

Educating Policymakers and Lobbying: Know the Difference

As experts with lived experience and knowledge gained from training, research, and direct service, we have a responsibility to participate in educating policymakers and working towards societal change. It is important to understand the ways you can be involved as a representative of a federally-funded program and which actions must be reserved to your role as a private citizen. You cannot be both a trainee or employee and private citizen in the same interaction with policymakers.

Trainee or Employee: Educating Policymakers Private Citizen: Lobbying

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Providing education on the impact of current or proposed policies and laws | Advocating for a specific policy or law to be passed or defeated |
| Sharing research and publications | Supporting specific political candidates or political parties |
| Developing and sharing policy analysis or findings | Electoral or campaign organizing |
| Responding to information requests from policymakers | Nonviolent civil disobedience (a peaceful form of protest) |

Example situations

Congress is considering legislation that impacts your program.

- *As a trainee or employee*, from your official e-mail or phone, you can share how the program impacts you, how it impacts the community you serve, what outcomes are important, what the needs are, etc.
- *As a private citizen*, from your personal e-mail or phone, you can ask your Member(s) of Congress to sponsor the legislation, make changes to it, or to vote for it. You can also ask other people in your district to make the same ask which is called "grassroots lobbying."

A presidential candidate is visiting your community. You want to make sure improving policies for persons with disabilities are a priority for them.

- *As a trainee or employee*, you can share facts, data, and information about important issues related to people with disabilities.
- *As a private citizen*, you can ask them to support policies that we know or strongly believe will positively impact people with disabilities (or defeat policies that will negatively impact people with disabilities.)

You are part of an amazing research institution with ties to legislation that Congress is considering.

- *As a trainee or employee*, you can share a summary of your research, its key findings, what the impact of the legislation will be (if passed) and answer questions.
- *As a private citizen*, you can explain why the research supports a position for or against a proposed piece of legislation, and suggest changes based on your research.