and the general public. Although Safe Kids advocates reported high levels of individual community involvement (e.g., 74% participation in church and 63% participation in a sports club or league), many noted partnerships between Safe Kids coalitions and local agencies to be a challenge. Training sessions to teach these advocates how to discuss their work in non-traditional settings could allow for greater support from the public and community. Additionally, Safe Kids Coordinators are currently employed only part-time, further decreasing the

capacity of local coalitions to build community relationships. Full-time funding for Safe Kids Coordinators could allow for greater emphasis on building relationships with legislators.

Legislator and Legislative Staff Findings

South Carolina state legislators and legislative staff (N = 175) were solicited to complete the survey via email and regular mail. A total of 15 legislators and legislative staff (9%) completed the survey. Similar to the advocate assessment, responses to each question were not required, leading to a varied number of responses for each question. Nearly all of the respondents were state legislators (n = 13, 87%), and 13% were legislative staff (n = 2).

Knowledge of Injury Prevention

Eleven legislators/staff completed the injury prevention knowledge section of the survey (the number of responses to individual questions ranged from 9 to 11). Like advocates, legislators/staff had difficulty with five questions, with 46% or fewer answering correctly. Four of the questions were motor vehicle related and one of the questions was motor boat related. Of the incorrect motor vehicle responses, three of the questions pertained to child passenger safety (50-100% incorrect) and one referenced distracted driving (91% incorrect). The motorboat safety question asked about a properly fitting life jacket for a child.

Perceptions of Injury Prevention

Perceptions of importance were measured in the same four domains used in the advocate assessment: injury prevention in general, texting/cell phone use while driving, child passenger restraint law, and graduated

driver's licensing. Legislators/staff felt that all four issue domains were very or extremely important (n = 10-13, 83-100%). As with advocates, child passenger safety and texting/cell phone use while driving were rated as the most important, while graduated driver's licensing was rated the lowest. Legislators/staff members felt that they had a slightly clearer understanding of graduated driver's licensing than advocates, but felt that advocates had a clearer understanding of the other injury prevention areas. Additionally, for every domain except texting/cell phone use while driving, legislators/staff felt neutrally or not very confident that they would pass legislation to address these domains in the next legislative session.

Impact of Advocacy

Legislators/staff responded to 16 questions regarding the impact of advocacy efforts from a variety of sources. Questions ascertained the perceived level of influence from each source as well as the importance of that source as a resource for information on injury prevention issues. The majority of respondents reported being influenced most often (e.g., always and often) by colleagues in the legislature (n = 9, 82%), followed by the general public (n = 7, 73%), voters in their district (n = 7, 70%) and leadership of the House and Senate (n = 7, 64%). Respondents rated voters from their district as their most important source of information on injury prevention, followed by lobbyists and their colleagues in the legislature. Even so, nearly 55% of legislators/staff reported never having been approached from any source regarding legislation focused on injury prevention.

Legislative Action after Advocacy

Eleven legislators/staff responded to three questions regarding policy action as a result of injury prevention advocacy efforts. The questions asked whether it was difficult for a legislator to distinguish between what advocates want and what is in the best interest of the state, if a legislator can decide how to vote on most issues by asking themselves if the proposed law is fair, and if injury prevention advocates make unreasonable demands on public officials. Thirty six-percent of respondents reported difficulty for legislators in distinguishing between what injury prevention advocates want and what is in the best interest for the state of South Carolina, while an equal portion of legislators/staff reported no difficulty in that regard. The majority of legislators/staff (n = 8, 73%) believed a legislator could decide how to vote on most issues independently. None of the respondents indicated that injury prevention advocates in general make unreasonable demands on public officials, but most (n = 7, 64%) remained neutral in their response.

Implications for Legislators and Legislative Staff

Legislators/staff indicated little knowledge of injury prevention practices promoting motor vehicle safety although they rated legislation in that area most likely to pass during the next legislative session. Additional research is necessary to determine whether reported neutrality regarding other areas of potential legislation is the result of true impartiality. If so, future research may yield the opportunity to influence attitudes of legislators/staff in this regard.

Child passenger safety and texting/cell phone use while driving were the most important issues to this group, but also those in which they were least informed. More than half of the legislators/staff surveyed had never been approached regarding injury prevention legislation, and their lack of information on prominent prevention topics may be the result of inadequate advocacy and lobbying and underdeveloped relationships with injury prevention advocates (lobbyists for nonprofit organizations were not one of the strongest influencers for legislators regarding injury prevention). Furthermore, legislators rely heavily on each other for information, and educational campaigns and increased advocacy and lobbying efforts may be effective for ensuring that accurate information is circulated throughout the legislature.

Integrated Findings

Advocates and legislators both consider advocates to have greater understanding of most injury prevention issues than legislators, but the groups exhibited similar knowledge levels when assessed across prevention areas. They also showed similar priorities, rating child passenger safety as a very important injury prevention area and graduated driver's licensing as least important (relative to the other areas).

Despite the attention given to child passenger safety, advocates and legislators both indicated little knowledge of best practices in this area. They were also incorrect in other aspects of motor vehicle safety, with coalition members consistently showing low levels of knowledge in the same areas as legislators and legislative staff. Similarities in the lack of knowledge between the groups may be the outcome of ineffective advocate education

and/or poor communication. Additional study is necessary to uncover the root cause of this issue.

Limitations

While the survey provides a new perspective to advocacy efforts by including viewpoints of both advocates and legislators/staff, it did have some limitations. First, advocacy is an ever-changing landscape, including more digital participation now than in the past (Fitzgerald & McNutt, 1999; McNutt & Boland, 1999). Questions regarding purely technological forms of advocacy were not included in the survey as most legislative action is the result of active behavior (e.g. personal visits) in conjunction with more passive, digital efforts (McNutt, 2000; McNutt & Boland, 1999). Nonetheless, the survey questions limited the involvement of Safe Kids advocates to more traditional advocacy activities and therefore provided a narrower perspective of their overall advocacy capacity, which may be inaccurate.

Second, while the data point to capacity and knowledge barriers to engaging in effective advocacy, the survey did not gather Safe Kids advocates perceptions of perceived barriers to advocacy efforts. Anecdotally, Safe Kids advocates' uncertainty as to whether they were allowed by their employer to engage in advocacy and lobbying was an issue noted by the Safe Kids South Carolina manager, but that aspect was not systematically assessed. These limitations, in conjunction with findings from the survey, supported the development of advocacy capacity-building efforts discussed later in this article.

Finally, although legislators and legislative staff (N = 175) were solicited twice via

email and once via regular mail, only 15 legislators and legislative staff completed the survey. Responses to the email may have been low as the survey was sent at the end of the legislative session (legislators in South Carolina are part-time and the session lasts six months out of the year) and when the legislators were out of session. Convenience sampling was then employed due to the lack of response, which may have introduced bias into the survey analysis. Legislators and legislative staff who responded to the survey may have been familiar with Children's Trust and/or concerned about child safety. Responses should be considered in light of the small number of survey respondents.

Supplemental Interviews

Children's Trust policy staff conducted brief structured interviews with legislators and staff over a period of one month and recorded responses. The Policy and Research team then reviewed and coded thematic responses; discrepancies were discussed and resolved. Questions for the supplemental interviews were crafted in response to survey findings to provide more detailed information from legislators and staff about effective communication strategies. Survey findings were noted in each question, which then sought insight from respondents to inform future advocacy activities. Potential interview participants were selected among legislators with an existing relationship with Children's Trust. These individuals are considered well versed among the legislature on issues of child injury prevention and thus able to provide applicable insights on advocacy efforts in this area. Five members of the SC House of Representatives, five members of the SC Senate, and five members of legislative staff were considered for interviews. Of the 15

potential interviewees, eight responded to the request for an interview. Three respondents serve as members of the SC Senate, three serve as members of the SC House of Representatives, and two are legislative staff who work for differing committees.

Findings from the survey were used to develop interview questions to legislators and legislative staff for the purpose of informing future advocacy activities. The interview questions asked about effective strategies for increasing knowledge (e.g., What is the most helpful way to communicate causes and consequences of motor vehicle safety?), altering perceptions (e.g., What would make injury prevention a top priority?), and pathways of influence (e.g., How does influence get to you from voters in your district?).

Interview responses were consistent across party lines and between legislators and legislative staff. Results indicate that policymakers are most receptive to advocacy efforts that emphasize the high incidence and seriousness of child injury, and that campaigns focused around recent fatalities that could have been prevented are likely to produce the greatest impact. Furthermore, legislators noted that policy issues presented by advocates receive more attention when they are accompanied by potential solutions crafted by those with expertise in the area. Legislators and legislative staff echoed the findings of the survey in their interviews, believing that they often lack the deep subject knowledge held by injury prevention advocates. To address this, they further encourage advocates to utilize mass media to promote knowledge and understanding of injury prevention issues to broader audiences.

Respondents noted relationship building as an important part of the political process. Legislators and legislative staff suggested that advocates strategically petition for support from legislative champions, members who are invested in a certain cause and have the capacity to gain the support of other members of the legislature. When asked, "How could a nonprofit be more effective in their advocacy efforts?" all of the respondents suggested that organizations gain a legislative champion on a committee that is relevant to their main policy issue. Advocate community involvement also came into play, as each respondent indicated that voters who are already acquainted with the chosen committee supporter through various community activities within their home district are the best advocates to communicate policy objectives.

Intervention

Based on the findings from the survey and responses from the legislative interviews, Children's Trust hosted a Safe Kids Advocacy Day at the SC State House to provide Safe Kids coalition members an opportunity to gain experience engaging legislators about injury prevention. The event consisted of a morning training session on effective advocacy techniques and an afternoon trip to the State House to discuss updating child passenger safety regulations with legislators. The advocacy training included a briefing on the survey and interview results as well as a discussion of current child passenger safety laws and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations. These overviews ensured that advocates tailored their message to legislative interests and were comfortable in their knowledge of appropriate child passenger safety regulations. Talking points about the issue were distributed to attendees

along with tips for effective messaging. Each advocate was also taught how to complete a form for calling legislators out of session for their meeting.

Advocates from across the state identified target legislators who sit on influential injury prevention committees and utilized their subject matter expertise to guide conversations around the impact of injury they had witnessed in each legislator's district. During the two-hour visit to the State House, 35 Safe Kids coalition members contacted 19 legislators directly and left informative material for an additional eight legislators. As with any advocacy intervention, it is difficult to determine the true influence of legislative action. In what appeared to be a direct response to the advocacy process and respected profile of Safe Kids among childhood injury prevention programs, four potential legislative champions emerged, pledging to introduce or co-sponsor legislation updating child passenger safety guidelines during the next legislative session. These meetings were the first contact with legislators for many Safe Kids advocates and built the foundation for future relationships promoting injury prevention.

Future Directions

While the Safe Kids coalitions are powerful in numbers (including nearly 400 trained child passenger safety technicians), they have not historically organized around coordinated advocacy efforts. Safe Kids advocates have often hesitated to contact their legislators regarding a particular issue and even fewer engage their elected officials at a local level (e.g., inviting them to community safety events). Successful advocacy will require Safe Kids advocates to devote more time to

raising their visibility at the State House and building relationships with policymakers (Andrews & Edwards, 2004; Hoefer, 2005). Social networks of Safe Kids advocates are largely under-utilized, and searching these avenues for volunteers and opportunities to increase awareness and partnership would allow for more time to be spent engaging legislators face-to-face. Collaboration with other nonprofits would garner greater media attention for Safe Kids coalitions and would likely increase legislative interest in their advocacy efforts (Gillan, 2006; Hoefer, 2005).

Additionally, Safe Kids advocates will require effective training on injury prevention issues to become better-informed advocates in these areas. Legislators and legislative staff consider lobbyists for nonprofit organizations important sources of information, and effective communication of accurate data is essential to maintaining that trust and capitalizing on the strong peer-to-peer support network within the legislature. Legislators reported being largely influenced by their colleagues when making policy decisions. Many indicated having never been contacted by an injury prevention advocate, however, exposing a clear opportunity for Safe Kids coalition members to increase their impact in the legislature. By accurately communicating injury prevention issues with only a small number of legislative champions, Safe Kids advocates can effectively influence the entire legislature toward better outcomes for children in South Carolina.

Broadly, this study indicates that a simple survey and a short training session can increase the capacity of advocates to spur legislative action. Educating advocates in any field on policy communication tactics that are informed by their legislators can

increase the likelihood of passing desired policy regarding a social issue. After only a half-day of advocacy training informed by survey results, and despite having little to no previous legislative contact, Safe Kids South Carolina advocates were able to garner pledges from four policymakers to either introduce or co-sponsor updated legislation. The success of this work clearly reiterates the need for policy and advocacy competencies by community psychologists. Community psychologists need not only to know how to build and sustain effective relationships with policy makers (Dalton & Wolfe, 2012), but also how to develop these capacities in others.

Acknowledgement

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