

Imagine Different Coalition

RESTRICTIONS ON LOBBYING AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

The purpose of Imagine Different Coalition involvement in public policy is to share our knowledge and expertise with those involved in the public policy process and to do so in pursuit of the Coalition's Vision and Mission. Public policy is an important part of the Coalition's concern as it is viewed in the context of the Coalition's interest in improving services and the available opportunities to children with disabilities and their families.

The Coalition shares its public policy expertise through the preparation of position papers; efforts to stimulate mission-based thought and debate; establishing positions based on the results and findings of our work and the work of our members; distributing learning from our work as part of the public policy process, and by the distribution of information through the PADDC Policy Information Exchange process. It is our intention to be thoughtful, circumspect, balanced and respectful of all engaged in the public policy process, while being prepared to adopt strong, proactive and if necessary controversial positions when supported by our work and in keeping with our Mission and Vision.

Non-profit organizations and organizations receiving funding through federal grants have legal restrictions regarding participating in lobbying and political activities. The Imagine Different Coalition is supported by the PEAL Center, a non-profit organization using federal funds from the PA Developmental Disabilities Council.

Non-Profit organizations receiving federal funds may involve themselves in issues of public policy without the activity being considered as lobbying and without jeopardizing their tax-exempt status. For example, organizations may conduct educational meetings, prepare and distribute educational materials, or otherwise consider public policy issues in an educational manner..

Members of the Coalition must act in accordance with restrictions on lobbying and partisan political activities when representing the Coalition. The Coalition and its members may educate, advise, or inform policy-makers, however, the Coalition, and its members acting on behalf of the Coalition, may not engage in lobbying or partisan political activities. Lobbying activities include:

- Attempting to or making a plan to influence the outcome of an election of any candidate or group of candidates
- Advocating for the adoption or rejection of pending legislation except when requested or invited by a member of a legislature through proper official channels
- Attempting to or making a plan to influence the awarding of federal grants.

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- Contacting, urging the public to contact, or making a plan to contact, a legislator or legislative body to support, propose, or oppose legislation, except as described below
- Attempting to influence regulatory or administrative action, except as described below

The Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities within the US Department of Health and Human Services, which funds the DD Council, which in turn funds the Coalition, has described the balance between the DD Council's charge to educate policymakers and the anti-lobbying rules as follows:

ADD believes that grantees will be able to meet their responsibility to inform, educate or advise policymakers under the Act and avoid violating the applicable limitations on lobbying by emphasizing nonpartisan analysis, study and research.

Using a nonpartisan approach, grantees would be free to advocate a particular position or viewpoint so long as there is a sufficiently full and fair exposition of the pertinent facts to enable the policymaker to form an independent opinion or conclusion. In such an analysis, a grantee would refrain from presenting unsupported opinions, distorted facts, inflammatory and disparaging terms, or conclusions based more on strong emotional feelings than on objective factual conclusions.

Grantees advising legislators and others concerning adoption of legislation should approach the task in a balanced way, discussing the advantages and disadvantages of the legislation and comparing it with other proposals that may also be under consideration. A nonpartisan approach to informing legislators does not require that grantees be neutral about outcomes for individuals with developmental disabilities. Rather, grantees would have to demonstrate an unbiased attitude when considering alternatives for meeting the needs of such persons. Grantees should emphasize their role as a source of information and advice in helping legislators and other policymakers to identify and evaluate the available alternatives for meeting the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities.

Coalition members may engage in lobbying activities as individuals or as representatives of their organizations but may not engage in these activities in representation of the Imagine Different Coalition except as described above.

The Coalition's members are only authorized to represent the Coalition in activities related to public policy when their representation 1) is consistent with the Coalition's Vision and Mission, 2) does not include any prohibited activities, and 3) falls within parameters approved by the Coalition Steering Committee.

Adopted by the Imagine Different Coalition ____ (date).