

Building collaborations among labor enforcement agencies and advocacy groups/community-based organizations.

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# Why should government do this?

It makes government agencies more effective.

- Resources: Advocacy groups amplify the agency's ability to fulfill its mission:
  - Outreach and education;
  - Line of first response.
- Serving as a bridge between government and isolated or vulnerable populations.

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- Policy matters:
  - Identifying issues and potential solutions (legislative, regulatory, agency policy/procedures);
- Providing expertise:
  - Subject matter expertise
  - Background information about industries or employers
  - Knowledge about communities and cultural norms

# Why should advocacy groups do this?

- Helps serve their membership / client population;
- Brings more resources to bear on the problems they are working on;
- Improves access to policy makers and enforcement agents:
  - Access to decision makers, who can fix problems with specific cases or overall agency operations;
  - Ongoing relationship helps advocates receive attention when they bring new general issues or specific cases to government attention;
  - Provides opportunity for meaningful input into policy decisions;
- Can support organizing campaigns in some circumstances.

# Getting your relationship off the ground

- Meet with each other
  - Managers or line staff or both?
  - Civil service and political appointees.
- When?
  - Ideally, before there's a particular case, problem, ask.
- How?
  - In person.
  - More than 1 person from each side present to promote continuity.

# Considerations for government agencies

- Consider potential limitations of the advocacy group: time of day, language issues
- If possible, it's useful to meet in the group's location at some point, and not only in your government office.
  - Appreciation
  - Your own learning
  - Everyone is the star of their own movie.

# Learn about each other

- Understand how the advocacy group approaches their work. Ask about the full scope of their services and activities in the community.
  - What do they do?
  - Number and demographics of clients/members;
  - Key issues and problems they see in the field;
  - How they address those problems and what they see as solutions;
  - Funding sources;
  - Resource constraints;
  - Staffing structure.

# Learn about each other

- Share similar information about your own agency:
- Explain how you approach your work, including your agency's:
  - Jurisdiction;
  - Investigative process;
  - Criteria for accepting cases;
  - Staffing structure;
  - Full range of your agency's role;
  - Enforcement priorities;
  - When do you want a referral regarding potential violations? How much prep work do you want the advocacy group to do, ideally?
  - **Resource constraints** and current caseload.

# Deepening the Relationship

- Get together regularly if possible, even if there's no case.
- Is there training either the agency or the advocacy group can provide to each other?
- Share press releases with each other, invite each other to events.
- Ask to be on their mailing list for their press releases, lift up their work on social media.
- Share job openings and offer to help circulate theirs.

# Referring cases

What regulators think about when a new issue or case is presented:

- How many people are impacted? How are they impacted?
- How does it fit into the agency's jurisdiction? Can the agency do anything about it?
- Who wants the agency to take action? Who might be opposed?
- Is there any precedent elsewhere (other cities or states)?
- What unintended consequences might there be?
- How resource-intensive is the ask? How does it fit into current work and workload?
- What's the statute of limitations? Is this an old case?
- Are there ongoing violations or have they ceased?
- Repeat violator?
- Why is it the right thing to do?

# Government people: when advocacy groups refer cases or issues...

- Keep an open mind even if the ask is outside of the box. Ask questions that will elicit the answers to the inquiries on the previous slide.
- Discuss:
  - How much prep work should the advocacy group do?
  - Will the group have an ongoing role, or are they just referring cases?
  - What can and cannot be shared? (Asymmetry of information)
  - What's typical time frame for case handling?
  - How will media be handled?
  - Who will be the ongoing point people?
  - How does the agency handle settlement negotiations?
  - What is usually included in a resolution?
  - Freedom of information laws.

# Government independence / objectivity

- Concerns about maintaining independence / objectivity as government agency (both about the reality and perception)
- How to address?

# Examples of formalized partnerships

- Funded and unfunded
  - SF
  - Seattle
  - CA
  - OSHA Harwood grants
  - MA
  - CO

# Some thoughts for government people about advocacy groups:

- They are advocates! Their job is to push.
- Funding pressures;
- Different role than government;
- Deep expertise, knowledge and commitment;
- Often severe resource limitations;
- Same goal: serving the public and improving workers' lives.