

Student Advocacy Guide



FACULTY OF
Health Sciences

Developed by a team of medical students

Co-Authors:

Bhatt, Meha

Fernandes, Rosephine Del

Lee, Peter

Nensi, Jenna

Supervisors:

Dr. Eva Purkey &

Dr. Mala Joneja

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION 1: ADVOCACY TOOLKIT



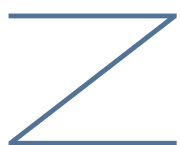
02.

Introduction



03-05.

Step 1: Choose an issue, and define its scope and context.



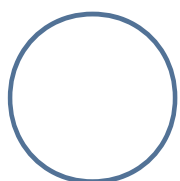
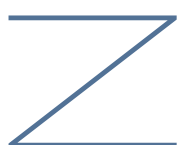
06.

Step 2: Gather more information and knowledge on the issue.



07-08.

Step 3: Formulate critical partnerships and find mentors.



09.

Step 4: Build achievable goals and objectives.

10-11.

Step 5: Make an action plan.

12-13.

Step 6: Take action!

14-15.

Step 7: Evaluate progress and gain new momentum.

SECTION 2: COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

16-19.

List of Kingston Community Advocacy Organizations and their contact information to get involved.

SECTION 3: STUDENT TESTIMONIALS

20-24.

Testimonials by students within Queen's Faculty of Health Sciences about their advocacy experiences and Pearls of Wisdom

INTRODUCTION

Health advocacy is a key competency for healthcare providers, whether at the individual, patient, community, or population level. Therefore, healthcare providers must develop a keen understanding of disease prevention, health promotion, social determinants of health and health disparities. Along with knowledge gain, it is essential for future healthcare providers to develop advocacy skills.

We have developed a Student Advocacy Toolkit that students can access virtually to build advocacy initiatives and connect with community advocacy organizations. The toolkit will consist of three components:

01 Steps to build an advocacy initiative

02 A list of Kingston community organizations conducting health advocacy work

03 Testimonials from student advocates and pearls of wisdom

STEP 1 - CHOOSE AN ISSUE, AND DEFINE ITS SCOPE AND CONTEXT

PERSONAL INTEREST

- **Choose a topic which motivates you** - Advocacy is fulfilling but can have significant roadblocks and progress may be slow at times. Therefore, it is crucial to choose a topic where you will have the internal motivation to keep going and power through setbacks. Passion is also contagious, seeing you passionate about your work will likely inspire others to support your cause.
- **Engage in self-reflection to identify interests** - Self-reflection is key to identify areas that interest you. It is important to characterize your values, morales, and past experiences to elicit an advocacy project you will be passionate about.
- **Find inspiration with other aspects of your life** - It may be helpful if your areas of interest are in line with other activities you are already engaged in due to work or studying. If there is synergy between as many of your activities as possible, you are more likely to have time to keep going.



CURRENCY

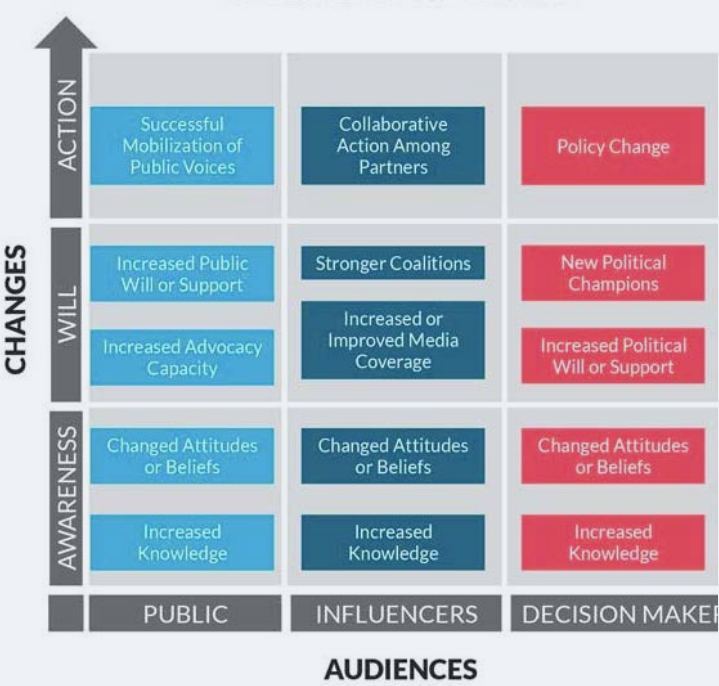
- **Consider topics with extensive media and political coverage**
These topics are often effective to consider as you may use their increased level of public awareness and discussion to bolster your initiatives.
- **Consider how social attention can lead to partnership possibilities** Areas that are currently gathering a lot of attention socially can help you identify appropriate mentors and partnerships, which will likely expedite the progress you make.



Source: <https://www.youthareawesome.com/advocacy-through-social-media/>

SCOPE

- **Identify the audience and target**
This may include politicians, policymakers, community members, institutional leadership, etc.
- **Clarify your project’s level of intervention**
Setting an appropriate level of change will allow you to form feasible goals. When considering this, you may think about your project's desired impact. Eg. Would you want to raise awareness, change attitudes, or initiate action? This effectively helps you determine the scope of your project.



Source:<https://www.ckx.org/fieldnotes-2/2018/4/26/ckx6-on-evaluating-advocacy>

FEASIBILITY

- **Ask yourself if your overall idea is achievable** - Do you think that your target audience can be influenced to initiate change? Do you think that with your own and your colleagues’ skillset, time and energy, and finances, you will be motivated to pull your project off? If the answer is yes, you are ready to finalize and start working on your initiative.



CHECKLIST:

- ☐ Does the topic align with my own interests, values, and experiences?
- ☐ Is the topic current and relevant to today’s society?
- ☐ Do I want to make an impact on a specific community, population, or government policy?
- ☐ What knowledge, skillset, and resources are needed to implement this project?
- ☐ Will I be able to balance this with my ongoing academic and personal responsibilities, and make a meaningful impact?

STEP 2 - GATHER MORE INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE ON THE ISSUE

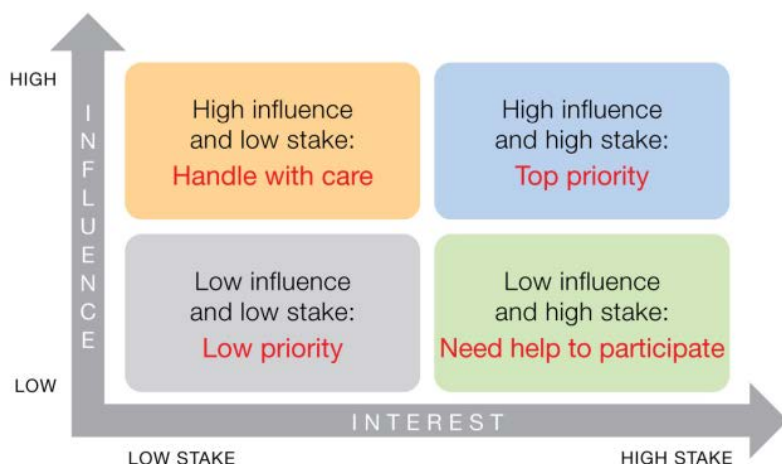
CONDUCT BACKGROUND RESEARCH

- **Perform preliminary research on the current state of your issue** - Depending on your background and your area of interest, this can be done by looking at published literature (i.e. environmental scan, scoping review), government websites, NGO and grassroots organization websites, and news reports among other avenues. Research need not be overly in depth, but should give you a good sense of the current state of your advocacy topic (eg. what action has been taken and is being taken to combat it). This will help you gauge the awareness of the issue among your target audience and the type of information to persuade them to prioritize this issue, while also identifying parties who can influence the target audience to initiate change.
- **Examine potential opposition to your efforts** - Sometimes there will be parties that are working for the opposite advocacy goal, so it is important to understand their activities to properly tailor and frame your own work.



Source: <https://azadnewsme.com/eas-programme-ota-hosts-3-day-partner-advocacy-conference/>; <https://northernstar.info/4302/opinion/youth-need-to-be-more-involved-in-political-advocacy/>; <https://nationalpost.com/news/advocacy-group-equal-voice-faces-fallout-after-firing-three-racialized-staffers>

CONSIDER SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY



Source: <https://www.iaea.org/resources/nuclear-communicators-toolbox/methods/planning/stakeholder-analysis/>

A **stakeholder analysis** can often help in identifying key stakeholders and affected parties

- **Keep in mind stakeholders and communities** - To prevent unnecessary harm to these parties, it is vital you ask their thoughts and opinions about your project. If your project is aimed at helping a specific community for example, you may want to prioritize their needs and align your goals. This will ensure everyone is on the same page, foster collaboration, and prevent you from misrepresenting that community.

UNDERSTAND RELATED POLICY AND WHAT YOU CAN DO TO INFLUENCE DECISIONS

- **Conduct research into related government and organization policies** - No matter what level of intervention your project is aimed at, this is always a good idea as it will better enable you to facilitate solutions for your topic and gather support for your ideas.
- **Engage with policy to ensure sustainability** - Sustainability is always something to keep in mind when developing your project, as change is more effective if it endures and keeps on improving as time progresses. Keeping up to date with policies and even playing a role in influencing them (eg. lobbying, letters, petitions, meetings with decision makers etc.) will allow your change to be more profound.



Sources: <https://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/advocates/events.shtml>; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_of_Commons_of_Canada

CHECKLIST:

- ☐ Did I perform a comprehensive search on my intended advocacy topic?
- ☐ Have I aligned my goals with that of community stakeholders potentially impacted by my advocacy initiative?
- ☐ What government and organizational policies are in place that are related to my topic of interest?

STEP 3 - FORMULATE CRITICAL PARTNERSHIPS AND FIND MENTORS

IDENTIFY KEY PARTNERS & RESOURCES

- **Partnership:** Collaborating with experienced advocates or leaders of community advocacy organizations can provide important local context prior to beginning your advocacy work. Connecting with key partners can also help spread your messages, understand community needs, consult resources that may otherwise be difficult to reach, and provide credibility to your advocacy initiative. When reaching out to partners, let them know what you can offer to the ongoing advocacy work and be open to learning from their experience and knowledge.
- Examples: Local community organizations, Community leaders/advocates/activists, Individuals with lived experience in your area of work.
- **Mentorship:** Along with forming partnerships, it may be helpful to connect with potential mentors to provide guidance and support as your advocacy initiative progresses. Conduct your research on their previous work and take this opportunity to pick their brain on their past experiences and knowledge. In your initial contact, provide information about your advocacy interests and previous experiences, and outline what you are requesting from them. An initial email may include requesting a meeting with a potential partner or mentor.
- Examples: Senior faculty members and staff at Queen's University; Students and mentors who have done similar advocacy work.



IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION

- Community activists and organization leaders have advocacy experience and skillsets that are valuable in planning your initiative, from messaging to action. Collaboration can involve creating an advocacy initiative from the ground or collaborating with a community organization on an existing advocacy initiative. If community organizations are already doing advocacy work on your topic, it is best to collaborate by contributing to this work and amplifying it rather than reinventing the wheel.
- Consult the list of local Kingston community advocacy organizations included in this guide to identify opportunities for collaboration.

DETERMINE WHO CAN AFFECT CHANGE AND COLLABORATE

- Different partnerships and mentors bring different perspectives, ideas and expectations to the table – finding a unifying goal can help to ensure your advocacy initiative is moving forward.
- Ensure that all partnerships and mentors are kept engaged and informed of the progress made throughout the project.



CHECKLIST:

- ☐ Who can help support and provide guidance?
- ☐ Are there community organizations who can provide opportunities for collaboration?
- ☐ Are my mentors and partnerships diverse in their skillset, perspectives, and experiences?

STEP 4

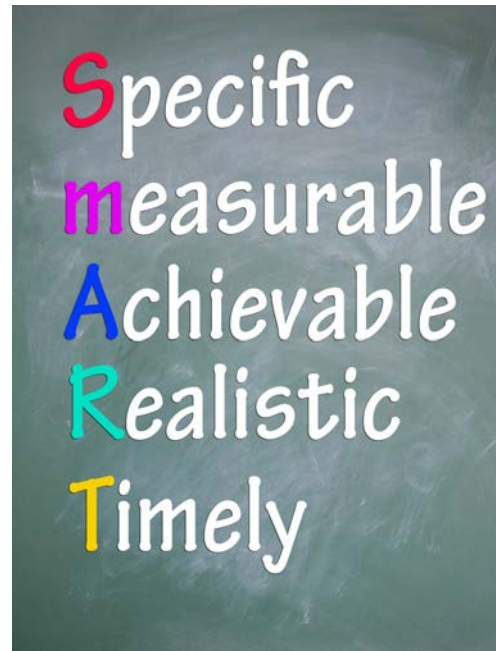
BUILD ACHIEVABLE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

SET GOALS

Set a long-term goal and short-term objectives for your work

When developing goals, consider the scope of action, relevant partnerships and needs of community stakeholders, key messaging and communication, and overall feasibility.

- **Long-term goal:** Define the ultimate goal that you want to achieve from your advocacy work on a particular issue.
- **Short-term objectives:** Define clear and specific “SMART” objectives that are intermediate and feasible steps towards the long-term goal. SMART objectives are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound. A single advocacy campaign may achieve a short-term objective, but may not be able to reach the long-term goal. Persistent long-term advocacy efforts may be required to reach the ultimate goal.



CHECKLIST:

- ☐ What are my long-term goals?
- ☐ What are my short-term objectives? Are these objectives specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound?

STEP 5 - MAKE AN ACTION PLAN

Develop an Agenda

Align the agenda with your short and long-term goals, your group member's timeframes, and the convenience of your target audience. Share the agenda with everyone to ensure they're on the same page.

Schedule a regular meeting time

Based on your agenda, regular meeting times will help all collaborators stay on track, be informed, and stay motivated to achieve the objectives. Meeting notes help to track recent updates and action items for the team.

Determine messaging

Determine key messaging with those impacted and other organizations. Use data to support your messaging. Consider your target audience when selecting a dissemination strategy and ensure that it is accessible. Strive to send a collective message to amplify those affected and make a meaningful impact.

Divide roles and responsibilities

Determine the stepwise tasks to achieve your goals. Find out what you will be responsible for. Learn the strengths and skillsets of your partners and divide tasks accordingly. Assign leaders to subsets of your project to encourage accountability. Think about any other supports that you wish to access for your advocacy initiative, such as interest groups at Queen's and your school student council.

Encourage communication between partners

Foster a supportive team environment conducive to asking questions and responding to help. Platforms such as SLACK or social media groups can be used for ongoing communication between members.

Be accountable and acknowledge the effort of others

Celebrate the small steps to success. Acknowledge and credit group members for their motivation and effort.

Plan your materials

Think about what items, venues, computer accounts are necessary for your advocacy initiative and how you can gain access to these resources.

SAMPLE MEETING NOTES

[illegible]

CHECKLIST:

- What is my timeframe and that of my group members? When is best to meet and how often should we meet?
- Who is my target audience and what is their understanding of my issue? How will I disseminate effective messaging with this target audience?
- Are the messaging platforms and planned actions accessible for the involved parties and accessibility needs met?
- What are my and my partners' strengths and skillsets? Who would like to take a lead on which tasks? What platform should we communicate our progress?
- What supplies, resources, or funding will I need, and how will I gain access to these?

STEP 6 - TAKE ACTION!

Identify relevant actions for advocacy and determine whether a single or combination of these is required to enact your initiative

EXAMPLES OF ADVOCACY ACTIONS



Opinion pieces or editorials, open letters, and blogs (i.e. Toronto Star, Healthy Debate, CMAJ Blogs)

Publish an opinion piece, letter to the editor, or open letter to educate the community about your topic, raise awareness and publicize the issue, gain the attention of decision-makers, and ultimately initiate change. Targeted open letters may also collect signatures from allies who support the cause and include demands for action from leadership such as politicians or policymakers.

Example: [Medical students join urgent calls for paid sick leave](#)



Social media blitzes or campaigns:

Social media advocacy may be individual or collective, and goals may be to educate, raise awareness, and stimulate discussion. Collective action can be effective in gaining the attention of the target audience. Publicizing the issue on social media may also increase the reach of the advocacy and persuade decision-makers to initiate change.

Example: [Health Students Fight Back Social Media Blitz](#)



Direct action (i.e. rally or demonstration):

Direct action aims to draw attention to an issue, often highlighting the urgency of an issue that requires change. This type of action garners media attention which can be effective at raising awareness. Due to the many considerations (legal, accessibility etc.) required when organizing such direct action, it is typically helpful to work with experienced organizers.

Example: [Health workers rally at Queen's Park to demand province make changes to pandemic response](#)

EXAMPLES OF ADVOCACY ACTIONS



Lobbying institutions and politicians:

As future health professionals, healthcare students are trusted members of the community. This position and knowledge can be used to organize meetings with politicians to present the issue, highlight critical evidence, and discuss solutions. Healthcare students have organized national, provincial, and local days of action to engage in collective lobbying of politicians on particular issues.

Example: [Municipal Day of Action on Housing and Homelessness](#)



Online or paper petitions (i.e. Change.org):

Petitions can highlight the importance of an issue to the public and urge decision-makers to initiate change. This action may be combined with continued advocacy to affect change.

Example: [Let Physicians Work, Remove MCCQEII Obstacle](#)



Research and education:

Highlighting gaps in healthcare research and education is an important step in closing the gaps. Identifying solutions and calling for change from institutional leadership can advance training for future healthcare students.

Examples: [Improving racial representation in medical learning materials \(Queen's Students and VisualDx\)](#) and [Queen's Medicine Report and Demands to the School of Medicine Admissions Committee](#)

CHECKLIST:



What are the relevant advocacy actions to reach my short and long-term goals?



Should these actions be conducted alone or in combination with other actions?

STEP 7

EVALUATE PROGRESS AND GAIN NEW MOMENTUM

EVALUATE PROGRESS

Determine the best ways to measure success

- **Define what success means to you**

Refer to your previously outlined short-term and long-term goals. Sometimes success does not mean policy change, which may not be feasible in a short period of time, but rather increased public awareness or increased partnership building.

- **Create a tool that is feasible**

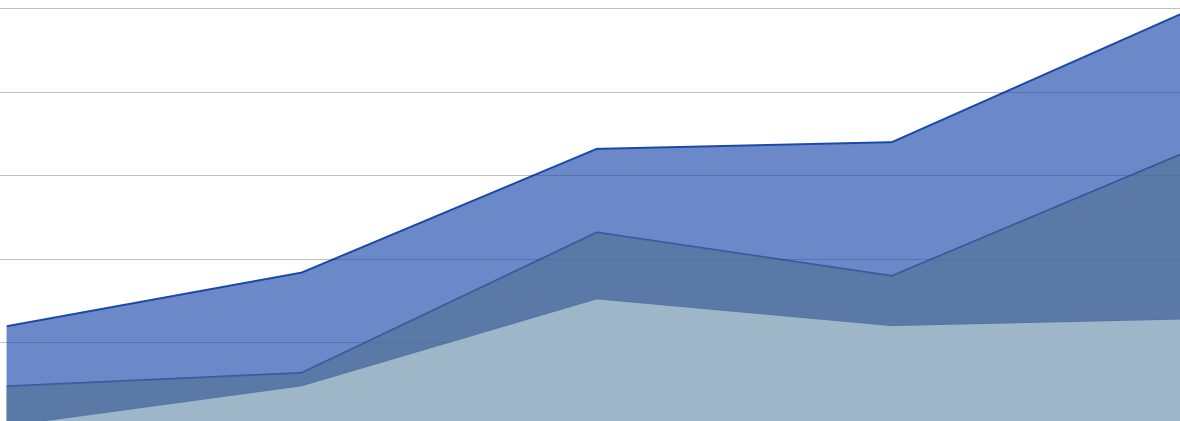
If the project involves a target audience, determine if it is possible to gain feedback from specific community members or populations. Be conscious of the impact of your measurement tool, as some issues surround an area of sensitivity. Determine if you have the resources to collect, review, and respond to data collected before measuring progress.

- **Measure factors contributing to your underlying goals**

Discover what is most meaningful to your advocacy initiative and monitor whether you have achieved intended goals within the target audience.

- **Examples of measurement tools**

These include, but are not limited to, survey responses, interviews, comments, number of participants or volunteers, number of engagements, number of signatures in support of a document, and/or changes to governmental policy.



MONITOR

Continue to evaluate your initiative

- **Use a systematic approach for reviewing your measurement tool**

Refrain from any biases and encourage anonymity when reviewing materials. Identify common themes and take the data and/or feedback earnestly. Re-evaluate current plans as a group and collaborate to address any gaps or further issues.

REFLECT

Reflect on progress thus far, ongoing challenges, and areas for improvement

- **Perform an honest reflection of the creation, planning, and implementation of your advocacy initiative.**

What barriers did you come across and how did you manage them? Brainstorm ways in which your advocacy initiative can be improved.

- **Acknowledge and appreciate the efforts made by your partners and mentors.**

Reflect collectively on what worked most effectively and celebrate the success with your collaborators.

CHECKLIST:

- ☐ Is my measurement tool feasible and relevant?
- ☐ Am I taking a systematic approach when evaluating my progress?
- ☐ What went well with my campaign? How can I make it better?
- ☐ Am I involving mentors and other stakeholders in the feedback and review process?

KINGSTON COMMUNITY ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

Note: This is not an exhaustive list of Kingston community advocacy organizations.

ORGANIZATION	DESCRIPTION OF WORK	WEBSITE/CONTACT
Mental Health Advocacy		
Maltby Centre	Mental Health & Autism Services for Children and Youth	https://maltbycentre.ca/ Tammy Halladay: thalladay@maltbycentre.ca
Learning Disabilities Association of Kingston	Kingston support group for people with learning disabilities, their families and educators. LDAK provides education sessions, resources, referral and advocacy.	https://www.ldakingston.com/ Djenana Jalovic: Djenana@gmail.com
Housing and Health		
Kingston Interval House	The shelter offers meals, accommodation, counselling, clothing, toiletries and safety.	https://kingstonintervalhouse.com/ admin@kingstonintervalhouse.com
Healthcare Providers Against Poverty - Kingston Chapter	Collective of healthcare providers working to eliminate poverty through social and political change.	https://healthprovidersagainstpover ty.ca/ hpagainstpover ty@gmail.com https://twitter.com/HPAP_Kingston
Kingston Youth Shelter	Kingston Youth Shelter provides a supportive, stable environment, and the tools and life skills to help youth emerge from their immediate or ongoing housing crisis.	https://kingstonyouthshelter.com/ Ruth Woodman: ruth@kingstonyouthshelter.com
Almost Home Kingston	Almost Home's mission is to provide a place of comfort and respite for families whose children are receiving medical treatment in Kingston area hospitals.	https://almosthome.on.ca/ Jennifer Varga (Administrative Assistant): JenniferV@almosthome.on.ca
Gender Advocacy		
Levana Gender Advocacy Centre	The Levana Gender Advocacy Centre is a student-funded Queen's University organization devoted to fighting gender oppression and advocating for broad ideas of gender empowerment for those of any or no gender.	https://levanacentre.wordpress.com levanacentre@gmail.com

KINGSTON COMMUNITY ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

Note: This is not an exhaustive list of Kingston community advocacy organizations.

ORGANIZATION	DESCRIPTION OF WORK	WEBSITE/CONTACT
LGBTQI2S+ Advocacy		
Education on Queer Issues Project (EQuIP)	EQuIP seeks to create a safer environment for individuals at Queen's and in Kingston of all sexualities and gender identities. EQuIP strives to create a fun, welcoming, and educational community for queer and queer-positive individuals while advocating for human rights and raising awareness about queer-related issues.	https://www.facebook.com/equipqueens Contact: equip@ams.queensu.ca
Community Health Advocacy Initiatives		
OSLER Kingston	Through a partnership with the Kingston Community Health Centres (KCHC), OSLER fosters opportunities for healthcare students to work alongside KCHC staff to help develop and deliver health programs and services in a local neighborhood impacted by complex social and health barriers.	https://oslerkingston.wordpress.com/ Contact: https://oslerkingston.wordpress.com/contact/
KHealth - Kingston's Community Health Initiative	Interprofessional group of students and professionals in healthcare from Queen's University, who are improving the health and well-being of the Kingston community through fundraisers, senior support, local volunteering, and food drives.	https://www.kingstonhealth.ca/ https://www.kingstonhealth.ca/contact-us
One Roof - Kingston Youth Hub	ONE ROOF Kingston Youth Hub is a community centre where youth serving agencies provide wraparound services for youth under one roof.	https://www.oneroofkingston.com/ oneroof@kingstonhomebase.ca
Community Living - Kingston & District	Community Living - Kingston and District aims to ensure that people with an intellectual disability have every opportunity to participate fully in our community with dignity and independence.	https://myclkd.ca/ Eleonor Egidio: volunteer@clkingston.ca

KINGSTON COMMUNITY ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

Note: This is not an exhaustive list of Kingston community advocacy organizations.

ORGANIZATION	DESCRIPTION OF WORK	WEBSITE/CONTACT
Community Health Advocacy Initiatives		
Loving Spoonful	Loving Spoonful connects people with good food across Kingston & Area. Working toward a healthier, more connected community, Loving Spoonful provides programs and champions policies affecting food security, poverty, social inclusion and community health.	https://www.loving Spoonful.org/ Contact: volunteer@loving Spoonful.org
HIV/AIDS Regional Services (HARS)	HIV/AIDS Regional Services provides comprehensive services including education, prevention and support for people living with, at risk of, or affected by HIV/AIDS, STBBI's in addition to advocating for broader social change to reduce stigma and discrimination.	http://hars.ca/ Contact Allison Cope: (613) 545-3698
St. Lawrence Youth Association	St. Lawrence Youth Association provides individualized restorative programming for youth at risk, aims to reduce youth crime and helps build strong individuals and communities.	https://www.slya.ca/ Contact: admin@slya.ca
Resolve Counselling Services	Resolve Counselling Services Canada provides quality counselling services to significantly improve the social, emotional and economic well-being of individuals and families.	https://resolvecounselling.org/ Contact: (613) 549-7850
Queen's Advocacy Groups		
After School Buddies	After School Buddies (ASB) works with the Boys and Girls Club of the greater Kingston area. ASB offers volunteer and advocacy opportunities for Queen's students to help facilitate athletic, artistic, and academic programming with a wide range of age groups at the Boys and Girls Club of Kingston.	https://www.queensasus.com/co-clubs Contact: afterschool@asus.queensu.ca

KINGSTON COMMUNITY ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

Note: This is not an exhaustive list of Kingston community advocacy organizations.

ORGANIZATION	DESCRIPTION OF WORK	WEBSITE/CONTACT
Queen's Advocacy Groups		
Community Living	The Community Living (CL) club aims to raise awareness about the importance of an inclusive and accessible environment and advocate to break down stigmas surrounding living with a disability.	https://www.queensasus.com/co-clubs Contact: commliving@asus.queensu.ca
Partners in Education	Partners in Education (PIE) rests on three pillars: volunteering, fundraising and awareness initiatives. The PIE volunteer program entails working directly with Pathways to Education and their various mentorship programs, including tutoring and active living promotion. The committee aims to assist with the mission of Pathways to Education to break the cycle of poverty for students in Northern Kingston.	https://www.queensasus.com/co-clubs Contact: partners.ed@asus.queensu.ca
Autism Partnership	The Autism Partnership committee (AP) is dedicated to supporting individuals in the Queen's and Kingston communities impacted by Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). The club consists of two main branches aimed at targeting the focal tenets of ASD advocacy: the Executive Committee, which facilitates fundraising, awareness, and outreach activities; and volunteer programs, consisting of the Awesome Possums and Buddy Program.	https://www.queensasus.com/co-clubs Contact: autismpartnership@asus.queensu.ca

STUDENT TESTIMONIALS: ADVOCACY EXPERIENCES AND PEARLS OF WISDOM

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

I was part of a group of three students who led an initiative to review the full **Medicine preclerkship curriculum** with help of ~100 volunteers. The project resulted in us identifying the **vast majority of lecture presentations with skin images only showed these images on white (Fitzpatrick 1 or 2) skin types**. Our work culminated in the acquisition of **VisualDx, a repository of more diverse images**, for all Queen's students and faculty to access with the aim of improving future materials used.

PEARLS OF WISDOM:

- 1) This type of work is usually slow. While it does not necessarily have to be, this is often how it is and there can be a lot of administrative hoops to jump through. Thus, it is pivotal not to be discouraged throughout the process of engaging in your chosen work and most importantly to **take care of yourself through it all**. Doing otherwise can result in experiencing burnout/becoming ill rather than accomplishing your advocacy goals.
- 2) Do not be afraid to **just get going and do the work**. Barring any major professional or academic repercussions, if your idea is something you can feasibly do, go for it. Do not let yourself be slowed by doubters, nay-sayers, or people who have never actually tried to do any of this work themselves. You will be surprised by how much you can accomplish by just deciding to actually start!
- 3) Find other people who are willing to help out. You do not need to do it alone. There really are genuine people out there who are looking for ways to make meaningful change. If you recruit carefully, you'll have **great people on your side** ***actually* doing work** and not just tagging along to **say** that they're an "ally" or "advocate".

-Iku Nwosu, Queen's Medicine 2022

STUDENT TESTIMONIALS: ADVOCACY EXPERIENCES AND PEARLS OF WISDOM

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Queen's Medicine Municipal Day of Action (MDoA) presents an opportunity for medical students to **organize and bring a topic of concern regarding public health and/or health policy to the attention of local governments.**

After polling the student body at Queen's University School of Medicine, **Housing and Homelessness** was selected as the topic of our 2020-2021 MDoA. The MDoA Team spent several months conducting research and consulting academic and community experts, which led to the development of 3 asks for the City Council of Kingston, centering on client empowerment and engagement in homeless policies. More information can be found in our [backgrounder](#) and [one-pager](#). We hope both documents will help guide other students in conducting similar work (in homelessness and housing, or otherwise). We **collaborated with many health experts and community leaders**. Following a series of 1-on-1 meetings with Kingston City Councillors and the Mayor of Kingston, we were **successful in passing a resolution** at the June 22nd, 2021 Kingston City council meeting which directed City Staff to *"present a report and recommendations to improve the meaningful inclusion, and compensated participation of people who are homeless and/or precariously housed and/or have lived experience with homelessness or housing precarity, on all relevant City working groups, task forces, and committees; and that this report include recommendations as to how the City will prioritize individuals that are in Kingston's homeless population, specifically women and Indigenous Peoples, through inclusive and targeted outreach to these demographic groups."*

PEARLS OF WISDOM:

1. **Do not reinvent the wheel:** any advocacy effort you want to undertake likely has a number of community groups or grassroots activists already tackling the issue. Your strength is in numbers! Leverage your unique position as a medical or other Health Sciences student (a member of the healthcare community!) to listen to what these groups need, and elevate their voices.
2. **Policy change takes time:** do not be afraid to dream big, but policy change is inevitably bureaucratic. The little wins are still wins! When developing an ask for a municipal (or provincial or federal) body, try to come up with tangible, feasible solutions, and present them in bite-sized pieces. The more specific, the better, because it allows politicians to say "yes" to you.
3. **Foster relationships:** relationships are what allow advocacy work to be achieved, so cultivate those relationships, especially with key decision-makers. When it comes to politicians, do not be afraid to reach out and ask for a meeting to discuss your advocacy goal, even if it is not yet fully formulated. Meetings will allow politicians to link a name and face to your project, which will cause them to listen more closely to your asks when they are ready. Longitudinal relationships are always better than fleeting ones.
4. **Ensure you have a coordinated follow-up plan:** while one-day events can create a lot of buzz in the moment, the real work often comes in the weeks following those moments, so make sure that you have a plan to follow-up consistently thereafter and leverage those longitudinal relationships to do so.

Additional Advice!

1. Find **at least one other person who feels as passionately** about your Advocacy work as you do. They will be the most important person for helping replenish your drive for this work, especially when the going gets tough. The more the merrier but all you really need is one.
2. Recognize that just by virtue of being a healthcare professional, society at large holds a tacit respect for what you have to say, even as a student. This is an **immense privilege**. Utilize it to shine light on issues that affect those whose voices are not heeded so easily.

-Angie Salomon & Alison Ross, Queen's Medicine 2023

STUDENT TESTIMONIALS: ADVOCACY EXPERIENCES AND PEARLS OF WISDOM

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

I contributed to the **development of KHealth; the first student-led interprofessional community health initiative** in Kingston, Ontario. Students from Medicine, Nursing, Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy work together to **improve the health and wellbeing of the local community**. KHealth focuses on research, health advocacy (through public outreach initiatives) and education to help equity-seeking populations in the Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington (KFL&A) area.

PEARLS OF WISDOM:

Establishing relationships early on with other groups who share similar interests within the advocacy space can be beneficial when attempting to generate interest among your target population regarding any future service projects, awareness campaigns, fundraisers etc.

-Justin Achat, Queen's Physiotherapy 2021

STUDENT TESTIMONIALS: ADVOCACY EXPERIENCES AND PEARLS OF WISDOM

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Project Connect is an initiative that aims to support **survivors of intimate partner violence and other vulnerable groups here in Kingston through the collection of cell phones and other mobile devices**. The Women's Health Interest Group (WHIG) and KHealth, which include students from Queen's SOM and other FHS students, have partnered with local organizations including Interval House, Dawn House, Sexual Assault Centre Kingston, Queen's Family Health Team, and Street Health to bring this project to the Kingston community. The students running Project Connect are the go-between for donors and organizations, advertising the campaign, and helping to coordinate drop-offs and distribution, while protecting the privacy and safety of those who access services at these organizations. Our role helps to alleviate stress from the organizations in need of these donations and takes the burdens of locating and collecting devices off of their already full plates!

PEARLS OF WISDOM:

1. **Listen to the suggestions of those who do this work everyday** — they are the experts. We involved our partners early on in our process and got their approval before publishing content (e.g., Street Health helped us change the poster wording to be more patient-centered). Our partners taught us a lot about the populations we are working for and helped us ensure our initiative took their needs and best interests into account.
2. **Build a strong team and allocate roles**. With lots of passionate people, it can be easy to either step on each other's toes or to be so scared of infringing on someone else's work that teammates will step back and not do anything at all. Ideally, you want to avoid both of those scenarios, and clearly assigning roles and responsibilities can certainly help!
3. **Don't be afraid to step out of your comfort zone and try new things**. If advocacy work was easy or could be done passively, we would have a lot of amazing new initiatives springing up left, right, and center. Unfortunately, advocacy work is hard work and often requires ingenuity and bravery. Our team did not have a lot of experience working with the media prior to Project Connect, but have since done a number of interviews which pushed us to reach wider audiences!

The response from some **community members who want to get involved can be so rewarding** (Ottawa Gary, shipping phones to us free!)

STUDENT TESTIMONIALS: ADVOCACY EXPERIENCES AND PEARLS OF WISDOM

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

I was involved as one of the organizers of the **OSLER Kingston x KHealth Interprofessional Case Competition** event. The event focused on a fictional case of a **patient with several comorbid health conditions as well as a complex set of social factors and barriers to accessing care**, including homelessness. Participants from several Faculty of Health Sciences programs, including medicine, nursing, occupational therapy, and physiotherapy worked together in teams to come up with an interprofessional care plan to present to a panel of judges.

PEARLS OF WISDOM:

- **Creating and maintaining an interprofessional lens** throughout such an event where all healthcare provider's strengths and scopes of practice are valued and incorporated into the case is important to ensure an accessible and worthwhile event open to students of all programs, and to try and **dismantle the existing hierarchy** that may exist within and between different healthcare professions.
- **Seeking feedback and guidance on the lived experiences of persons from equity-seeking groups** when incorporating those experiences into fictional cases is very important to ensure proper consultation is done and that the experiences presented are accurate and respectful.

-Alanna Jane, Queen's Medicine 2023

REFERENCES

1. WHO Handbook: A practical guide to successful advocacy:
<https://www.who.int/chp/advocacy/chp.manual.EN-webfinal.pdf>
2. Cancer Control: Knowledge into Action: WHO Guide for Effective Programmes: Module 6: Policy and Advocacy:
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK195418/>
3. St. Michael's Family Health Team Advocacy Toolkit:
https://fmf.cfpc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/F175_Introduction-to-System-Level-Advocacy-for-Family-Physicians.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0h16_IAWoQ57AMtuvORs22cqBp0wwucbopAKKdphwbhoELbp8aBSUqBME
4. Advocacy in Medical Curriculum Toolkit - IFMSA:
https://issuu.com/ifmsa/docs/amc_toolkit
5. CFMS Advocacy Toolkit: <https://www.cfms.org/what-we-do/advocacy/advocacy-toolkit>
6. OMSA Advocacy Toolkit:
https://omsa.ca/sites/default/files/media/advocacy_toolkit_final_2020.pdf
7. National League for Nursing Diversity & Inclusion Toolkit:
<http://www.nln.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/diversity-toolkit.pdf?sfvrsn=2>
8. Advocacy in Action: TIPS & TECHNIQUES: Eight Tips For Building Advocacy Partnerships:
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/08924562.2007.10590739?journalCode=ustr20>
9. Community Tool Box: Chapter 30: Principles of Advocacy:
<https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/advocacy/advocacy-principles/overview/main>