

## Advocacy Pitches: A Primer

**Rationale:** This assignment provides you the opportunity to practice your oral advocacy skills by preparing a 5-minute pitch to a target audience of your choosing.

### Guidelines

- I. **Be professional; state your background and affiliation.** Elected officials and advocacy groups are inundated with information and requests. If you have the good fortune of meeting with an official/leader, or a representative from their staff, thank him/her first and foremost for taking the time to meet with you. Then, state your background (e.g., student, health care professional, etc.) and affiliation (e.g., school, organization, hospital, or perhaps just a concerned citizen). If you have expertise on an issue owing to your background education and/or work experience, make that explicitly clear. Your credibility is enhanced when you can lean on your knowledge to explain why the status quo is inadequate. Even if you are not an expert on the issue, your initiative and rationale for prioritizing the matter may inspire an official to take action. For example, many times health issues have become a priority only after concerned and informed citizens have taken the time and effort to advocate. More often than not, you will know as much, if not more, about a health issue as those to whom you are speaking.
  
- II. **Frame the public health issue to a specific course of action.** Specify why you are bringing the issue to their attention. Professor Bhattacharya shares this example: *While working for Congress, I recall an encounter with an individual representing an HIV/AIDS advocacy group. He presented a clear grasp of the issues affecting persons afflicted with HIV/AIDS in the nation, but after 30 minutes he had failed to articulate*

*what he wanted the Congressman to do. After he wrapped up his prepared remarks, my senior colleague politely responded, “Thank you very much for taking the time to meet with us on all of these issues, but I’m a little confused. What, exactly, do you want the Congressman to do for you?” After a moment’s pause, the individual replied that he simply wanted, on behalf of his organization, to keep the Congressman abreast of the issues afflicting his constituents and reiterate their support for his prior efforts in serving their community. This informative encounter was a valid reason for convening with us, but by failing to make the intent of the meeting clear from the outset, we never had a chance to follow up on any of the issues that he raised because he simply ran out of time. It’s imperative to make your intention clear from the outset so the official and his/her staff can help to further your specific needs. A confused or unmotivated official may not champion your cause, no matter how noble it may be.*

- III. **Articulate multidisciplinary points.** Plan each point before you deliver your pitch, breaking them down into bullet points, if possible. Be sure to cite scholarly resources and research to support your claims, and include information related to multiple disciplines.
- IV. **Include closing remarks.** Conclude your pitch by reiterating why you have brought this issue to their attention, as well as specific opportunities this person or group has to advance or address the public health issue.
- V. **Beat the clock.** You have 5 minutes, which translates into a few paragraphs of information.