

Drafting Legislation Checklist

Research who your personal state legislators are.

For the purposes of this guide you will want to know who your STATE Representative(s), STATE Senator, and Governor are. Depending on which state you live in you may have multiple elected officials in your state legislature that represent you. This step may come in handy in other parts of the process.

The easiest way to do this is to input your address here:

<https://www.commoncause.org/find-your-representative/addr/>

Research when your State Legislature is in session.

Only ten states have a full time legislature that meets throughout the entire year, therefore you will have to research what time(s) of year your state legislature meets. Some states even meet only every other year.

Start your research here to see if your state is in session. The website is searchable by state and year.

https://ballotpedia.org/Dates_of_2020_state_legislative_sessions

Research if the bill you are advocating for already exists or needs to be written.

All bills begin with an idea whether it comes from an organization, member of the public, or legislator. If you have an idea for a potential law one day, you can work with your own legislator to have it introduced, or with a legislative champion around that issue. If your bill has already been introduced in the past (or current) you can research by the bill number assigned where the bill is in the legislative process.

Begin your research by googling your state name and “legislature”

Most Legislative pages are searchable by topic or bill number. For example, here is an example of Minnesota’s State Legislative Page

<https://www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/legis>

If the bill already exists, work to research any organizations in your state that may be supporting it and reach out to see how you can get involved.

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Research who the “Legislative Champions” may be around the issue you are working on.

You can begin your research by searching online for advocacy groups in the state that may have worked on similar issues like mental health grounds, recovery community organizations, harm reduction organizations, prevention networks, or other public policy groups. For example, you can reach out to them and ask which state Legislators may be leaders around addiction, health, or criminal justice, depending on what you are advocating for. These Legislative Champions on issues may end up being co- sponsors or key supporters on the bill you are working on.

Research the key committees (and chairpersons of those committees)

This step will prepare you in knowing who to contact when your Bill is assigned a committee (More on this in the ‘How a Bill becomes a Law’ section. The political party that currently holds the majority of seats in each legislative body also hold the chair positions of committees, and controls what may come up for a vote to be moved out of committee (More on this in the ‘How a Bill becomes a Law’ section).

Create a list of potential Barriers to your bill

This list can help you predict any opposition to the bill and give you a strategy to counter it if it arises. Some common barriers may be costs to what your bill proposes, stigma, political party opposition, and disinformation about what your bill does.

Create a list of why the Bill is important to you

This step is important for a number of reasons. It can help you to share with decision makers why the bill is important, garner community and organizational support, craft a message, recruit other advocates to the issues, shape future testimony for the bill, and help write some talking points to anyone who wants to help advocate with you.

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Research to Identify and Build a core grassroots campaign for your issue.

This process is much easier with a network of Recovery Advocates. Here are some suggestions to help you build your grassroots base.

- Contact the Recovery Advocacy Project to work with a RAP State Lead/Regional Lead info@recoveryvoices.com This can also help any digital efforts you may have in the future. Each state has a digital Action Network they can mobilize when you want to contact elected officials.
- Research organizations in your state that may be like minded. Depending on the bill you are working on you may find support in recovery community organizations, prevention groups, student groups, family groups, criminal justice advocates, mental health organizations, or prevention networks. Make contact and ask their level of involvement.
- Make social media posts about the bill you are advocating for and ask people to contact you directly.
- Research existing coalitions in your state. Contact them with your idea/bill support.
- Identify other key advocates in your area/state. Some of these advocates may be vocal online. Reach out to them about the bill you are interested in and get their take on it.

You can also read this other Recovery Advocacy Guide: Build your Advocacy Base. <https://www.recoveryvoices.com/building-your-advocacy-base/>