



Advocacy Guide



BECOMING A SPARK ADVOCATE

Thanks for joining up and welcome aboard. People like you will help make sure that Big Tobacco's deadly products hurt fewer young adults. We know you're anxious to get to work, but there are a few things you might find helpful to learn about advocacy before you put any plans into action. Let's start at the beginning.

Who we are

We are young adults who are activists for healthy living. We instigate change by raising awareness and taking action. We've seen enough lives ruined by Big Tobacco's products. We're here to educate community leaders and decision makers that tobacco is a threat and that our age group is targeted at the places we go. Our mission is to reduce the deadly impact Big Tobacco has on our generation by advocating for policy change surrounding tobacco issues. Sneaky tricks like candy flavors and shiny packaging are no match for our resolve — and we're spreading the word. Look out Big Tobacco, here we come.

Who we are not

Spark is not a group that aims small. We're not here to take away anyone's cigarette or force people to quit. We don't bash tobacco users and we're not offensive. We are simply spreaders of truth and common sense — which just happen to be two very powerful weapons.

WHAT SPARK SAYS

People are bound to ask you, "What is Spark all about?" Here are some things you can talk about to explain why we are fighting Big Tobacco and what we believe in.

Big Tobacco:

- Makes a special effort to target 18-24 year olds.
- Surrounds us at our music venues and places we like to eat, drink and hang out.
- Ties itself to glamor, sex and partying to draw us in.
- Creates new products to appeal to younger people, such as flavored tobacco, bright-colored mini-cigars, snus, etc.
- Promotes its lethal products by touting how "natural" they are, how "American" they are, and by disrespecting and distorting American Indian culture. It's all crap.
- Knows that nicotine is addictive, no matter what form it's in.

Spark believes that:

- We can work together to become the generation that never lets up on Big Tobacco.
- Tobacco preys on people who don't know — or fully understand — the risks. We believe our education gives us an obligation to speak out.
- Smoke-free isn't enough. All tobacco needs to be off our campuses.
- We are the key to supporting efforts to continue funding for an aggressive State Tobacco Prevention and Control Program here in Wisconsin.
- We can protect our campuses, towns, cities, friends and families from tobacco's toll.
- By speaking the truth about tobacco to students on campus, to city and state government leaders, to our peers and to other community groups, we can make a difference.

WHAT ADVOCACY MEANS

There is a fine line between lobbying and advocacy. Spark is funded by the State of Wisconsin, which means we aren't allowed to lobby. But that doesn't mean we can't get a lot done — we just need to be mindful of how we deliver our message.

Actions considered advocacy:

- Meeting with a legislator to discuss a social problem, without mentioning a specific proposal.
- Providing a legislator with educational materials about a specific piece of legislation, without calling for specific action on the legislation.
- Responding to a request from a legislative committee for information about a specific piece of legislation.
- Tracking activities of legislators, including votes, positions taken, contributions accepted, etc.
- Talking to the media about your issue.
- Advocating for better enforcement of existing laws.
- Conducting public education campaigns.
- Producing and distributing research reports or studies that provide non-partisan analysis on policy issues, including specific legislative issues.
- Advocating for the enactment and enforcement of private or voluntary policies.
- A newsletter to your members providing info about a specific piece of legislation, but not a specific call to action.

Visit www.tobwis.org for more advocacy examples

Communication is considered lobbying if it:

- Reflects a view and encourages a specific action for a specific piece of legislation.

For example:

- It would be considered lobbying to ask whomever you are speaking with to vote a certain way or take a specific action on a specific piece of legislation.
- It is not lobbying to sit in your Senator's office and discuss a specific piece of legislation, as long as you don't push for a specific action on that legislation.
- It is not lobbying to sit in the same office and discuss your position on a policy issue as long as the discussion is not about a specific bill.

PLANNING AN ACTIVISM EVENT

One of the most important parts of being an activist is taking action. Activism events are one of the best ways to get the most eyes on our cause. But these events need to be well thought out and well executed. We need to make sure that our message is heard loud and clear if we want to make a difference.

Here is an activism checklist to get you on your way. Once you have answers to these questions, you should keep coming back to them as you plan your action to be sure that each step along the way is the right one.

Activism check list:

- What is the problem that you want to tackle?
- What is your goal?
- Whom do you want to reach with your message to achieve change?
- How does that audience receive information?
- What does this activism initiative look like?
- What is the key message you want the audience to remember when they see your action?
- What are problems that you could run into?
- Who can help you pull this off?

LOOKING FOR SOME EXAMPLES?

Here are a few small ideas to get you started on your activism journey, but don't limit yourself to these options — be creative and don't be afraid to think big. Remember, activism events are a great way to meet people and recruit new Spark members.

Sample activism events:

- Have a Spark table on campus where students can trade in their tobacco products for a cold turkey sandwich. You could get sandwiches donated from the cafeteria, local sandwich shops or cafes.
- Do a sidewalk chalking of the Spark logo. Take a picture and post it to the Spark facebook page and list its location.
- Use Spark's logo as your facebook profile picture and ask your friends how they feel about Big Tobacco using candy flavors in their products.

WRITING A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the editor (LTE) are great when you want to comment on something that's been in the news or you want to bring attention to an issue. You get to control what's being said and your letter gets read by lots of people. Good LTEs:

- Are 250 words or less
- Stay positive by sticking to the message without responding to attacks
- Tell a local story that talks more about people than statistics
- Don't use too many technical terms

THE THREE COMPONENTS OF A GOOD LETTER:

The lead

Keep your opening paragraph short and punchy, like these two examples:

- "New research shows that smokeless tobacco and mini-cigars are deadly. This is exactly why we need to act."
- "Big tobacco companies are using devious tricks like bright packaging and candy flavors to target young adults."

The body

Use the bulk of the letter to repeat your primary message. The goal of a letter is to repeat the central message, not attack critics. Spark's primary messages are:

- Tobacco companies are targeting young adults by using candy flavoring and brightly colored packaging.
- Big Tobacco's strategy of providing free samples to young adults needs to be restricted.
- Wisconsin campuses should be tobacco-free.
- The Tobacco Prevention and Control Program saves Wisconsin lives and health care costs.

The conclusion

Start by repeating the positive message and end with a call to action.

- "A lot of good has been done to prevent young adults from smoking cigarettes. But other deadly tobacco products such as snus and mini-cigars have moved in. Smokeless products and mini-cigars are just as harmful as cigarettes. We must continue to fund tobacco prevention and control programs in Wisconsin. Please contact your legislator to voice your support."

Sample LTE

To the Editor of (publication name)

As a young adult in XXXXX COUNTY, one of my constant concerns is that one of my friends will fall victim to the marketing of the tobacco industry, which for years has built its future around addicting young people to its deadly products.

So far that fear has not become a reality, but now the tobacco industry has really sunk to a new low. They're developing a collection of new products that are flavored like candy – and even packaged to look like candy.

Tobacco companies aren't all that subtle in their attempt to target young adults. They can't afford to be. In Wisconsin, they sell \$1.5 billion worth of cigarettes every year – and they have to replace 7,000 of their best customers each year because they die of tobacco-related diseases.

They know — and we know — that to develop new lifetime customers, they must convince people to smoke before their early 20s – or they're unlikely to convince them to become addicted.

So the battle for the hearts, minds and future health of young adults in our state still depends on how hard we work to prevent them from becoming addicted to tobacco products.

We must stay aware and engaged. We need strong community, county, school and state counter-tobacco programs to help us effectively wage this war.

At the very least, we shouldn't deceive ourselves into thinking that the battle has somehow been won. Because it hasn't.

Some of the products may look different from cigarettes, but the dangers remain. The fight is still on – and it's very real. Please voice your support for the continued funding of an aggressive Tobacco Prevention and Control Program in Wisconsin.

Sincerely
(Your name)
(Your address)

PRESS RELEASES

Press releases are used to promote local events or to draw attention to the local angle of a national or state-wide story. A press release is not the story, but rather a prompt to draw reporter interest and a tool that allows you to frame the issue in their mind.

The six steps to writing a great press release:

- Write an attention-grabbing headline.
- Summarize the who, what, when, where, and why in your first sentence.
- Double-space your release.
- Use strong quotes.
- Use only basic facts.
- Include the name and phone number of the person available for additional comment.

Press release checklist:

- Start with:
 - For Immediate Release
 - DATE
 - Contact: NAME
 - Phone: XXX-XXX-XXXX
- Is the release on letterhead?
- Does the release contain a website address for more information?
- Do you have quotes from key leaders? Have you cleared them with those being quoted?
- Is the headline short?
- Did you check spelling?
- Is ### at the end? It means "the end."
- Who is sending the press release?
- Who is making follow-up phone calls to the media?
- Is the release marked for immediate release?
- Is the contact person's name and phone number listed at the top?
- Does the first paragraph explain who, what, when, where, why?
- Are there other media conflicts (like another major event)?

Sample press release

Spark
YOUR HEADQUARTERS ADDRESS
For Immediate Release
DATE
Contact: NAME
Phone: xxx-xxx-xxxx
Students Organize to Reduce Tobacco Use on Campus
MADISON, WI – On Saturday April 2, students will be holding an event at the Memorial Union to discuss ideas about how to reduce tobacco usage on campus. Use of smokeless and other tobacco products is on the rise in Madison. Student leader John Doe said, "We're not allowed to smoke in campus buildings, but that hasn't stopped people from using other tobacco products on campus. We're here to figure out how to limit that by making some rule changes."
These dedicated students are members of a tobacco prevention group called "Spark." Members work with community leaders and lawmakers to reduce Big Tobacco's presence in the places young people go.
Another student leader, Jane Doe, said, "It's really important that people realize these products are deadly. I've heard a lot of people around campus talking about how they quit smoking and started using pouches, mini-cigars or things like that. They need to realize they are still doing damage to their bodies. If we could get rid of tobacco products on campus, we'd be doing a lot of people a lot of good."
The event will include a brainstorming session followed by an action-planning meeting where students will detail the steps they plan to take to limit tobacco products on campus. Spark members are quick to point out that they are not against tobacco users, but rather the companies that produce deadly tobacco products. "We're not here to demonize tobacco users. We understand that addiction is a tough thing to overcome. We just want to help people lead healthier lives by reducing Big Tobacco's impact on our generation."
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MEETING WITH LEADERS

Getting in front of legislators, community leaders or campus officials is critical to instigating change in tobacco prevention and control policy. Speaking with them is a huge opportunity to get your message out. Here are some do's and don'ts for having a successful meeting with an official:

Do:

- Identify yourself and whom you represent every time you make contact.
- Know the issue or the status of the legislation.
- Be brief (10 minutes or less) and say thank you.
- Be specific and practical. Relate arguments to situations in the legislator's home district.
- Talk with legislators even if their positions differ from yours.
- Be honest. NEVER lie. Acknowledge opposing arguments and any political liabilities.
- Leave behind a one-page fact sheet summarizing your position. Highlight important facts and arguments. Include your name, address and telephone number so you can be reached if there are any questions.

Don't:

- Arrive with a crowd or back legislators into a corner.
- Overwhelm them with too much information or jargon.
- Get into lengthy arguments.
- Be afraid to say you don't know. Offer to find out and send the information soon.
- Confront, threaten, pressure or beg.
- Expect legislators to be specialists. Their schedules and the number of bills they deal with make them generalists.

ATTENDING THE JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

A new budget for Wisconsin is released every two years. As part of the budget process, the Joint Finance Committee holds hearings across the state to get public input, which it uses to provide recommendations to the State Legislature. Strong, consistent communication to this group gives us a better chance to continue reducing Big Tobacco's impact on young adults. It's best to speak in the first person when addressing the committee because telling your own story is more powerful than telling someone else's. When representing a group like Spark, you should tell your own story but end with something like, "This is what it's like to quit tobacco. The other young people standing in front of you could all tell similar stories."

STEPS TO ADDRESSING THE COMMITTEE

Greet everyone

Good morning Chairperson and Members of the Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to speak. My name is (YOUR NAME). I live in (YOUR CITY).

Say why you are there

I am here to speak about the benefits of continued funding for tobacco prevention programs in Wisconsin.

Explain why this issue is important to you

My friends and I were first exposed to little cigars when tobacco companies were distributing free samples at a local music festival. They weren't appealing to me, but many of my friends tried them. They figured they weren't too bad since the products tasted like apples and strawberries. A few weeks after the festival they kept getting coupons in the mail for little cigars and then cigarettes. Some of the products were even free. That was three years ago. Now many of my friends are addicted to tobacco and haven't been able to quit even though they've tried repeatedly.

Tobacco companies have changed strategies and are marketing new tobacco products that are flavored and priced cheap to lure new young users. The packaging on these products is attractive, colorful and similar to that of candy. I believe these products are directly targeted at young adults like my friends and me.

Repeat why you are there

I am here today because I believe it's important that we continue to fight tobacco in Wisconsin. Big Tobacco is constantly inventing new products and new messages to convince people to start using. I want to do what I can to prevent other young adults like my friends from fighting with a long-term tobacco addiction. One of the best ways to do so is to continue funding an aggressive tobacco prevention and control program in Wisconsin.

Close

Thank you for the chance to speak to you today.

WRITING TO THE JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE

Written testimony is very similar to spoken testimony. The most important part is the message and personal story you tell. Here are some things your written testimony should include:

- A greeting to the "Chairperson and Members of the Committee" and an introduction of who you are and where you live.
- An explanation about why you are writing.
- A brief but personal story that explains why the issue of tobacco prevention and control is important to you.
- A paragraph that repeats why you are writing.
- A thank you for being able to share your thoughts.

RULES FOR WRITTEN TESTIMONY

- Keep your testimony to one page.
- Use your organization's letterhead if your testimony is educational and you are writing as a representative.
- If you are providing spoken testimony, your written testimony does not have to be exactly the same. You should focus on the same key points or messages.
- Bring 20 copies of your testimony.
- Include your home address.
- Send a copy of your testimony to your legislators with a note about your submission.
- If you have a legislator on the Joint Finance Committee, send a note to them thanking them for their attention and enclose a copy of your testimony.

Other good advice:

- Include a photograph. Try to show the person highlighted in your story in their environment.
- Use your real voice. Think about how you would tell your story to your best friend. Your everyday language will sound authentic and sincere.
- Paint a picture. Use words that create an image. Include telling details. "I'm friends with students who gave up cigarettes only to get sucked back in with other tobacco products. They're still doing permanent damage to their bodies but they can't help it because they are addicted" is better than "I have friends who are still addicted to tobacco products."
- Use great quotes. Think short, powerful sound bites. "I've never been a tobacco user, but I'm sick of seeing my friends hurt themselves."
- End happy and show a solution. Legislators want to solve problems and make things better. "I see every day with my own eyes the impact tobacco prevention funding has in my community — with continued funding we can carry on the fight against Big Tobacco and make a difference in my community."

WE NOW PRONOUNCE YOU A SPARK ADVOCATE

Thanks for reading. We know this is a lot of information to cover. Refer to this manual often, and if you have any questions — ask. You should have your local Spark leaders help you take your first activism steps while you're learning the ropes.

We know you can do this. And we're proud to have you on our team.

For more information about Spark call **(262) 703-4200**



