

**Building Coalitions – A Recipe for Success**  
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*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”*

*Margaret Mead*

You have undoubtedly heard the expression, two (or more) heads are better than one. This rule applies to advocacy work as well. The more motivated individuals you have working together, the more influence you are bound to have on the legislative process. Whether that group is defined as a coalition, alliance or network really makes no difference, the important thing is that the group is committed to working together to achieve common goals and objectives.

When working on a particular issue, it is a good idea to muster the grassroots support of others who share your concerns and are interested in your effort. This ensures that the decision makers realize that the issue is important to many people. Legislators particularly appreciate when groups with common interests work together to reach consensus prior to approaching lawmakers.

Over the years, OAFP has actively sought out people with whom we can partner on issues of common interest. Examples of our successful participation in coalitions are numerous and include, naming a few:

- Ohio Health Advocacy Network
- Ohio Partners for Cancer Control
- Ohio Advocates for Health Care Access
- Primary Providers Vision Screening Coalition
- Save Our Sight Coalition
- Ohio Hepatitis C Coalition
- Ohio Coalition for a Healthier Ohio
- Ohio Child Health Coalition
- Midwest Stroke Prevention Coalition
- State Planning for Health Education Coalition

The Academy’s leadership within the Ohio Coalition of Primary Care Physicians is without question our most noteworthy success in coalition building. OAFP hosts and staffs coalition meetings which are made up of leaders of the following organizations:

- Ohio Osteopathic Association
- Ohio Chapter of the American College of Physicians/American Society of Internal Medicine

- Ohio Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
- Ohio State Society of the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians
- American College of Obstetricians/Gynecologists, Ohio Section
- Ohio Academy of Family Physicians

These organizations have shared and strategized on issues of agreement, we seek understanding on areas of disagreement and discover resources within our unique groups that serve to make us all stronger.

A wonderful example of collaboration among the member groups of the Ohio Coalition of Primary Care Physicians was the joint testimony before the Ohio Commission to Reform Medicaid on April 20, 2004. The Coalition decided at its January meeting that it would be more effective to present joint testimony rather than each of our individual organizations presenting separately. This decision was followed by a March 19, 2004 conference call to discuss what our consensus points would be. OAFP staff then developed the consensus points into a **one-pager summary**. OAFP Past President Brian Bachelder, M.D., testified presenting the consensus points along with the results of the 2002 Medicaid Reimbursement Survey (another successful Coalition project). Drs. Richard Tuck (Ohio Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics) and Martha Simpson (Ohio Osteopathic Association) attended and played a supportive role in addressing the commission's questions.

Commission members were impressed that these groups had worked together to reach consensus prior to appearing before the commission and appreciated that all six groups presented a single piece of oral testimony presenting a unified front as to what their concerns and positions were.

Groups in your community can easily build coalitions and enhance their clout and visibility. Here are some suggestions for organizing a coalition on issues of interest to you and your community:

- Carefully consider which groups should be invited to participate
- Brainstorm to determine which groups have the power to affect the issue – both positively and negatively. Knowing supporters and potential opponents helps when developing a strategy
- Once groups accept the invitation to participate, make sure everyone understands each group's purpose, where they stand on the issues and who they serve
- Determine the specific skills and talents of your coalition members

- Develop the mission statement of the coalition
- Assign a meeting facilitator who will take ownership of coordinating meeting details and develop the meeting agendas

Appoint work groups and make work group assignments and have those groups meet and work together between meetings of the full coalition.