Sustaining Stakeholder Engagement and the Importance of Tracking Implementation

From Idea to Action

- Policy Tool & similar processes help to prioritize and assess feasibility and timing
- Often, feasibility of a given issue is associated with level:
  - Policymaker education
  - Advocate education
  - Community engagement
  - Along with the obvious issues of political capital and budgetary capacity

Waiting for the window of opportunity

- Not all policies are primed for action
- Ensure that advocates and stakeholders are informed and prepared for when the window opens
- Advocate Education and Engagement:
  - May need multiple iterations before stakeholders and policymakers understand and are prepared to act
  - Make sure they know what you are asking them to do
  - Regularly revisit the issue
- Use coalition meetings and workgroups as opportunities to keep up momentum on particular issues

Identifying & Engaging Stakeholders

- Stakeholder group: the broader the better
- Some traditional partners may be hamstrung by funding sources/conflicts of interest
- Seek out new and non-traditional partners to be included
- Ensure that there's something in it for them
  - Information sharing
  - Shared advocacy effort
  - Combining of issues into mutual initiatives

Example: Maryland Exchange

- Sought out a broader stakeholder group, including child advocates and insurance experts

- Spent time educating advocates on the process of Exchange development as well as oral health policy concerns

- Child advocates in Maryland were the first to engage but brought oral health coalition along

- Exchange became a priority and both advocacy groups were well-prepared to respond

- **Outcome:** Requirements for dental plans in Exchanges that create equity in coverage and protect families and children

Messaging the Change

- Understand current policies/laws affecting your issue
- Research solutions – what are other states doing? What are other advocates proposing?
- Identify science base, costs/cost-savings, quantitative benefits, public health impact.
- Translate research into concise messages and documents
  - Test on those new to the issue
  - Don't be afraid to start over from scratch

Monitoring the Change

- Once a law passes or policy is implemented, much work is often left to do:
  - Track regulations & guidance from state/federal gov't.
  - Comment and seek clarification on unanswered issues
  - Monitor progress and success of policy
    - Continue to check in
    - Make recommendations for improvement
    - Educate the public on the policy

Example: Maryland Exchange

- **Issue:** dental plans and dental benefits in the state Exchanges

- Reached out to oral health coalitions, state and national advocates multiple times in early 2011

- Materials were too dense and had no real ask of advocates

- Re-worked materials and saw some increased interest among state advocates but most felt unprepared to act

Example: Maryland Exchange

- **Bonus:**
  - Now have partners willing to work on a broader range of issues than before
  - State advocates now engaged in Federal regulatory issues that impact those they represent