



California Nurse--Midwives Association

Guide to Effective Grassroots: AB 1612

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What is grassroots?

A grassroots movement is one driven by the constituents of a community. Most often grassroots movements are at the local level and are organized to support the common interest of a particular group. In our context, it is the passage of legislation to provide nurse--midwives autonomy in their practice and increase access to midwifery care. State government has a tremendous impact on the profession of nurse--midwifery. Nurse--midwifery is a profession that is directly affected by regulation and legislation. Like other healthcare professions, you have the opportunity to be a voice for nurse--midwives in your community. This is a great advantage! You can impact the future of your profession.

The importance of effective grassroots

Organizing and maintaining effective grassroots advocacy is imperative to CNMA's success. Having local grassroots allows CNMA to have influence in the most direct way. State legislators hear from various healthcare professionals and their associations on a daily basis. An effective grassroots program gives CNMA the opportunity to stand up to competing interests as they relate to healthcare. Grassroots is about getting the word out. As a professional healthcare provider you are already a well respected member of your community. It is possible that you are already advocating for the profession without even knowing it. You may have an ongoing relationship with your legislator. You probably have friends and clients already talking about the benefits of nurse--midwifery. You may know the family of a legislator. The list goes on.

CNMA is dedicated to protecting and advancing the profession of nurse--midwifery. Effective grassroots at the local level validates efforts in Sacramento and allows you to bridge the gap. It is important that your legislator is hearing a consistent message at home and in the Capitol.

This guide provides you with tips and tools that will help you produce effective grassroots in your community.

Organizing a strong grassroots campaign in your community

Organizing a strong grassroots campaign in your own backyard is the key to success with current legislation and establishing long--term relationships. There are members like you who are eager to become involved.

Make the connection:

Connect with your fellow nurse--midwives. Talk to everyone at your chapter meetings and staff meetings. Find out who is passionate about advocating for the profession. If you aren't familiar with other nurse--midwives in your area, contact CNMA for a list, cnmamidwives@gmail.com.

CNMA can provide you with various materials to help get your local advocacy campaign up and running. Please check out the CNMA In--District Advocacy website:
<http://california.midwife.org/index.asp?bid=35>

How to meet with your local legislator

Not sure who your local representative is? To find out, visit:
<http://findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov>.

What can you do to help?

CNMA understands that you are already an active member of your community. The majority of your day is dedicated to serving the healthcare needs of your clients. Although your time is spread fairly thin between your various daily responsibilities, there are a number of tasks you may perform that will make you an asset to CNMA grassroots efforts.

Why should you meet your local legislator?

- Building statewide influence begins at the local level. That means in order for CNMA to be recognized and respected by the state legislators, members must demonstrate their value to their own legislators in their home district.
- Building awareness about nurse--midwifery and the value to the community is a powerful tool, and accomplishing this goal has the added bonus of helping CNMA win favor for key legislation.
- District office meetings with local legislators are a good chance to get to know your representative. Introduce yourself and share why nurse--midwifery is important and a valued health care benefit to the legislator's constituency.
- Know your legislator's background: whether he/she is well versed on health care issues, has taken a position on the issue or has heard of the legislation being advocated by CNMA. Be direct, clear and brief and keep in mind the legislator's time is limited. Study the CNMA key messages, fact sheets and frequently asked questions beforehand.

Contacting Your Local Representatives:

State legislators are elected to office to represent the interests of their constituents and make knowledgeable votes on key issues. It is your obligation to be a resource and provide factual information to your legislator. Your legislator is eager to hear your interests. Introduce yourself and other professional as a nurse--midwives and discuss what is most important the profession.

- **FACE--TO--FACE MEETING** – in the spirit of a true grassroots effort, CNMA members should contact their legislators' in--district offices directly and arrange face to face appointments for a meet--and--greet.

That's it. Easy! **It's no different from greeting a new client for the first time.** The important thing is that you have extended the offer and paved the way for future conversation. It is time legislators get to know who nurse--midwives play an important role in healthcare in their community.

Dos and Don'ts

Do:

- Arrive a few minutes early for the meeting.
- Come prepared with materials to leave behind including a business card and a summary of the key issues you want to get across during the meeting.
- Thank the legislator or staff member for their time.
- Send a thank you note or letter thanking them for meeting with you (reinforces what you had to say, develops relationships.)
- Limit what you have to say. Keep it short and concise. Legislators and their staff have dozens of meetings every day, five days a week, so pick out the most critical points.
- Ask them directly to support or oppose legislation if you are talking about bills (they may not be able to give you a definitive answer, but it is always important to ASK that they vote your position on an issue.)
- Share personal stories about how an issue impacts you. This is very effective and is something that a legislator or staff member is likely to remember.
- Be gracious and flexible. It is fairly common for legislators or staff members to be running late. Just go with the flow and understand that that they have lots of demands on their schedule.

Don't:

- Show up without a meeting (their schedules are jammed packed and have many meeting requests to accommodate).
- Show up late. This doesn't send a very good message. If you absolutely can't avoid it, call and let the office know.

- Show up with more people than you indicated would attend meeting. Many offices are very small and legislators or staff will be more at ease meeting with a group that fits in their office space.
- Don't be upset if you meet with staff member and not legislator. Staff reports all their meetings and what took place with the legislator.
- **Do not discuss fundraisings or contributions** in the meetings with legislators or staff in the capitol or district offices – this is not allowed. Make sure to stick to legislation and policy matters.

Writing effective letters to your legislators

Visit <http://california.midwife.org/index.asp?bid=35> to view letter templates that are available for immediate use. Keep in mind; the more personal you make your letter the better! Here are some helpful tips.

- You can find your legislator contact information by accessing their personal website or visiting, <http://findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov>.
- Use your own words on your own stationary.
- Address letters to your own legislator(s).
- Keep your letter short and clear.
- Identify bills by title and number.
- Make sure your letter is timely. Write your letter when legislation is pending in committee or the floor of the legislature.
- State reasons for your position. Tell how the issues affect you, your business, your patients, and your community.

Meeting Report

At the completion of your meeting with your legislator, please complete this form and return to CNMA @ hbronsy@gmail.com or complete it online: <http://bit.ly/1F7kqu3>

DATE _____

YOUR NAME AND THOSE THAT ATTENDED THE MEETING _____

LEGISLATORS NAME _____

DID YOU DISCUSS AB 1612? _____

WAS LEGISLATOR FAMILIAR WITH BILL? _YES_____NO_____

DID LEGISLATOR INDICATE A POSITION ON AB 1612? _YES_____NO_____

WERE THERE QUESTIONS THAT REQUIRE A FOLLOW--UP?
_YES_____NO_____

IF YES, WHAT?

HAVE YOU SENT A THANK YOU LETTER? _____