

HOW TO CREATE LEAFLETS, FLYERS, BROCHURES and NEWSLETTERS

Getting people interested in legislative issues, and politics in general, can be a challenge. Often, union members don't see the connection between legislation, politics and the disability community, so it may take some creativity to get their attention. Some people aren't aware of what's happening in the State Legislature or how it may affect them and their families. There are many ways to begin the education process. One useful technique is to convey the disability community's concern about an issue or campaign in writing. You can:

- Create a short leaflet, flyer, bulletin or brochure.
- Put an article in the local union's newspaper or newsletter .
- Send a letter from a local agency/provider to its members.

A written format is one way to provide people with the facts in black and white (and even color!) and can become a building block to stimulate their future participation.

How do you decide which written format to use?

Leaflets, flyers and brochures:

- Are a way to quickly get information to members.
- Can be designed to grab people's attention with a cartoon, graphic or provocative header .
- Can provide people with enough basic information to encourage them to ask for more.
- Can become a catalyst for discussion when they are handed out personally.
- Can encourage people to jump on board.

A leaflet or a flyer (handbill) is usually a short, often urgent, written message printed on just one side of a standard weight paper if it is to be handed out or on poster board or cover stock if it is to be posted on a bulletin board. Use an attention-getting graphic or a short, snappy headline in large type at the top so that people who will glance it from 20 feet away will want to stop and read it.

A brochure is a glorified leaflet. It, generally, still is a single sheet of paper but it's longer, folded up and printed on both sides. It can explain things in more detail. It is useful for mailings and long-term use and is less likely to be thrown away. You can fit more material into a brochure.

In either a leaflet or brochure, you want to focus on just one basic idea or theme.

An article in a local agency's newsletter

- Can be extremely useful in providing members with in-depth information.
- Can educate and interest other family members if it is received at home.

A letter or special mailing from the local leadership:

- Can personalize the need for membership education and involvement about an issue.
- Can accompany the leaflet, flyer, bulletin or brochure, or it can be a follow-up request for action.

Whichever format you select, timeliness and cost may become key considerations. Does the local agency have a regular newspaper or newsletter? How urgent is the issue and how does this match up with the publication date? Who is going to design the leaflet, flyer, or brochure? How many are needed? What about printing/reproduction costs? How will they be distributed? Is there time to get a letter mailed out? Are postage costs a factor? These are just a few questions to consider before making your choice.

Basic Preparation Questions

No matter which format you choose to communicate the issue, there are a few basic questions to keep in mind when putting your written piece together:

- Why are you writing the article, leaflet, flyer, brochure, article or letter?

Decide what action or attitude you hope to influence.

- What do you want to communicate to the reader?

Clearly define your objective in your own mind.

- Who are you trying to reach with this message?

Your audience will determine: 1) the tone of your article, etc.; 2) kinds of arguments used; and 3) action requested.

- What are your most persuasive arguments?

Identify the main reasons why it is to the reader's interest to act in the manner you suggest.

AFTER THINKING ABOUT THE ISSUE, YOU'RE READY TO WRITE

1. Get attention through a headline. Here are some examples:

“Warning: The New Legislature could be Hazardous to Your Community Living”

“Are you outraged about your State Representative’s choice of institutions over community services?”

A good headline should give people reason to read on. It also helps if you try to see things from the audience's position. What is likely to make them stop and think?

2. Use a cartoon, picture or graphic, if possible.

A cartoon can add interest and sometimes humor.

The right picture or graphic can illustrate key points.

Leave plenty of space around the headline, the cartoon or the picture. Most people don't want to read a long, rambling sheet of information. There are many cartoonists whose work can be incorporated into your leaflet, etc. or sometimes there are talented people in the disability community who can contribute ideas.

3. Outline your major points and use them as subheadings. Subheadings allow people to get the overall picture of the issue. For example:

- Fewer benefits for direct-service workers.
- Thousands on waiting lists
- Fewer mental health services
- More empty nursing home beds.

Subheadings also help to make the leaflet, etc. easier to read and reflect that it is organized.

4. Explain each subheading and decide how much detail you will use.

A one-page flyer or leaflet will probably just include highlights of information.

A longer newspaper/newsletter article or brochure, will likely contain more specific details.

5. End by re-emphasizing your main idea (what you want people to remember). The ending may also include an appeal for action:

"Call your Representative and Senators"

"Write a letter to the Governor"

"Attend the meeting with our Representative"

6. Consider using a regular layout or style for your leaflet, etc.

Members will begin to recognize your work and become familiar with its purpose. This will add a degree of comfort and confidence to their understanding the issues.

As you write, consider the following guidelines to help you get your message across more effectively.

How to Create Leaflets, Newsletter, and Flyers sources:
American Labor, "Leaflets that Work", American Labor Education Center.
"How to Do Leaflets, Newsletters and Newspapers," Nancy Brigham