



Building **Community** Resilience

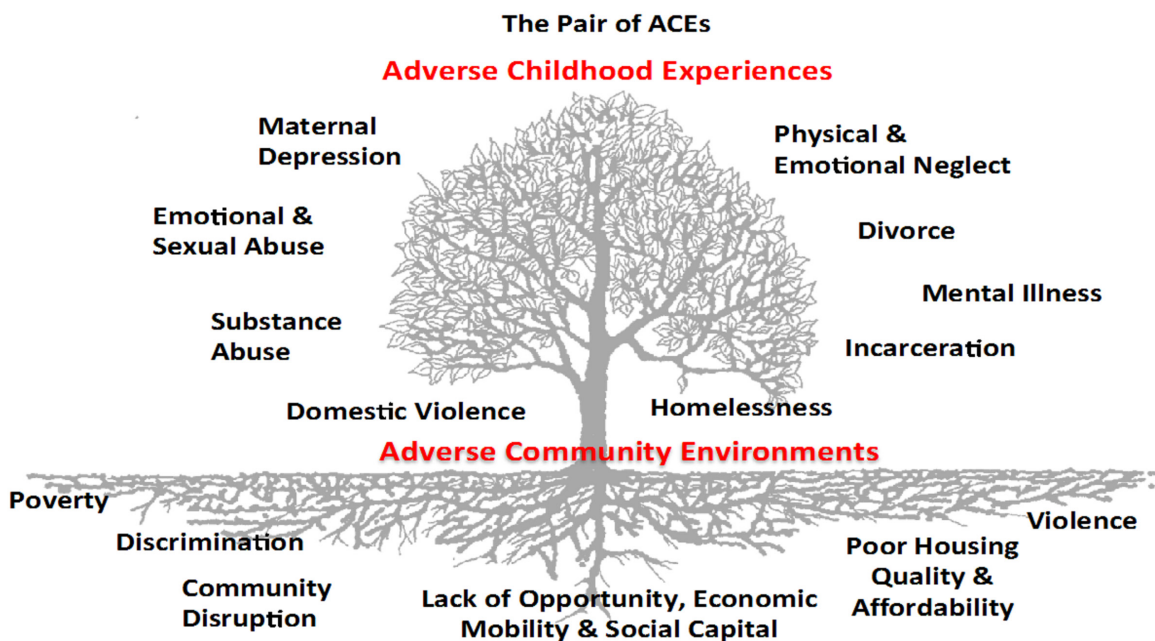
# Policy and Advocacy Guide

March, 2018

# Building Community Resilience Policy and Advocacy Guide

## Table of Contents

I. Introduction to the Building Community Resilience Policy and Advocacy Guide .....	3
II. Q&A: What is Policy and Why Does It Matter to Your Organization and Mission?.....	5
III. Lobbying, Politicking, Advocating, Educating—What Are the Rules and Why Do They Matter?.....	7
IV. Developing a Policy Strategy to Make an Impact .....	11
V. Finding Allies—Who Can Help You? .....	20
VI. Finding Your Policy Audience - Who Are You Trying to Influence and Why?.....	23
VII. Developing & Delivering Your Message, Pitch & Ask .....	31
VIII. Additional Resources.....	40



Ellis, W., Dietz, W. (2017) A New Framework for Addressing Adverse Childhood and Community Experiences: The Building Community Resilience (BCR) Model. *Academic Pediatrics*. 17 (2017) pp. S86-S93. DOI information: 10.1016/j.acap.2016.12.011

# I. Introduction to the Building Community Resilience Policy and Advocacy Guide

## Why a Building Community Resilience Policy Guide?

As the Building Community Resilience (BCR) collaborative has evolved over the past three years, engaging with policymakers at the local, county, state and federal levels has become essential to our work to establish and align systems that support and promote resilience for individuals, families and communities. The Washington, DC-based National BCR team at the Sumner M. Redstone Global Center for Prevention & Wellness at The George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health has expanded and engaged more deeply in policy guidance and assistance to the [BCR teams](#) around the country while also developing an overall national policy strategy for the BCR collaborative. At the same time, the BCR teams have been engaging with policymakers to varying degrees – from the Portland-based team’s relationships with key state legislators and leadership on public campaigns to reduce stigma around mental health to the Cincinnati team’s partnerships with public schools and school districts to the City of Dallas embedding the BCR process in the Office of the City Administrator. The BCR Policy Guide is an outgrowth of this local and national learning, and the collective work to address the ‘Pair of ACEs’ – [adverse childhood experiences that occur in the context of adverse community environments](#) – that negatively impact child health and other life outcomes across the nation. This guide was created in partnership with the [Campaign for Trauma-Informed Policy & Practice \(CTIPP\)](#), a recognized leader and advocate for public policies and programs at the federal, state, local and tribal levels regarding the relationship between trauma across the lifespan and many social and health problems. It complements the work of BCR, [The Center for Health and Health Care in Schools \(CHHCS\)](#) at the Milken Institute School of Public Health at The George Washington University, and [Spitfire Strategies](#) on developing coalitions, determining targets, and communications.

## Using the Guide

The BCR Policy Guide is intended to assist you and your organization in becoming effective policy advocates and educators. We provide guidance to help you identify and act on policy opportunities that will ultimately prevent and mitigate the Pair of ACEs and build community resilience to help children, families and communities thrive.

- 1) We recommend first reviewing the policy Q&A and advocacy definitions in Sections II and III.
- 2) Section IV lays out the Four Rules of the Road when thinking about engaging in policy, and a Policy Blueprint, which provides a high-level view of policy work from preparation to ongoing development.
- 3) Once you’ve let this information sink in, you can begin to identify your goals and develop a policy strategy by working through the Nine Essential Questions and using the related tools and worksheets in Section IV.

- 4) Sections V provides tools to help you identify partners to strengthen your likelihood of success and Section VI offers a tool to identify and prioritize policymakers who can help move your work forward as well as background on how legislatures are organized.
- 5) Section VII prepares you to craft a strong ‘pitch’ so you can begin directly engaging with policymakers. In addition, you’ll find an Appendix with case studies, including a lengthy discussion of a current policy opportunity around trauma-informed approaches.

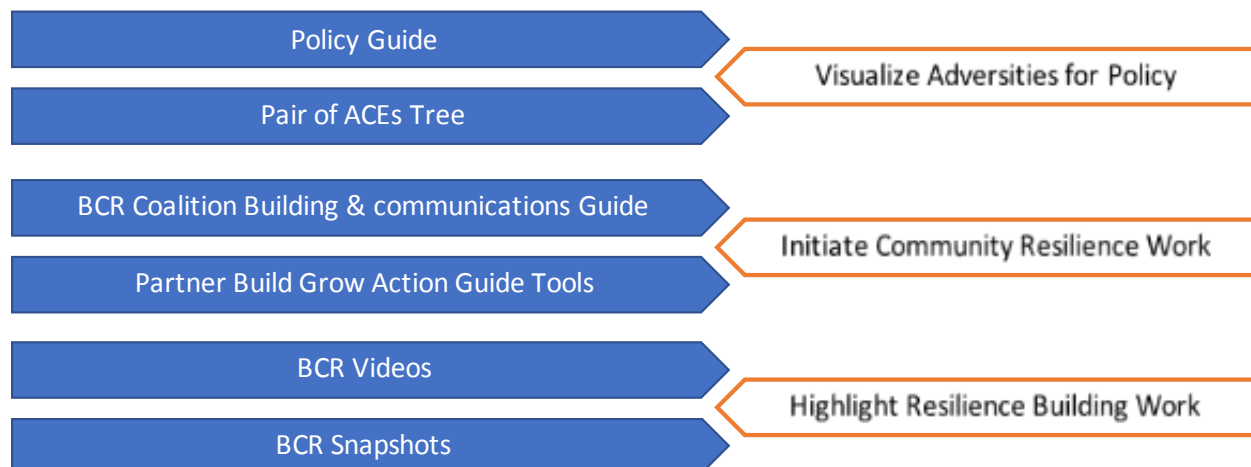
**To access all of the links in this guide, we recommend downloading a digital version of this guide on the BCR website, at [go.gwu.edu/BCR](http://go.gwu.edu/BCR).** The BCR website also includes several other BCR resources, which can be paired with this guide in the following ways:

- Use it along with the [Pair of ACEs Tree](#) to help policymakers visualize the interplay between child, family and community exposure to adversity.
- The [Coalition Building and Communications Guide](#) (developed by Spitfire Strategies) and the [Partner Build Grow Action Guide](#) (developed by The Center for Health and Health Care in Schools) offer important tools to help determine the problems you’re trying to solve, identify partners and form a coalition around resilience building, develop a shared understanding across diverse partnerships and communicate to new potential partners.
- [BCR videos](#) highlight the resilience-building work being driven by our teams around the country, as well as two Congressional briefings on trauma-informed approaches for U.S. Senate and House staff held in 2017.
- The [BCR snapshots](#) describe the unique work underway at BCR sites around the country.
- Our social media channels are rich with additional content and conversation: on Twitter @ResilNation and on Facebook – search for “Pair of ACEs.”



*All tools are available for download at: [go.gwu.edu/BCR](http://go.gwu.edu/BCR)*

## BCR Tools & Resources



## II. Q&A: What is Policy and Why Does It Matter to Your Organization and Mission?

### **What is ‘Policy’ Exactly?**

At its most basic definition, policy is what government does or does not do about a problem or issue. Policy generally takes the form of laws or regulations, but can also include guidance or accepted practice about how programs or institutions are run. In addition, non-government institutions (such as hospitals) may have internal policies that are not directly linked to laws or regulations or where discretion exists under the law that can impact individuals, families and communities. For example, a hospital could be influenced to engage in local sourcing or job training in order to improve economic opportunity for local families.

### **Policy is made in a number of ways and in a variety of settings.**

While most associate the legislative or regulatory process with policymaking, it can be much broader than just a legislative body passing a law or a governmental agency or department issuing a regulation. It’s important to keep this in mind as you determine where you can be most impactful. For instance, rather than asking your state legislature to fund a new grant program, perhaps you could ask the health department or other agency to include guidance in their grant funding announcement clarifying what the grant can be used for. As you determine your priorities, remember there may be multiple pathways and policy arenas in which to accomplish your objectives.

### **Who are ‘Policymakers’?**

Throughout this guide, we use the terms ‘policymaker,’ ‘legislator,’ and ‘elected official.’ Most broadly, ‘policymaker’ refers to anyone who is in a position to create or change rules – be they laws, regulations or institutional practices. A ‘legislator’ is elected to represent a specific group of constituents in a legislative body, such as a city council, county board, school board, state Senate or House of Representatives, or in the U.S. Congress (House or Senate). A legislator’s job is to make and change laws. An ‘elected official’ includes these legislators, but can also include judges, sheriffs and other government officials (e.g. a city comptroller or state treasurer) who interpret or carry out laws or create regulations as part of the Executive Branch of government.

### **Why does Policy Matter to Building Community Resilience Efforts?**

Fundamental to the Building Community Resilience work is bringing the right people to the table and, critically, ensuring that the community – the very people that policies and laws impact – are partners in resilience building efforts. Being at the table where policy is made – or educating those who are at the policy table – is powerful, and a logical step in our work to inform, shape, and align public and private systems with community to address the Pair of ACEs.

Just as the BCR teams have built coalitions and partnerships across sectors – working to align education, social services and clinical sectors with community, for example – policymakers can

also be thought of as a critical (albeit broad) sector to engage in our work. It is often these institutional, governmental or elected officials who can help remove structural barriers to progress and enact policies that can expand, improve or sustain your work.

### **Level Setting: Policy Change Takes Time**

Remember that legislative progress is generally slow and methodical, and that victories often take a long time. The first universal health care bill, meant to ensure that basic health coverage was available to all Americans, was introduced during the Truman Administration. However, Medicare and Medicaid, which now provide health insurance and some social services coverage to seniors and people with disabilities and low incomes, did not become law until 20 years later in the late 1960s. It took another 40+ years for another expansion of health insurance and Medicaid through the Affordable Care Act.

### III. Lobbying, Politicking, Advocating, Educating—What Are the Rules and Why Do They Matter?

When engaging with policymakers there are some key rules of the road to keep in mind to stay on the right side of lobbying and tax laws.

- Who you are (e.g. are you representing a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization or are you acting as a private citizen?);
- What you are saying (e.g. are you interested in a specific piece of legislation or a policy issue more broadly);
- How you say it (e.g. are testifying in a public hearing or meeting privately with a government official?).

These are the key factors in determining the legality of your actions.

If your organization has a legal counsel, you should always consult with them first.

#### **What's the difference between lobbying, politicking, advocating, and educating and when is it okay to do one or the other?**

Advocacy is a broad term that covers any number of activities meant to influence policy and advance a cause. Advocacy can and should be part of your strategy to create change, but not all advocacy is created equally in the eyes of the law and different types of advocacy have different rules. Below is an overview of some of those rules.

#### *Lobbying & Lobbyists*

There is a common misconception that non-profit organizations cannot lobby. Lobbying is legal for most types of organizations, but there are limits. It's useful to know how lobbying and lobbyists are defined as well as the basic rules regarding lobbying and non-profit organizations.

**Lobbying is defined in federal law<sup>1</sup> as any oral or written communication (including an electronic communication such as email or text) to a government employee, elected official or their staff that is made on behalf of a client with regard to specific legislation, rule, regulation, or policy, or the execution of a policy, or the nomination or confirmation of a person.**

There are two principle types of laws related to lobbying: disclosure and tax laws.

**1) Disclosure laws** exist at both the federal and state levels and generally require a person engaged in a certain amount of lobbying to register and disclose for whom they are lobbying and, depending on the jurisdiction, on what matter.

---

<sup>1</sup> 2 U.S.C. 1602.

This guide will not go in depth on disclosure and registration requirements for lobbyists other than to say that registered lobbyists can either be an employee of an organization or can be retained by organizations to lobby on a specific issue or issues (e.g. a utility company might retain a lobbyist to lobby Congress to pass a bill to subsidize solar power). Your organization may employ or retain a lobbyist and it's important to understand how your organization utilizes lobbyists. More information about individual state requirements can be found on the [National Council of State Legislatures \(NCSL\)](#) website.

**2) Tax laws** generally govern the extent to which tax-exempt organizations can lobby and maintain their tax-exempt status.

There are Internal Revenue Service (IRS) rules<sup>2</sup> related to lobbying by tax-exempt organizations. In general, tax-exempt (501(c)(3) organizations [can lobby](#) as long as that activity is not a “substantial part” of their overall activity. While this is a vague standard, the widely held belief is that an organization whose lobbying activities are less than 5% of its overall activities would pass the “substantial part” test. Organizations can also choose to follow an “expenditure test,” which requires organizations to track their lobbying expenditures and not exceed a limit, specified by the IRS, based on the size of their organization. Other types of organizations, such as 501(c)(4) “social welfare” organizations and 501(c)(5) labor unions, can engage in unlimited lobbying and some partisan political activity (such as endorsing candidates), while private foundations are strictly prohibited from engaging in any lobbying (though they can fund organizations that do lobby as long as the funding is not earmarked for lobbying).

It goes without saying that each individual organization may have their own internal rules on lobbying above and beyond federal or state legal frameworks.

#### **Important Note If You Receive Federal Grants**

Many organizations may derive some of their resources from federal grants. You can never use those resources to lobby; however, an organization can use non-federal funds to lobby or advocate if they comply with the relevant rules about lobbying, politicking and advocating. An organization can generally use federal funds to educate (e.g. you invite an official to visit your federally funded program to show them the impact it's having on the community).

#### *Politicking*

Engagement in electoral politics brings up another set of considerations. Similar to the lobbying rules, what is allowed largely depends on the tax status of your organization. Unlike lobbying, tax-exempt organizations are generally not allowed to engage in partisan politics at all. However, non-partisan political activity, such as advocating for a particular issue or registering voters, is permissible. What does that distinction mean in practice? As long as the activity is not

---

<sup>2</sup> 26 U.S.C. 501



or doesn't have the appearance of an endorsement or criticism of a particular candidate, you should be fine. In practice, that means it's perfectly acceptable to issue a policy paper supporting a particular position even if a candidate also holds that position. Note that ballot measures or referendums, which are issues (typically city or statewide) decided by voters (e.g. a measure to legalize marijuana in a certain state), fall under the IRS' lobbying rules – not electoral politics rules – and the “substantial part” test (see *Lobbying* section above) applies for tax exempt 501c(3) organizations.

“Social welfare” organizations, including those organized as 501c(4), have much different rules and can engage in electoral politics as a “secondary” activity, meaning that the activities cannot constitute more than 49% of their activities. These organizations can endorse candidates, ask their members to take specific actions on an issue, or ask politicians to take a pledge to support a certain policy.

### *Education*

Unlike lobbying, where the focus is on a specific action (e.g. asking an elected official to support a specific bill), education is focused on issues and ideas. Remember that education can be influential (which is the point) but cannot make specific requests about a particular piece of legislation. Education can be proactive (e.g. you ask to visit a legislator to talk about the importance of trauma informed practices in schools) or reactive (e.g. a legislator calls you to ask about what policies could assist more schools in becoming trauma informed) and public (e.g. you release the results of research regarding children in your city exposed to multiple ACEs) or private (e.g. you share the results directly with a legislator).

## **What's the bottom line on advocacy, education vs. lobbying, and politicking?**

Here are some basic rules to keep in mind if you are a tax-exempt 501c(3) organization<sup>3</sup>:

1) It's generally always permissible to do any of the following activities:

- Testify at a public hearing;
- Comment on a proposed rule, regulation, or other policy where public comment has been requested;
- Invite an elected or government official to visit your program for the purpose of learning about your work;
- Conduct and share research;
- Talk to the media;
- Respond to a request from a legislator or agency asking for your expertise in a particular area;
- Participate in a public briefing, panel or convening for the purpose of educating policymakers or the public about an issue;
- Go to a town hall and ask a question of a policymaker or elected official;

---

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/2000/09/21/advocacy-lobbying-501c3-charitable-organization-501-c-3/>

- Meet with a legislator or staff privately for the purpose of educating them on a particular issue or gathering information about their work;
  - Engage in your capacity as a private citizen (including private meetings with legislators on specific bills or matters, signing paper or electronic letters or petitions to advocate for a certain policy or legislative change, etc.);
  - Develop and disseminate policy positions and papers as long as they are not related to a specific piece of legislation;
  - Express views on specific pieces of legislation in public newsletters or newsletters to subscribers as long as they do not ask recipients to take action;
  - Target elected and other government officials to take action – or not take action – on a certain issue as long as you are not asking them to take action on a specific piece of legislation (e.g. asking the Mayor to devote more resources to affordable housing vs. asking the Mayor to veto Bill #123);
  - Use board members to contact public officials;
  - Organize a rally or public event in support or opposition of an issue or cause (e.g. you organize a rally to oppose gun violence);
  - Asking an elected official to help you obtain information from an agency (e.g. you ask your Member of Congress to contact an agency for information about the status of a grant application);
  - Congratulating a newly elected official and urging action on an issue.
- 2) The following activities will generally be considered lobbying or politicking as described in the above sections:
- Meeting in private with a legislator or staff in order to influence a specific piece of legislation;
  - Sending a written communication, including sign-on letters originating from other organizations, urging support or action on a particular piece of legislation.
  - Endorsing a specific candidate for office or participating in a campaign to elect a specific person to office, or using your organization's resources to help a specific candidate;
  - Organizing an event or rally to support or oppose a specific piece of legislation (e.g. you organize a rally urging support for H.R. 567 to ban semi-automatic guns)
  - Communicating to your members – by email, text or verbally – asking them to call a legislator and request sponsorship of, a vote for, or opposition to a specific bill.

## IV. Developing a Policy Strategy to Make an Impact

While it can be useful to engage in policy matters on an “as needed” basis or in reaction to events, spending the time and resources to develop an intentional policy strategy will significantly increase your ability to make an impact and be proactive. This is true both at the individual organization and also the coalition level. Developing a plan will allow you to align your resources and expertise under a common vision and then measure your results.

### **When engaging with policymakers – or when planning to do so – there are four broad rules of the road to always keep in mind:**

- **Political Context and Timing** - Political environments, or the likelihood of certain policies or policy changes by a given council, congress or other legislative body, can differ significantly at various levels (i.e. federal vs. state vs. local) and change can happen rapidly. Your strategy should include staying abreast of relevant political environments and ongoing changes. While your long-term vision might be to influence statewide legislation, the ground might be much more fertile at the local level. For example, focusing advocacy resources first on local policymakers could be more fruitful, and also allow you to describe your local successes and lessons learned in future interactions educating state-level policymakers.
- **Your Organization’s Overall Mission** - Consider how policy engagement fits within the overall mission of your organization. Also consider the strengths and weaknesses of your organization, the staff you will have to deploy to carry out a policy agenda, and to what extent you have buy-in from your leadership or board. Gaining the support of the decision makers inside your own organization may be a key part of your initial – or ongoing – strategy to influence external policymaking.
- **Risk vs. Reward** - Consider any potential downsides to engaging in policy – overall, but also on specific issues – and how it might impact your organization’s other priorities. It is important to also consider key stakeholders’ (such as funders and other supporters) perceptions of your engagement in policy work.
- **Your Strategy** – Your strategy should be dictated by your long-term policy goal(s). Your strategy sets out a roadmap to help guide your actions. Once you’ve devised a strategy, the rest of your work should flow from that. Recognize the difference between your strategy and your tactics. Think about strategy as the “what” and tactics as the “how”. Your strategy remains stable, but your tactics can change to suit the context and political climate. Make sure your tactics always serve your overall strategy.

## Nine essential questions when developing your policy strategy:

Jim Schultz from the Democracy Center has developed [nine essential questions](#) to ask as you start developing your policy strategy. We have adapted these essential questions for Building Community Resilience. While these questions do not have to be answered in a specific order, the **Policy Blueprint** below suggests one way your team can walk through these questions and develop your answers. **Worksheet #3** can be used to track your answers as you develop them.

- 1) What do we want? Determine your policy priorities based on the problem you are trying to solve.
- 2) Who can make it happen? Identify stakeholders, allies and specific policymakers.
- 3) What do they need to hear? To be most effective, develop and tailor messages by audience.
- 4) Who do they need to hear it from? Determine the right messenger(s) on your team.  
Depending on the situation, a community member might be most appropriate, whereas in other contexts a professional could be most effective.
- 5) How can we make sure they hear it? Identify potential opportunities to advocate and channels by which to do so.
- 6) What do we have? Determine your current capacity and what gaps need to be filled.
- 7) What do we need? Identify how to fill any gaps.
- 8) How do we take action? Develop action steps and identify interim outcomes.
- 9) How do we know if it's working? Determine how you will measure success and evaluate outcomes.

## A Policy Blueprint: Seeing the Big Picture

The following high-level **Policy Blueprint** suggests one way your team can walk through the process of developing your policy strategy. However, please note that the steps below do not have to be taken in a specific order, and may become a more organic process. Tools, guidelines, and additional information are included throughout this guide to help you think through, build out, and act on specific goals.

### *Step 1 – Preparation:*

- 1) Determine the relationship between your organization or coalition and the government (local, state, federal). Understanding how your organization currently interacts with various levels of government can help you determine your policy goals and ensure that they are in-line with the overall goals of your organization. For example, if you are funded or regulated by an agency, that may impact how to engage with that agency on other policy issues.
- 2) Review Your Resources & Assess Capacity. What kind of capacity do you have – staff and other resources – to devote to policy work? Determine who in your organization is best positioned to work in this area. Aligning your policy goals with your resources and vice versa, is necessary to have a clear understanding of what is achievable with what you have. If you find you need extra capacity to achieve your goals, identify outside sources, for example, through the BCR partnership and coalition building tools in the [Partner Build Grow Action Guide Tools](#) developed by The Center for Health and Health Care in Schools (Download at [go.gwu.edu/BCR](http://go.gwu.edu/BCR)).

- 3) Talk to your Board and Attorneys. If your organization has a board and/or attorneys, this step is important not only to make sure you have buy-in and are acting in accordance with the governing structure of your organization, but also to help identify potential allies. For example, many board members may already have active relationships with policymakers that can be leveraged.

*Step 2 – Identifying your top priorities and action plan:*

- 4) Make Long-Term Priorities to Create a Vision for Success. Develop a clear view of what you wish to accomplish and what successful outcome(s) would look like. For instance, your top priority may be to ensure the continuation and sustainability of your work. How you go about achieving that is likely different than if your priority is to influence specific pieces of legislation. **Use Worksheet #1: Determining Policy Goals & Priorities.**
- 5) Map Action Items & Tactics. Impacting policy, especially at the legislative level, is a slow process. Think through all the steps (i.e. tactics and the action items that flow from them) you need to get to your desired end result. *Don't underestimate the need to educate policymakers on your issue, and the time required to do so.* **Use Worksheet #2: Translating Goals into Action.**

*Step 3 – Developing your allies and message:*

- 6) Identify Key Partners. Who else can you enlist in your effort? Advocacy is often most powerful when policymakers hear a similar message from a range of groups, constituents and stakeholders. **Use Worksheet #4: Identifying and Mapping Targets, Tool #1: Identify Potential Partners, and Tool #2: Circles of Influence.**
- 7) Collect Stories & Data. Using stories paired with data is foundational to the Building Community Resilience work. Stories about real children, families or individuals affected by policies – or the lack of a needed policy – can be incredibly powerful in moving people to action. In the policy realm, these stories are particularly effective when they're from constituents represented by the policymaker you are trying to educate or influence. Similarly, data that describes the scope or impact of an issue within a policymaker's jurisdiction is most effective. Begin collecting relevant stories and identifying data you have access to that will help you describe the issues and make your case for action to policymakers (see [BCR Example Stories & Scenarios in the BCR Communications Guide](#) — Download at [go.gwu.edu/BCR](http://go.gwu.edu/BCR)). **Use Tool #3: Message Box.**
- 8) Get to Know Policymakers & Their Staff. Identify your access points to key policymakers. Have you already worked with policymakers or their staff? Do members of your board have existing relationships? Track your interactions.

## Getting Started: Creating Your Policy Strategy

The following guidelines, tools and worksheets can be used to help build your policy strategy by identifying the specific problems you're trying to solve, setting priorities, and determining the steps needed to make change.

### Remember to be SMART

The Determining Advocacy Goals and Priorities Worksheet can help you develop and prioritize your goals. As you work through it, remember the SMART Rule. Your goals should be:

- Specific** - You can clearly articulate the desired ultimate outcome
- Measurable** – You have identified a way to measure success
- Achievable** – The goal is doable with the resources you can marshal
- Relevant** – The goal is related to your work and mission
- Time-bound** – You have set milestones and a timeline for reaching your goals

## Worksheet #1: Determining Policy Goals and Priorities

*Before deciding on a policy priority, it's worth first determining what your team/organization values most. Use this worksheet to brainstorm your team values - the issues you want to address most, logistics, and organization. **See the next page for an example of a completed worksheet.***

**Potential Policy Priority:** \_\_\_\_\_

	<i>What's important to our team?</i>	<i>Does the policy priority above meet this criteria?</i>	<i>Comments</i>
<b>Importance of Issue</b>	1.		
	2.		
	3.		
	4.		
	5.		
	6.		
<b>Logistics</b>	1.		
	2.		
	3.		
	4.		
	5.		
	6.		
<b>Organization</b>	1.		
	2.		
	3.		

## EXAMPLE - Worksheet #1: Determining Policy Goals and Priorities

**Potential Policy Priority:** Increase reimbursement and funding for the co-location of mental health services in schools.

	<i>What's important to our team?</i>	<i>Does the policy priority above meet this criteria?</i>	<i>Comments</i>
<b>Importance of Issue</b>	1. Lessen the impacts of ACEs in community	X	
	2. Addresses urgent need(s) in the community	X	
	3. Priority raised by other stakeholders	X	This has been raised by other partners
	4. Connected to other priorities	X	
	5. Furthers health equity	X	
	6. Spreads trauma-informed principles	X	
<b>Logistics</b>	1. Ease of communication	X	We can communicate the "why"; need help communicating the "how"
	2. Winnable	X	
	3. Clear targets to make it happen		We'll need assistance with this
	4. Internal capacity to craft a solution		We'll need assistance with this
	5. Clear timetable	X	
	6. Opportunities for community engagement	X	
<b>Organization</b>	1. Consistent with mission/vision	X	
	2. Impacts sustainability of work	X	
	3. Internal resources		We'll need some outside assistance



## Worksheet #2: Translating Goals into Action

*Use this worksheet to determine action steps and tactics to achieve each of your goals. **See the next page for an example of a completed worksheet.***

**Organizational Mission:**

**Strategic Goal/Priority:**

**Resources Needed:**

**Support:**

**Target(s):**

**Tactics:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Action Steps (and Actors) [including timeline]**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## **EXAMPLE - Worksheet #2: Translating Goals into Action**

**Organizational Mission:** Address and prevent the risks of childhood adversity and work to strengthen families.

**Strategic Goal/Priority:** Reduce the incidence of childhood adversity related to parental opioid misuse in the Upshaw Community by increasing access to treatment and supports for families facing addiction. Pass the “Family Focused Treatment Act” through the state legislature (legislation that would fund treatment for families that have been referred to the child welfare system).

**Resources Needed:** Staff – 5 hours of staff time per week; travel funds to Capital City

**Support:** Board Member Harrison; State Senator Pinckney (author of the bill); Coalition for Foster Youth

**Target(s):** Children and Families Committee Chair Tyler; Republican Leader Fritz; Human Services Deputy Secretary Jones

**Tactics:**

1. Educate legislative staff about the bill
2. Use media and other channels to raise the profile of the issue

**Action Steps (and Actors) [including timeline]**

1. Develop a fact sheet and deliver to all offices – Darrell; 3/5/18
2. Organize meetings with Tyler and staff – Samantha; 3/25/18
3. Hold Public Briefing with Community Members; Jim; 5/30/18
4. Draft Op-Ed for Enquirer; Darrell; 4/15/18
5. Pitch story about local family; Darrell; 3/30/18

## Worksheet #3: Policy Strategy Planning & the Nine Essential Questions

*While these questions do not have to be answered in a specific order, the **Policy Blueprint** in Section IV suggests one way your team can walk through these questions and develop your answers. This worksheet can be used to track your answers as you develop them.*

*Remember: Goals and outcomes should be “SMART” – **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**esults-based, **T**ime-Bound*

**Goal:**

**Interim Outcomes:**



1. What Do We Want?
2. Who Can Make It Happen?
3. What Do They Need to Hear?
4. Who Do They Need to Hear It From?
5. How Can We Make Sure They Hear It?
6. What Do We Have/What Do We Need to Develop?
7. How Do We Take Action/Start?
8. How We Tell If It's Working?

## V. Finding Allies—Who Can Help You?

Impacting policy can be a resource-intensive endeavor. Identifying partners and leveraging the expertise and resources of different organizations can provide you with a much greater chance of success and broaden the scope of your policy work. The tools in this section can help you both identify partners and think strategically about who is in the best position to help you achieve your policy goals.

### Tool #1: Identify Potential Partners

This tool was developed by BCR partner, the [Center for Health and Health Care in Schools](http://go.gwu.edu/BCR), to help BCR teams map out the individuals, groups and other players who might have shared interests. Additional tools and resources in the BCR Coalition Building and Communications Guide may also be useful when reaching out to potential partners. **Download at:** <http://go.gwu.edu/BCR>

 <b>PARTNER BUILD GROW</b> An Action Guide for Sustaining Child Development and Prevention Approaches											 The Center for Health and Health Care in Schools	
Building an Action Team: Identifying Partners												
Instruction: The categories below represent possible agencies, organizations, or local groups within your community that should be considered as you form/strengthen your coalition. First, decide what role they may play in advancing your cause (check all the green columns that apply) and then fill in additional information about the organization/group that may be invited as a partner (blue columns that apply). Feel free to modify text in any cells as needed.												
Potential Cross-Sector Partner (see sample below)	Not Applicable/No Relevant Role	Potential Action Team Member	Potential Coalition Member	Letter of Intent	Memorandum of Understanding	Organization/Group Name	Known Expertise/What unique perspective do they bring?	How can you assess representativeness of this group?	Contact Name & Information	When is the right time to engage them?	Who will invite/invite person(s) to meet?	Comments: What is the "win" or "hook" for the individual/group to join?
Community Mental Health Agency or Program												
Substance Use Prevention or Treatment Center												
School Health Professional Organization												
School District/Local Health Organization												
Federally Qualified Health Centers												
Hospital or Health Care Institution												
Parent-Teacher Association Organization												
Family Advocacy Organization												
Department of Health Agency or Program												
Department of Social Services Agency or Program												
Department of Recreation Agency or Program												
Department of Child Welfare Agency or Program												
Department of Juvenile Justice Agency or Program												
Local Police Department												
Community Organization												
After-School Program Provider												
Local Foundations												
University or College												
Medical Offices												
Potential Community Ally/Partner (see sample below)												
faith Organizations												
Recreational Community or Neighborhood Organization(s)												
Non-Profit/Community Organizations												
Marketing/ Youth Development Organizations												
Parent groups/School connected or other												
Community service/volunteer organizations												
Immigrant/Community Development												
Local Businesses/Retail												
Industry/ Manufacturing												
Art/ Theater/ Music/Cultural												
Local Hospitality												
Environmentally conscious groups												



## Tool #2: Circles of Influence

This is a tool developed by Technology of Participation and used by BCR's partners at the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO). Utilize this tool to identify and map out the partners that might engage in your policy work.

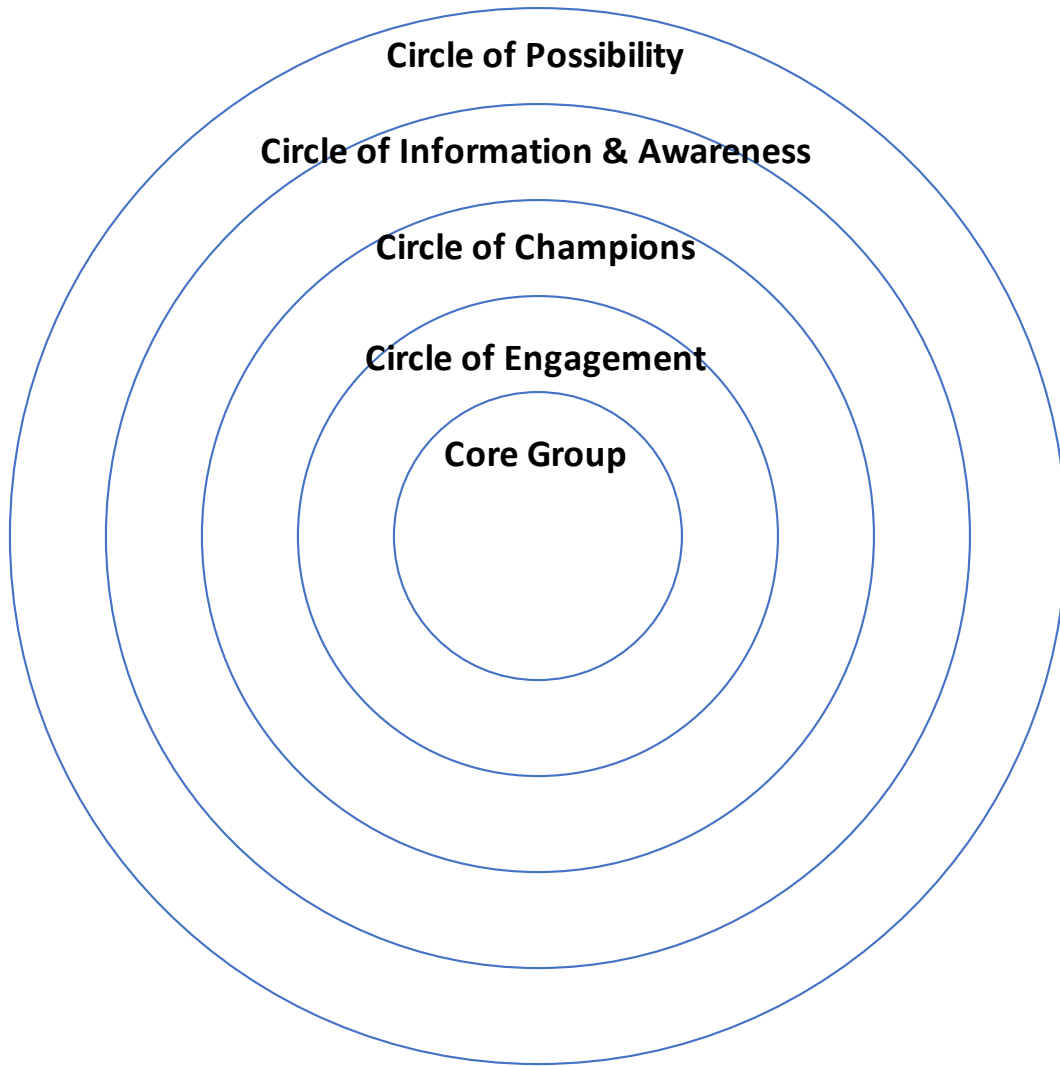
Core Group: This is the group that will do most of the day-to-day work and engage in planning, decision-making, and mobilizing others. Think of this group as the people who are responsible for carrying out your policy work and can always be counted on to step forward when needed.

Circle of Engagement: This group is committed to the BCR work and can be called on for specific tasks at particular times. They don't see themselves as the prime drivers of the work, but are willing to assume a share of the responsibility. This may include some who can become increasingly engaged in the BCR policy work and move into the core group.

Circle of Champions: Champions typically hold leadership positions within the community and either are, or need to be, committed to the BCR work. They are likely not involved in the day-to-day work, but can help open doors and make connections that can help your policy work move forward. They need to be kept informed of what's happening (big picture) and where and when to plug in without having to be involved in more granular details of the work. They appreciate chipping in and then stepping back until next time.

Circle of Information and Awareness: This group is not very close to the BCR work, but should be kept in the loop as they are in positions to either lend support or slow down your progress. This group may also have a stake in the outcome of your work, perhaps because they are in a community or sector that might be impacted. They need to be honored with occasional touches that allow them to see what is happening and offer their input. Occasionally these individuals move into the Circle of Champions group.

Circle of Possibility: These are individuals who don't immediately come to mind as being related to your work, but they might be inclined to find common cause with you. They could turn out to be a partner or be helpful in some way. Be creative when thinking about who might fall into this category because they are likely outside of your regular professional circle.



## VI. Finding Your Policy Audience - Who Are You Trying to Influence and Why?

As you move from planning to action, you will need to identify the individuals and/or institutions that have the authority, power, or jurisdiction to implement policy changes aligned with your advocacy goals. The Identifying and Mapping Targets tool in this section can help you determine the policy audiences that would be most beneficial to engage. To begin the research, you'll need to effectively move them to action.

In this section, you'll also find background information that can help you to better understand how legislatures are constructed and how legislative offices tend to be staffed. There is also background about bureaucracies to help you think through how best to target them.

As you begin this process of identifying and engaging policymakers, keep a few things in mind:

- 1) **Start small.** Focus your energy and resources strategically to prevent casting too broad a net, which could weaken your effectiveness.
- 2) **Think about the network.** Policymakers are often interested in the positions of their peers and their peers' activities on issues. To further your impact, think strategically about how they interact and influence one another.
- 3) **Focus on policymakers you can influence.** Target legislators that represent you or the area where your program is located, or have a relationship with your organization or a board member.
- 4) **Don't just talk to your friends.** You may lose opportunities by only talking to the policymakers that are natural allies. At the very least, these conversations can help you identify areas of opposition and develop counter messages.
- 5) **Watch the landscape.** Policymakers (and their power) change frequently. The legislator that you want to target today may not be in office or may be on a different committee in 6 or 12 months. Re-visit your target audiences regularly and adjust as the context changes.

## Worksheet #4: Identifying and Mapping Targets

Use this tool to begin identifying and mapping which policymakers you should target and how to prioritize where to focus your resources. As you begin your advocacy work, look to your local elected officials and determine which ones may be most useful to target. As your advocacy work matures, you may ultimately form relationships with policymakers who are interested in your work and can help move it forward (e.g. they chair a key committee or have a background in the issue).

	Target 1	Target 2	Target 3
<b>Policymaker Name Title &amp; Jurisdiction Organization or Legislative Body</b>			
<b>Interest in Issue (Does your issue overlap with their priorities?)</b>			
<b>Support/Opposition? (Are they on record – through previous votes or statements – on the issue?)</b>			
<b>Influence over Issue (Do they have jurisdiction or sway with those who do?)</b>			
<b>Knowledge of the Issue (How much education will be involved?)</b>			
<b>Ask or Desired Action (What do you want them to do?)</b>			
<b>Access (How do you get in front of a particular audience?)</b>			
<b>Attention Getter (What will they respond to?)</b>			



## Background: Understanding the Legislature

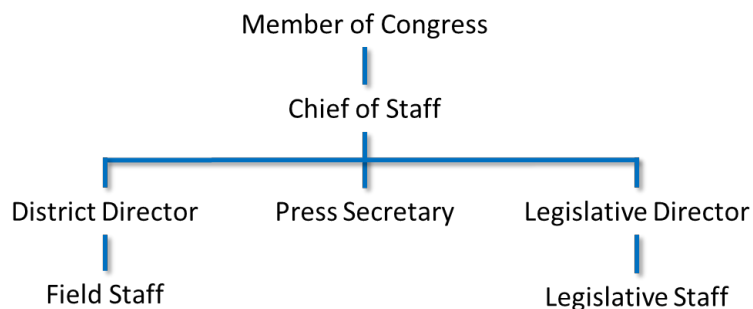
As you think about who your target audience will be, the messages you want to deliver and the actions you may ask them to take, it's likely that the legislative branch will be at the heart of your strategy. This section uses the U.S. Congress as an example to look at how legislative offices and committees are generally structured. ***Although the examples used here are federal, most legislatures will be similarly structured and lessons should be generalizable to help you think through where to focus your efforts.***

Your initial point of contact with a legislative office will almost always be at the staff level – the individuals who work for an elected official, in this case, a Member of Congress in either of the two chambers of Congress (the House of Representatives or the Senate) – and it's important to understand the various roles that staff play.

There are two kinds of staff in Congress, *personal staff* and *committee staff*, which are sometimes called professional staff.

### *Personal Staff*

A Member of Congress' personal staff works in his or her office in Washington, DC or in their state or district office. In addition to being responsible for addressing concerns raised by the constituents they represent, each person on the Washington personal staff is responsible for – and has expertise in – a particular substantive policy area, such as health, law enforcement, foreign affairs, etc. They advise their boss about legislation being considered in their area of expertise and meet with constituents, along with advocacy groups, who are interested in those issues. The staff in the state or district offices are generally referred to as “field staff” and address constituent concerns and forward information and constituent interests to the Washington office. A typical office has an organization chart that is some variant of the below diagram.



### *Committee Staff (Professional Staff)*

Other staffers in Congress work for a particular committee or subcommittee (e.g. the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP) or the House Subcommittee on Interior Appropriations under the full Appropriations Committee). They will either work for the chairman of a committee – who will be from the party that has a majority of seats in the Senate or House – or for the ranking member – the senior member on the committee from the minority party. They are knowledgeable about the programs and issues under their

committee's jurisdiction. While these staff work for the committee, they have a particular connection to the chairman of the committee or subcommittee. For example, staff on the HELP Committee consider themselves to be working for Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) who is currently chairman. Larger committees may have dozens of staff and there may be more than one staff member who works on a particular issue. Smaller subcommittees may have just one or two staffers who cover all of the issues under that subcommittee's jurisdiction.

### *Process*

Any Congressperson – Senator or Representative – may draft and introduce legislation, but it then gets referred to a committee(s). For the legislation to move, the committee must discharge it, usually through a process called “mark-up” where the full committee may amend the legislation and vote to move it forward so it can then be considered by the full House or Senate. This is considered “regular order,” but it should be noted that in recent years regular order has been followed less frequently and some pieces of legislation are pushed forward by leadership (e.g. the Senate Majority Leader or House Speaker) for consideration.

### *Four Types of Committees*

**Standing Committees** - permanent committees that have jurisdiction over specific legislative and oversight activities. These make up the majority of committees and are where you will focus most of your attention. Both chambers, the House and Senate, have their own standing committees that somewhat mirror one another but do not have the exact same names or the exact same jurisdiction. Standing committees hold regular hearings and “mark-up” legislation.

**Conference Committees** - temporary committees made up of members selected from both the House and Senate to reconcile differences in legislation passed in each of the two chambers. Their goal is to agree upon a final version to send back to both the House and Senate to vote on, pass, and send to the President to sign into law.

**Select Committees** - temporary committees that are usually formed around a specific topic (e.g. climate change) or to conduct an investigation. Some might include members of one chamber while others may include members from both chambers depending on how they are created. They typically release reports or findings related to their work to potentially inform future action or legislation.

**Joint Committees** - permanent committees that include both House and Senate members and are generally formed around a specific issue (e.g. The Joint Committee on Taxation).

*Of the four committees, the most critical are two main types of Standing Committees of:*

- Authorizing Committees process legislation authorizing or revising programs in the areas under their jurisdiction. For example, most legislation in the Senate involving health, education and welfare go through the HELP Committee.
- Appropriations Committees pass appropriations bills that make discretionary funding available for the programs that the authorizing committees have created or revised

through authorizing legislation. The House and Senate each has what are known as the Full Appropriations Committees, which in turn have subcommittees for each major area. For example, the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education is responsible for putting together the annual appropriations bill setting out how much money will be made available for each of the Federal programs in the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education. Appropriations bills for each subcommittee are drafted by the chair of that subcommittee and his or her staff (sometimes with input from the Ranking Minority), giving the chairs tremendous power to determine how much money will go to each program under its jurisdiction and, as discussed below, what will go into the report accompanying the appropriations bill.

### *Spending & Revenue*

It is important to note there are two types of federal spending: discretionary and mandatory.

**Discretionary spending** is made up of funds that must be appropriated each fiscal year through the Appropriations Process (Congress passes and the President signs the annual Appropriations bill). Funding for the CDC is largely discretionary, for example. In total, discretionary spending makes up around 40% of the federal budget and is split roughly evenly between domestic and defense spending.

**Mandatory (or entitlement) spending** makes up the largest portion of the federal budget. Mandatory programs are established in statute, which generally means the federal government has an obligation to pay for these programs regardless of how much they cost. Examples of mandatory programs are Medicare, Social Security and foster care. These programs are largely outside the purview of the Appropriations process and any changes require legislative action (for example, changing the eligibility criteria for Social Security).

**Revenue Measures** (i.e. tax) must go through the Revenue Committees that have jurisdiction. In the House, the Ways and Means Committee has jurisdiction over all revenue measures. In the Senate, the Finance Committee has jurisdiction.

### **How Congress Impacts Policies and Programs**

There are numerous ways that Congress can effect change in Federal programs and policies. To educate and/or advocate effectively you need to understand what those levers are and who can pull them. If one route, such as authorizing legislation, is not available, you may try to find a way to use one of the other routes to accomplish your objective, such as getting your provision inserted into an appropriations bill. Here are some examples of the policy levers in Congress:

- 1) **Authorizing Legislation** – The most common way to create or revise programs or laws is for Congress to pass a bill that authorizes new programs or changes existing ones, called authorizing legislation. If the program requires funding, the bill will authorize a certain amount of appropriations for the program. However, authorization does not mean the

funding is available. Funding must wait for the appropriations committee to actually appropriate or effectively write a check for the funding. Generally, the amount of funding authorized is treated as the maximum that the appropriations committee may appropriate. Usually the amount actually appropriated is less than the amount authorized. Authorizing legislation must be (in the following order):

- a. introduced by one or more Members of Congress,
- b. considered and voted on (marked-up) by the authorizing committee or committees,
- c. sent to be voted on by the full House and Senate and then, when passed by both Houses,
- d. signed by the President.

However, each of those steps is fraught with barriers. For example, in this Congress, if a bill is introduced only by Democratic Senators, the authorizing committee chair is unlikely to even bring it up for a vote in the authorizing committee unless there is Republican support. In addition, even if a bill gets through the relevant committee, if the Senate or House leadership does not like the bill, they will not put it on the calendar for a vote by the full body. On the other hand, if they support a bill, they have the ability to motivate the committee chair to move it forward quickly.

- 2) **Appropriations Legislation** – Theoretically, every year Congress approves an appropriations bill reported out by each Appropriations subcommittee, approved by the full Appropriations Committee and then the full House or Senate. Appropriations bills are not supposed to be used to authorize new programs but, in fact, they are commonly used for that purpose. This occurs when Congress is so deadlocked that it is virtually impossible to get an authorization bill passed. While annual appropriations bills from each appropriations subcommittee is the way the process is supposed to function, for the past few years Congress has been unable to pass most or all of those individual bills because of Congressional deadlock.

Instead, Congress initially passes a continuing resolution to enable the government to continue to operate. Then, it eventually puts all of the individual appropriations bills developed by the various subcommittees – but never approved by the full Senate or House – into a single Omnibus Appropriations bill, which is developed primarily by the Senate and House leadership behind closed doors. Even if Congress once again ends up lumping all of the appropriations bills into an Omnibus bill, it is possible to get some authorizing provisions into it, so long as there is support from the leadership of both parties.

- 3) **Bill Report Language** – Every bill approved by a committee or subcommittee is accompanied by a “report” which contains more narrative discussion than the bill itself. It explains what is in the bill and the reasons the committee included various provisions. For appropriations bills, the report contains paragraphs explaining why the subcommittee added or reduced funding for a program and often contains directives to the agency receiving the funding, detailing actions the committee wants it to take. Those directives are

not legally binding and the relevant agencies, such as the Department of Health and Human Services or the Administration for Children and Families, sometimes ignore them, but they offer another way to send a signal to a Federal agency to implement certain initiatives.

- 4) **Non-Legislative Actions** – There are a number of ways that Members of Congress can influence policy outside of the legislative process.

#### *Federal Agencies*

Members of Congress often ask agencies to take specific actions or interpret laws in particular ways. Members often direct letters to the Secretary of a Department requesting that he or she take a certain action. They tend to be more effective if the letter is signed by a number of Senators or Congresspersons from both parties, particularly the party in control of the White House.

For example, in December 2015, eleven Democrats and one Republican Senator led by Senator Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND), sent a letter to the then Secretary of HHS asking that she direct her staff to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy for addressing historical and childhood trauma in Native American communities. The Secretary, working for a Democratic president, wrote back that she agreed and informed the Senators that she had created a taskforce to implement the strategy.

In addition to asking an agency to take a specific policy action, Members of Congress can also assist you in getting information or clarity from a department or agency that can help your program be more effective. For example, your work might be supported through a Medicaid waiver (a process of granting programmatic funding or changes to your state Medicaid program by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)) that is being renewed and you are having trouble getting updates from CMS. Your Member of Congress could assist by requesting information and updates for you.

#### *Oversight*

Congress also has oversight functions and Committees regularly hold hearings in which individuals, referred to as witnesses, from Federal agencies and elsewhere provide testimony (typically a written statement they read aloud that becomes part of the public record) and also answer questions. These hearings provide a platform to talk about issues of importance to the Member of Congress and offer opportunities to ask agencies why they are taking certain actions. Hearings can also be about a specific topic that Congress wants to explore. For example, the Energy and Commerce Committee might hold a hearing examining how Medicaid can be used to pay for preventive services. These types of “fact-finding” hearings offer opportunities for you to submit written or oral testimony, and to help influence what witnesses are called and what questions the elected officials ask of witnesses. Members of Congress can also request other entities to examine a particular issue.

One example is the Government Accountability Office (GAO), which is a non-partisan office that provides fact-based analysis to Congress. Often, Members will request that GAO look at a particular issue. For example, Senator Durbin recently requested that GAO examine whether braiding and blending (when an entity can mix different funding streams for a program and/or certain requirements might be waived to make the funds more flexible) of federal funds at the local level, which would allow entities to use various funding streams to pursue their work, could impact childhood trauma. GAO's report could serve as a basis for future legislating.

Effective advocacy requires learning how and when to use various mechanisms and, just as importantly, when not to. For example, sometimes it is strategic to advocate for a bill that you know has no chance of passage because it provides an opportunity to educate members of Congress about an issue, laying the foundation for future efforts. In other circumstances, focusing on more nuanced or narrow asks and actions might fit better with your strategy.

**Trauma-Informed Legislation - Sens. Durbin-Heitkamp/Rep. Davis**

The Heitkamp-Durbin bill is an example of authorizing legislation. It authorizes new trauma-informed programs and authorizes funding for them. For example, since the Heitkamp-Durbin bill likely will not be acted on by the authorizing committee, one possible strategy is to identify those provisions that could generate Republican support and seek to have them added to the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill when it is before the appropriations subcommittee.

## VII. Developing & Delivering Your Message, Pitch & Ask

After you have a policy strategy and have thought through who can help achieve your desired outcomes, you need to develop and hone your message, pitch, and ask, and prepare to deliver it to your policy audience. The guidelines in this chapter and the below Message Box will help you develop a message and pitch that are concise, engaging, relevant, and include a clear request or “ask.”

### Context Matters

As you develop your message, pitch, and ask, remember that context is crucial. You should understand the current political climate, the values and areas of focus of your policy audience, what your audience can reasonably be expected to do, and who else will support your audience in taking action.

**Answer the question: Why does my audience care about this and how does it align with their values?** For example, making an equity argument to a conservative lawmaker may fall flat. However, framing your pitch in terms of increasing efficiency or better aligning systems to produce better outcomes (better bang for the buck) might resonate. In a time of tight budgets, asking a state legislator for a new source of funding is unlikely to be successful, but asking for increased flexibility in how existing funds are used might be better received.

### A pitch to a policy audience involves six primary pieces:

- 1) **Who You Are** - A concise description of the work you do
- 2) **Issue Statement** - An explanation of the Pair of ACEs and trauma, why they matter to your policy audience and what can be done to address the issue
- 3) **Hook** - An attention grabber that combines data and stories – ideally from individuals within the policymaker’s jurisdiction – to convey and personalize the issue
- 4) **Solution** - A description of what’s working in the community and what can be done to sustain it
- 5) **Ask** - A specific and actionable request that your policy audience can follow up on and which you can use as a basis for future contact with the office.

**The Message Box** below can help you put together your message, pitch and ask. You can find a more robust [SMART Chart and Message Box](#) from BCR partner Spitfire Communications in the [BCR Coalition Building and Communications Guide](#). Here’s an example of how to use the Message Box it when preparing to meet with a policy audience:

**Who You Are:** This should be a concise description of your organization, the work you do, and the scope of your impact. This is an important opportunity to talk about your connections in community as well as your links to other sectors. For BCR collaborators, this is also an opportunity to explain that you are part of a national effort.



### PRO TIP

Remember that elected officials love hearing about good work taking place in their district, so don't be shy about playing to that strength.

**Example:** “I’m Rafael, a pediatrician at Children’s Hospital. I help to lead an initiative called Partners for Children, which involves Children’s, the health department, the child welfare agency and a number of community non-profit organizations. Our goal is to improve health outcomes for children whose families have been impacted by substance abuse. We do this by working to address the health issues that often result from the adversity the child has been exposed to, but also by partnering with other organizations to address issues in the child’s home that are causing instability, such as sub-standard housing or parental substance abuse. We are also part of a national collaborative called Building Community Resilience, which is working in different cities to align various sectors to address adverse childhood experiences – or ACEs. We are seeing that this work can enable children, families, individuals, and whole communities to bounce back and thrive, even in the face of these very difficult challenges.”

**Issue Statement:** This is an opportunity to explain the Pair of ACEs and why they matter. It’s important to frame the issue in terms of solvable problems. Although exposure to ACEs can have negative lifelong impacts, children can be buffered against their effects and communities can become resilient – preventing and mitigating the impact of the Pair of ACEs. Many policymakers will not be familiar with ACEs or trauma, so make sure your explanation is tailored and responsive to their level of knowledge. Avoid using jargon that you might use with peers and enliven your description with stories of real people.

- **Show the Pair of ACEs tree** ([go.gwu.edu/bcrpairofcestree](http://go.gwu.edu/bcrpairofcestree)) to help illustrate how one’s community impacts the adversity a child, individual or family is exposed to – and opportunities to build resilience that improve outcomes.
- **Review and use** the high-level [BCR Talking Points](#) and **Communication Guidelines for the Pair of ACEs** (pg. 12 – 14 of the [BCR Communications Guide](#)—download at [go.gwu.edu/BCR](http://go.gwu.edu/BCR)) to help you describe the Pair of ACEs in a simple, concise and relatable way. Importantly, these talking points frame the challenges presented by the Pair of ACEs as an opportunity that can be addressed with existing resources and systems already in place. This particular point – that you are asking for alignment, not a brand-new program or system – is often highly appealing to policymakers.

**Example:** “Are you familiar with ACEs? ACEs stands for adverse childhood experiences, which are traumatic or stressful events, including abuse, neglect, exposure to violence and family dysfunction that can negatively impact a range of lifelong outcomes. Children exposed to ACEs have significantly higher rates of chronic disease later in life, lower educational attainment, and higher rates of substance abuse. For instance, research has found that a child exposed to 4 or more ACEs is 7 times more likely to abuse alcohol and 120 times more likely to commit suicide



than someone with no exposure to ACEs. We also know that ACEs don't occur in a vacuum, but exist in the context of community. Stable and safe communities can offer buffers and supports to children, whereas communities with concentrated poverty, high levels of violence, or lack of economic opportunity create Adverse Community Environments that make it less likely that children will have the supports they need to grow up healthy. We call this dynamic, the Pair of ACEs and our work seeks to prevent ACEs and buffer against their impacts by creating more resilient communities and getting supports to children and families."

**Hook:** This part of your pitch should grab the attention of your audience and give them something to remember. Your hook should combine both data and stories. Most elected officials will gravitate toward a personal narrative, but their staffs (the ones who ultimately will be writing legislation) covet the data. Use the rule of no stories without data and no data without stories. One way to create a strong hook is to combine overall data about the children you serve with a story about a particular child. Focus on ways that the story reinforces what the data are telling you and vice versa.

- **For story ideas**, refer to the BCR Example Stories and Scenarios on pg. 10 – 11 of the BCR Communications Guide.
- **Data relevant to your pitch** can be found from many sources. A few key sources include:
  - 1) *The Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health's* interactive data query: <http://childhealthdata.org/browse/survey>
    - Provides state-level data from the 2016 National Survey of Children's Health, which includes data on the health and wellbeing of children and families.
    - Relevant data includes ACEs, resilience, social determinants of health, physical, emotional, and mental health, healthcare access, insurance, community and school activities, family activities, neighborhood support, and demographic data.
    - Most data can be subcategorized by a variety of demographic indicators, such as race/ethnicity, income level, household structure, etc.
  - 2) *The Annie E. Casey Kids Count Data Center*: <http://datacenter.kidscount.org>
    - Provides state (and select county and city-level data) from multiple data sources on the health and wellbeing of children and families.
    - Relevant data includes economic wellbeing data, education data, family and community data, health data, safety and risky behaviors data, and demographic data.
  - 3) *Child Trends Data Bank*: <https://www.childtrends.org/databank-indicators/databank-by-topics/>
    - Provides state-level data from a variety of data sources on the health and wellbeing of children and families
    - Relevant data includes a range of poverty, education, child welfare, and health condition indicators.
  - 4) *County Health Rankings*: <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>
    - Provides county and community-level data from mostly Vital Statistics and Census data.

- Relevant data includes quality of life data, health behaviors data, clinical care data, social and economic factors data, physical environment data, and more.
- **Consider these tips when weaving data into your hook:**
  - When communicating the scope of the issue, consider selecting a reference point which is commonly known within your community. Examples include the distances between common sites, sizes of local stadiums, or how many children would fill up school buses. For example, “the number of children in our city who have experienced two or more traumatic experiences would fill up our XYZ stadium three times”.
  - When communicating the impact of the issue, consider highlighting the *inequity* of its impact: several of the data sources above allow users to subgroup data by race/ethnicity, income, special healthcare needs status, etc. For example, you may want to highlight the % of children of color in your state impacted by ACEs, as compared to the % of white children in your state impacted by ACEs.
  - Think about what topics would persuade your audience, and explore which kinds of data exist on these topics. For example, if your audience is an education champion, consider exploring the education indicators that exist. On the Data Resource Center, you’ll find an indicator regarding missed school days; you may want to highlight the % of children with ACEs who miss 10+ days of school a year, as compared to the % of children without ACEs who miss 10+ school days.
  - Find a way to discuss your data concisely and simply – it will speak volumes to your community’s needs. If it’s not distracting, consider using a graphic to illustrate your point.
  - If you have a skeptical audience, cite your credible sources. However, keep in mind that decisions are usually made on an emotional level, and data are then used to rationalize these decisions. Therefore...
  - ***...data should always be tied to personal stories and stories always grounded in data.***
- **News stories** are also an important place to watch for data trends and often include stories about local people that represent those trends. Policymakers are often very attuned to what’s covered by the media, so keep an eye out and fold these data and stories into your pitch.

**Example:** “One out of two children in our community has been exposed to one or more ACEs. That’s enough children to fill the downtown stadium five times over. A child exposed to ACEs is less likely to graduate from high school and more likely to have substance misuse disorder. Our schools are seeing these ACEs play out in the classroom, which can prevent learning and ultimately threaten academic achievement and graduation rates. To help students deal with the adversities they experience at home and to support their success in and outside the classroom, we have been placing – or co-locating – mental health professionals in schools and making sure all teachers and staff are trained in what’s called “trauma-informed approaches.” In the schools we work in, absenteeism has been reduced by 15% and reading and math scores have improved 10%. We had one student, who I’ll call John, whose grades started falling. He would rarely make it through a school day without getting into an argument with a teacher after his mother was incarcerated and he moved in with his grandparents. We were able to connect John with mental health services in school and our social worker connected his grandparents

with a local organization that supports this type of “kinship care,” since the opioid crisis is landing a lot of grandchildren with their grandparents and older family members. Last semester John made the honor roll for the first time and made the basketball team.”

**Solution:** Think about this step as a ramp that is leading to your ask. Building on the description you used in your Hook, the Solution should explain what’s working to build resilience and what more is needed to broaden the reach and impact.

**Example:** “The data we’ve collected shows that having pediatric practices screen for childhood adversity such as abuse, neglect, homelessness, or food insecurity, embedding community health workers into pediatric practices, and connecting families with community resources to address underlying causes that may be impacting a child’s health, is making our patients healthier and less likely to visit the emergency room. We’ve been able to pay for this work – and show the effectiveness of this model – by using philanthropic support. But a more sustainable source of funding is needed to make sure that this work can continue and expand to more parts of your district. We are aware of some states that have successfully used Medicaid to help reimburse for this type of work and we think that’s an option worth exploring in our state.”

- **Leave your data behind** – The numbers that describe the issue within the policymaker’s jurisdiction are a critical part of the story – and your pitch. Printing and leaving behind a simple chart, such as the BCR snapshot (download at: [go.gwu.edu/BCR](http://go.gwu.edu/BCR)), with a brief explanation of the data, will be valuable to the policy staff and elected official in describing the concern to other policymakers and stakeholders, and ultimately following up on your ask.

**Ask:** This is the heart of your policy pitch and the reason you are engaging on the issue – to get results. There are some simple guidelines to follow as you develop your ask:

- **Be Specific and Actionable** — use words like cosponsor, vote, meet, support, write, join, visit, tour.
- **Be Reasonable** — ask for something that might fit into your audience’s broader agenda. If you ask for something that is clearly outside of their comfort zone or in conflict with their values, you’ll be told no and lose credibility.
- **Make your ask “furthering”** — you are building a relationship with this policymaker or staff person and your initial ask could simply be something to keep the conversation going.
- **Localize it** — clearly state why it matters to their community and constituents.
- **It can be simple** — especially if this is your initial meeting, viewing your ask as a first step is a good idea.

**Examples:**

- 1) As you’ve heard, our community is benefiting from expanding mental health supports in school, and students who have access to these supports are doing better in school. More

schools in our state could offer these supports if our Medicaid program covered some of the costs. Senator Smith has introduced the Mental Health in Schools Act (Bill 1445) that amend the state’s Medicaid program to cover in-school mental health supports. As a member of the Health Committee you could help to advance this legislation by becoming a cosponsor.

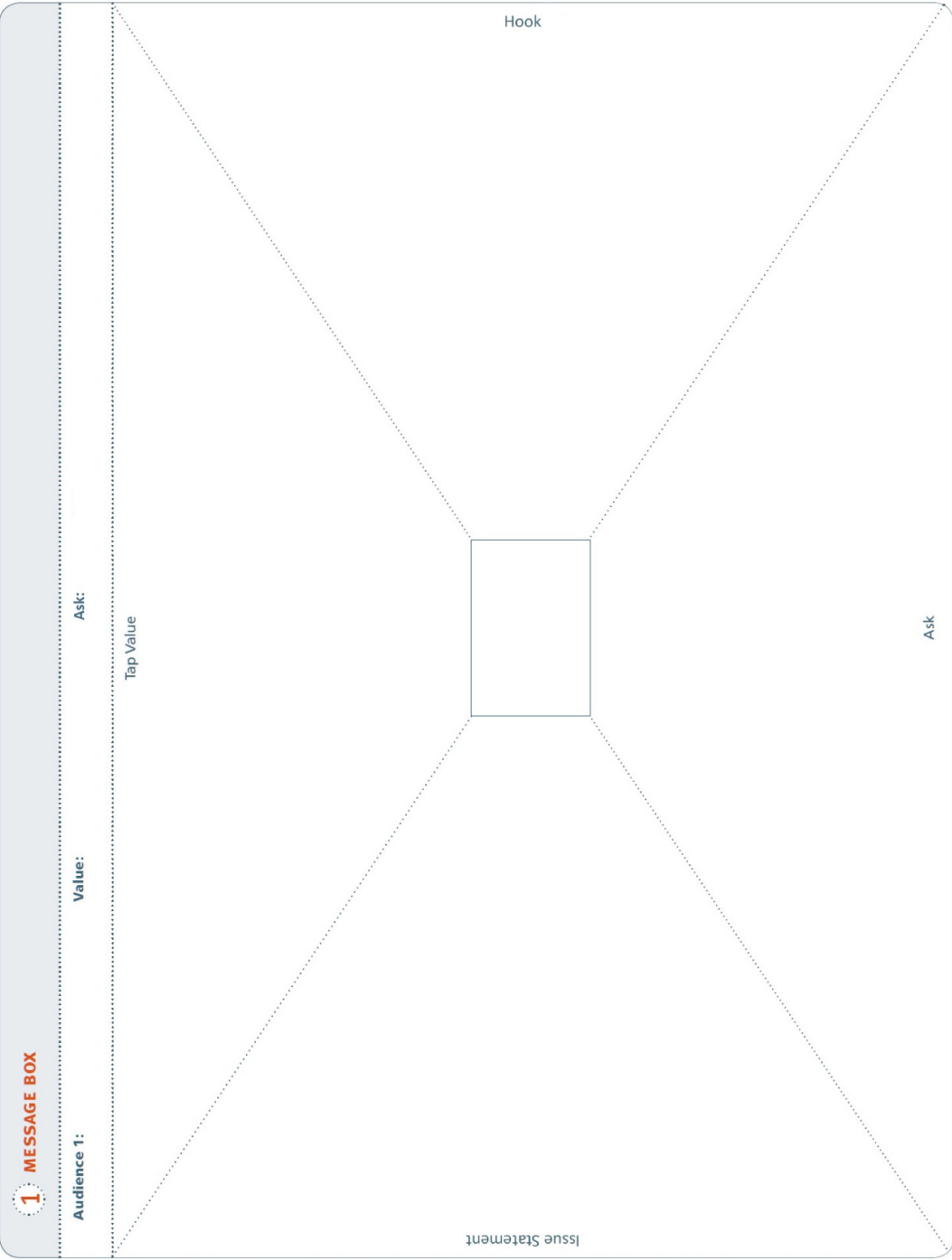
- 2) Our “Parent University” program is serving 200 families in our community by giving first-time parents the tools to raise healthy children. We’d like to invite you or your staff to visit the program in person and meet some of our families.

**Wrapping Up:** Before ending your meeting, thank your policy audience for their time and also ask about potential next steps or specific points of follow-up on to keep the conversation going after you leave. Find out if there is additional information they would find useful – how can you make it easy for them to engage? Also, point out that you have materials to leave behind – such as the data you described, your BCR site snapshot, or other program overview information – that include a description of your partnerships and local work and the BCR national collaborative, as well as the Pair of ACEs tree.

**Example:** “We appreciate you being so generous with your time today. We’ll send along more specific background information about the community health worker program to help your staff prepare for the upcoming Health Committee hearing. We can also connect your office with several members of the community we are partnered with, who can describe the depth of the issue and how our collaborative work is helping improve health outcomes.

## Tool #3: Message Box

Use the below message box (adapted from Spitfire Strategies [smartchart.org](http://smartchart.org)) to help pull together your pitch.



## Meeting with Legislators: Dos and Don'ts

### DO

*Make an Appointment* - This should go without saying, but showing up without an appointment and having a meaningful conversation is not realistic. Many offices have a scheduler or staff assistant. Call and set up an appointment. It's always good practice to confirm your appointment a few days ahead of time.

*Have a plan and an agenda* - Understand your goals and have clearly defined roles for each person in your group. Create an agenda that allows you to cover the points you want to make in the time you have.

*Listen* - Visits provide opportunities to gather information and learn about the priorities of the office. While it's important to convey your message, listening and learning about how a legislator sees an issue is very valuable and can inform your advocacy work going forward – particularly as you work to build an ongoing relationship.

*Offer Solutions* - Legislators hear about problems all the time. It's fine to identify a problem, but always have a solution and offer it. Keep your conversation positive and forward looking. After all, this work is about building resilience, which is inherently a positive approach to some of our thorniest challenges.

*Localize It* - You are in the community doing great work. Be sure you highlight your local ties and frame your solution(s) in terms of how it will impact the community that the policymaker represents. Include a community voice to the extent possible, such as describing feedback you've received from families involved in the work or your program.

*Bring Materials* - Leave behind materials with information about your work – as well as utilize reference materials during your meeting – that help to illustrate the issues you're discussing.

*Be Flexible* - Your meeting time might change or be interrupted. You have planned to meet with the legislator themselves, but now you are meeting with staff. Having a flexible attitude and a well-prepared message will allow you to adapt to the flow of the meeting, while still getting your points across.

*Be Relevant* - Understand how your ask is connected to the legislator's priorities and how it fits into the current political environment. Make it easy for them to say yes.

*Use Data and Stories* – Elected officials love stories and their staff love data. You should use both. Remember: no data without stories and no stories without data.

*Follow Up* - Send a thank you note, respond to unanswered questions, send materials electronically and look for opportunities for continued engagement.

## DON'T

*Mislead or Oversell* - Establishing your credibility is key. Speak to what you know, it's okay to say, "I'll need to get back to you with the answer." Likewise, don't inflate successes or promise things you cannot deliver.

*Bring Too Many People* - Be strategic about who is at the meeting and what their role is. Unless you are just there for a photo-op, a meeting with more than 4 attendees is not likely to be as productive as with a smaller group.

*Forget About Staff* - Meetings with staff are often the most substantive and, as your relationship develops with the office, it's the staff who you will engage with most frequently. Treating all the staff you encounter with courtesy and respect, regardless of their seniority, will also help your cause.

*Waste Time* - Be concise during your meetings and allow the legislator and their staff to ask questions. It's rare to have more than 30 minutes, so make your time count.

*Forget Your "Ask"* - Remember the reason you are there is to help move an agenda. The rest of the meeting should be in service to that goal. Elected officials and their staff appreciate you being open and direct about your motives and what you want. If you are not, you may lose the opportunity for future engagement.

*Forget About the Opposition* - Be aware of opposition to your ideas and be prepared to address concerns. If new concerns are raised that you are not prepared to respond to, it's okay – even wise – to follow up later rather than risk being misleading.

## VIII. Additional Resources

- 1) **The Building Community Resilience Site Snapshots** provide more information about each of the BCR communities. Download them at [go.gwu.edu/BCR](http://go.gwu.edu/BCR)
- 2) **Building Community Resilience's Policy Recommendations to States** (2017): <http://go.gwu.edu/bcrpolicyrecstates>
- 3) **The Center for Health and Health Care in Schools** (<http://healthinschools.org>) has additional tools and tips for improving the sustainability of school-connected approaches that promote students' cognitive, social, and emotional health and educational success. Visit their Partner Build Grow Action Guide for practical tools, including guidance on Connecting to the Policy Environment and Mapping Assets, at <http://actionguide.healthinschools.org>.
- 4) **The Alliance for Strong Families and Communities** has additional tools and tips to help you build your advocacy work.
  - Policy, Advocacy, and Communications Toolkit: <http://go.gwu.edu/bcralliancetoolkit>
  - Other resources: <http://www.alliance1.org/>
- 5) **The Campaign for Trauma Informed Policy and Practice (CTIPP)** is a good source for advocacy tips and information on current policy debates. Visit their Resources Page: <http://ctipp.org/News-And-Resources>
- 6) **ACES Connection** is a social network featuring news, tools, and updates about ACEs-related work around the nation: <http://www.acesconnection.com/>



## Building Community Resilience

Sumner M. Redstone Global Center for Prevention and Wellness

Milken Institute School of Public Health

The George Washington University

[go.gwu.edu/BCR](http://go.gwu.edu/BCR)



@ResilNation



Search for “Pair of ACEs”

Supported by:

