



*Georgia Department of Public Health*

# Communicating about Public Health/Prevention to Policy Makers

Presentation to: Chronic Disease University

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*We Protect Lives.*

# Communicating about Public Health/Prevention to Policy Makers

**I. Ahead of the Curve:** The Importance of *When* You Make a Plan and *What* Your Plan Should Include

**II. Only Say What You Need To Say:** The Importance of *How* You Deliver Your Message

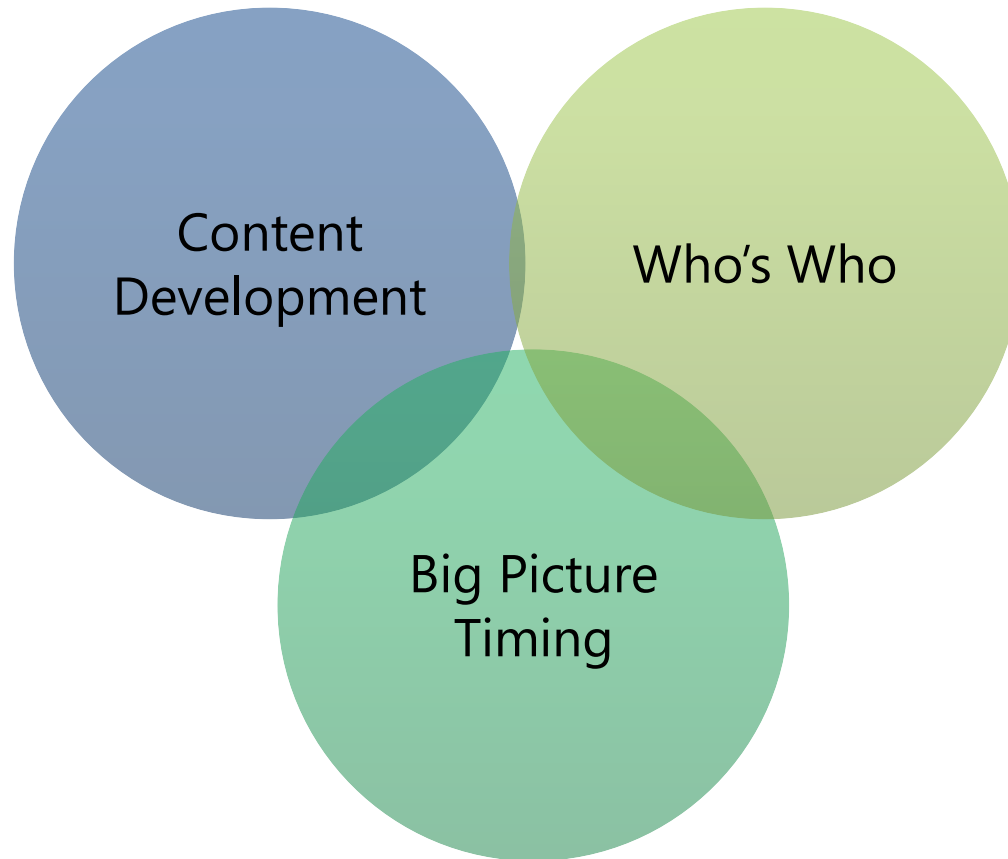
**III. Finding Champions:** The Importance of *Who* is on Your Team

# **I. Ahead of the Curve:**

The Importance of *When* You Make a Plan and *What* Your Plan Should Include

# Ahead of the Curve: The Importance of *When* You Make a Plan and *What* Your Plan Should Include

Don't get started without making a game plan!



# Ahead of the Curve: The Importance of *When* You Make a Plan and *What* Your Plan Should Include

## 1. Content Development

- No meetings should occur with either legislators or their staff before you have finished developing the core of your content. At the very least, you need to have compiled the supporting data and created a 1-2 page handout before meeting with these stakeholders.
- Include in your plan an action item related to quality checking.

# Ahead of the Curve: The Importance of *When* You Make a Plan and *What* Your Plan Should Include

## 2. Big Picture Timing

- Account for the fact that the legislative process can take several years; in Georgia it is a two-year cycle.
- While legislative session is when the main action occurs, your calendar of events should start far earlier than that time period – at least 3-6 months.

# Ahead of the Curve: The Importance of *When* You Make a Plan and *What* Your Plan Should Include

## 3. Who's Who

- Set up meetings/conversations with key partners early on to get on the same page.
- As mentioned previously, identify who the key legislators and legislative staff should be and set up initial appointments to meet with them long before session ever starts – Again, I would recommend at least 3-6 months before session starts.

# **II. Only Say What You Need To Say:** The Importance of *How* You Deliver Your Message



# Only Say What You Need To Say: The Importance of *How* You Deliver Your Message

What are the most important things you want to communicate to policy makers?

- You have limited time, limited attention, and often limited background understanding on the part of policy makers, so it is critical to decide upfront what the key messages are that you want to present.

# Only Say What You Need To Say: The Importance of *How* You Deliver Your Message

## Keep it short

- If your presentation is longer than 10-15 minutes, you will lose your audience.

## Frame the problem clearly

- Don't waste time getting to the key issue you are trying to take action on
- Visuals > Words 99% of the time- but don't overwhelm your presentation with complicated charts and graphs.

# Only Say What You Need To Say: The Importance of *How* You Deliver Your Message

## Make it local

- Use data, facts, and anecdotes that relate to the state and if possible the districts that policy makers serve in.

## Put it in context

- Where does Georgia rank nationally? Regionally?
- How many other states/counties/cities have implemented the intervention in question? What has their success rate looked like?

# Only Say What You Need To Say: The Importance of *How* You Deliver Your Message

## Make it personal

- Relevant personal stories will be something policy makers can remember and relate to far more than just data alone.

## Don't sacrifice accuracy

- Accurate data MATTERS. If you don't have confidence in the data, do not use it.
- Be ready to defend your data – What sources did you use? What years did you calculate for?

# Only Say What You Need To Say: The Importance of *How* You Deliver Your Message

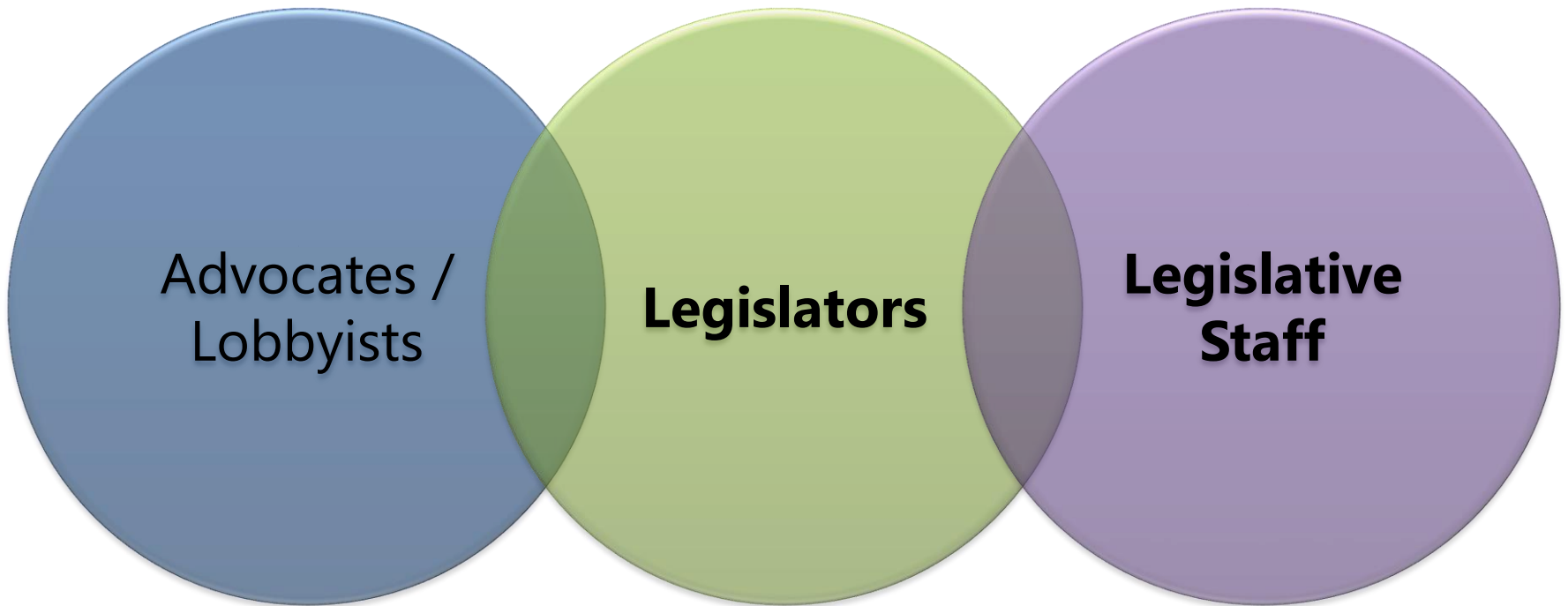
The “Ten Minute Rule” should not keep you from developing other content related to your area of interest; policy makers, depending on their position and area of expertise, will want/need some combination of the items below as a follow up:

- 1-2 page handout
- Key talking points and/or FAQs (1-2 pgs max.)
- Packet that includes the detailed data/information that supported your presentation

# **III. Finding Champions:** The Importance of *Who* is on Your Team

# Finding Champions: The Importance of *Who* is on Your Team

Three Main Groups To Consider When Finding Champions:



# Finding Champions: The Importance of *Who* is on Your Team

## Legislators

- **Do your homework:** Who is on the health committee? Who has sponsored positive public health legislation in the past? Who has supported funding for public health?
- **Be strategic:** Chairmen are the key. If the committee chairman doesn't approve or is lacking even basic awareness of your request, it will be an uphill climb.



# Finding Champions: The Importance of *Who* is on Your Team

## Legislative Staff

- In Georgia, each chamber has full-time staff who assist in both the legislative and appropriations processes.
- Particularly with appropriations requests, you **need** to meet with the appropriate legislative staff.
- They can generally handle even more of the nuanced details than legislators would typically get into.
- While they don't make the ultimate decisions, staff can end up being some of your strongest allies *or* biggest obstacles, depending in large part on the relationship you build with them.