

# Raising Public Awareness



Sometimes your advocacy efforts are focused just on educating your community about an issue. Other times you may need to include an educational component to your advocacy goals because, while you have a specific policy change you want, it is on a topic most people are unaware of (e.g., issues facing students with disabilities are often unknown beyond those who have a disabled person in their family). In either instance, your advocacy campaign needs to raise awareness in your community about an issue.

Raising public awareness requires a concentrated effort to get your information out in your community in as many different ways as possible. Forming coalitions with other organizations that agree with your PTA on the issue can help as well. Here are some ways your PTA can raise public awareness:

- Host a public forum on the issue with local experts, business leaders, local politicians, parents, and students to discuss the issue.
- If your school district has a committee focused on the issue, ask that the PTA have a seat on the committee to represent the voice of families in the district. Note that this applies to all committees that either make decisions or make recommendations to decision makers (e.g., city council committees or boards).
- Use the public comment period of school board meetings to bring awareness to the issue. Be aware that many school boards limit public comments to two or three minutes, so you may need to spread your information out through several public commenters.
- Provide educational materials as part of voter information. Remember that PTA cannot endorse candidates for any office, but can do non-partisan events like hosting candidate forums, providing voter information on how all the candidates stand on issues, and providing voter scorecards on how incumbents have voted on issues.
- Use public media to build awareness of an issue, including letters to the editor, op-ed pieces, public service announcements (PSAs), local radio call-in shows, TV news public interest pieces, and local community access channels. See *Using the Media* and *How to Write a Press Release* for more information.
- Use social media. Have a memorable hashtag. Develop a selfie-focused campaign with people sharing why they care about the issue (and have them tag their friends).