

V E R M O N T

EARLY CHILDHOOD
ADVOCACY ALLIANCE

Description of Alliance Issue Working Groups (IWGs)

The Alliance **Issue Working Groups (IWGs)** support advisory discussions on messaging, mobilization, and strategy for each of the priority issues on the annual Legislative Agenda.

After the Alliance Steering Committee approves the annual Legislative Agenda, Alliance staff work with the Lead Organization(s) for each issue to either identify a lead staff person for an IWG; identify an existing coalition that serves the same purpose as an IWG; or to design an alternative format for stakeholder engagement. This process usually occurs late fall or early winter.

The Lead Organization(s) assign(s) a staff/volunteer leader to serve as the primary contact, and the Alliance Executive Committee approves the appointment. IWGs can also be staffed by the Alliance Executive Director or Public Engagement Director, if the Lead Organization(s) cannot provide support.

The IWGs meet as input is desired, as concerns arise, and/or as conditions change, most often by conference call. Any Alliance member is invited to participate in the activities of an IWG.

Why Establishing an Issue Working Group is Important

- The IWG informs the Lead Organization's strategy and the Alliance's advocacy functions, and assists in keeping the Alliance membership informed, engaged, and "bought in" to the Lead Organization's direction.
- IWGs are not intended to control the Lead Organization, or in the case of some issues, the lead coalition. IWGs do not supplant or replace existing coalitions, but rather give the Alliance a space/structure in which to discuss our coalition's perspective(s) on the ongoing effort, and to shape feedback that might seem appropriate to offer to the Lead Organization and/or managing coalition.
- IWGs support good communication, a flow of ideas, and airing of concerns, in order to create a collaborative atmosphere as the Lead Organization seeks and receives support from the Alliance in the course of its advocacy efforts.

Description of the Alliance's Policy/Advocacy Committee (P/AC)

The Alliance's **Policy/Advocacy Committee (P/AC)** supports communication and collaboration among Lead Organizations as they conduct their advocacy campaigns simultaneously. By sharing information, coordinating schedules, and sharing successes and challenges, the early childhood community is able to make the most of the limited advocacy resources available and avoid conflict, duplication, and confusion.

The P/AC also advises the Alliance's advocacy/lobbying team as it supports multiple legislative priorities during the legislative session. Given the Alliance's limited resources, decisions about the allocation of staffing can be challenging, especially in the constantly-shifting State House environment. The P/AC creates a forum for discussion about the needs and timetables for the Alliance's priority issues. These conversations ensure that Alliance resources are used strategically and keep with the goals and intent of the year's Legislative Agenda.

Alliance staff support the P/AC, whose membership is made up of Lead Organization staff and an appointed at-large member. During the legislative session, the P/AC meets weekly, by phone, to review the movement of bills of interest to the Alliance in the State House.

For more information, contact Matt Levin, Executive Director, at 802-229-4281 or matt@vecaa.org