



GRASSROOTS STRATEGY FOR YOUR STATE ASSOCIATION

DME Licensure

2014 - 2015



DME state licensure helps ensure that all Americans have access to quality medical equipment/services despite competitive bidding.

An effective way to pass DME licensure in your state is through grassroots advocacy. Grassroots advocacy takes more organization and closer attention to detail, but pays off in return. A grassroots lobbying strategy will...

- Show you are an industry leader
- Will give you more opportunities for legislative success
- Expands your network of supporters, By working with groups inside and outside of the DME industry to pass a state licensure law, your association will expand your network so you will have more advocates that can help move future legislative initiatives forward.
- Will provide great public relations for you and your members
- Is more efficient for your members – state legislators are in THEIR communities
- Will allow for DME issues to get more exposure in the local media

KEY ELEMENTS OF GOING GRASSROOTS

- Clearly identified leadership roles
- Data collection
Significant legislative successes are made possible by collecting data and analyzing it. What data are you interested in collecting? How will you go about doing it? Keeping track of every detail takes time and can seem unnecessary, but the more data you can collect, the more opportunity you will have to reach your goals. (Examples of data – Contact info, meeting notes, dates, number of emails sent)
- Measurable goals (examples below)
 - Getting state licensure laws passed
 - Tracking legislative events attended – who is there and how many people are there (i.e. town halls)
 - Tracking number of messages sent to legislators
 - Compiling data on advocates (name, address, city, state, phone number, email)
 - Seeing agency rule changes
 - Tracking number of new members for your state association

THE GRASSROOTS STRATEGY

STEP 1: IDENTIFY LEADERSHIP ROLES

As you start your grassroots campaign to pass DME licensure in your state you must identify leadership roles. Important questions to answer:

- Who will be leading grassroots efforts?
 - Coordinating meetings
 - Leading strategy
 - Communicating with state association members
- Who will support the leader?
 - Going to meetings
 - Helping coordinate events
 - Helping with communications

STEP 2: IDENTIFY YOUR LEGISLATIVE GOAL

This packet centers around passing DME licensure as a goal, but you can plug in any legislative goal into this strategy. Maybe passing DME licensure in your state isn't feasible at this time – what is? You want to put your efforts into what is most important for your association. Think both short term and long term.

STEP 3: DO THE RESEARCH

Before you start planning meetings and drafting your game plan to pass your bill, you have to do the research.

- Understand how a bill passes in your state
- When does the legislative year begin in your state?
- When does a bill have to be presented on the floor?
- What is the status of DME licensure in your state?
(Has there ever been state licensure for DME? If so, when? What were the details? If not, has anybody ever tried to push a bill forward? Why did it fail?)
- Identify brick and mortar and reciprocity requirements for DME licensure
- Figure out funnel dates when you meet with your legislator

****Consider contacting the governor's office in your state to see if your bill can be a priority for the governor. If he/she decides to push the legislature to run the bill it will have more chances of passing. Do this by calling the governor's office and setting up a meeting to speak with the chief of staff or individual in charge of health related issues****

STEP 4: CREATE A TIMELINE

After reading through the information, put together a timeline. Edit along the way.

SAMPLE: TIMELINE FOR PASSING DME LICENSURE IN IOWA

Sep. 22 – Oct. 6 - Leader of grassroots efforts and support team meet

- Discuss current state of DME licensure in state and the plan to pass it
- Put together prospect list
- Find legislative sponsor

Oct. 6 – Find legislative sponsor

Oct. 8 – Meet with legislative sponsor to go over sample language and discuss prospect list

Oct. 10 – Assign members of state association to prospect list

Oct. 13 – Bill drop (Nov. 7)

- Go on temperature check meetings and lobby for prospects to support bill. Make changes to the bill as needed based on the response from key individuals/groups.

Nov. 7 – Bill drops

- Put together press release about the bill, publish press release on your website, share press release with members, supporters and on your social networks.
- Send introductory message to supporters and members about the bill with the bill number included and educational info about how the bill will help them. Provide a survey to see who supports the bill or opposes the bill so you can see in your own membership who opposes. (Important to putting out fires).
- Start scheduling meetings with legislators for Capitol visit days

Nov. 7 – Dec. 31

- Pay attention to who supports/opposes your bill
- Add more key groups/individuals to your prospect list to lobby bill. Assign individuals to set meetings with prospects in January.
- Begin scheduling lobby meetings with prospects for January
- Begin scheduling Capitol Lobby Days for March

January

- January – members have conversations with key groups/individuals
- Get a compelling story for the need on DME Licensure in local newspaper
- Analyze which legislators support/oppose the bill based on conversation with legislative sponsor
- Create online location where people can show support for DME Licensure
- Invite supporters for Capitol lobby day in February

February

- Meetings with prospects continue
- Go to the Capitol to lobby with legislators about the bill
- Encourage members to show support for the bill by attending Capitol visit day in March
- Get into radio interview about lobby efforts and Capitol visit day
- Track which legislators are on board with DME licensure bill

March

- Go to the Capitol to lobby with legislators about the bill
- Encourage members and supporters to send emails to legislators about the importance of the bill
- Continue getting press attention on bill

APRIL

- Bill gets introduced on the floor and hopefully passes!!

STEP 5: FIND A LEGISLATIVE SPONSOR

A law starts out as an idea. These ideas may come from anyone- concerned citizens or business owners etc. The idea is presented to a state level representative. The representative does the research to make sure the idea would be beneficial as a law. Then they have their bill drafters write the legislation. The representative then presents this bill to other legislators on appropriate committees in hopes of gaining more support. Once the bill has a sponsor and the support of other representative, it is ready to be introduced.

Who do I contact?

- Start by contacting your local state level senators/ representative about the issues. Ask them if they would be willing to sponsor your bill. Tip – Work with legislators that you have a good relationship with.
- If you don't have a relationship with any legislators, look through your contact list. Do you have relationships with opinion leaders, other political types or business associates that may be able to connect you with their friends in higher places?

Be prepared before contacting your representative

- Be comfortable and knowledgeable of the issue. Make sure you've thought out both sides of the case and are prepared with rebuttals. Be prepared to answer questions like, "Why does this need to happen?" and "Why is this so important?"
- How will this bill have a positive impact on your community and state?

STEP 6: MAKE YOUR PROSPECT LIST

Identify key groups/individuals that you need to support your DME licensure bill

Directions - Name the individual/group, write O if you think they will oppose your bill, write S if you think they will support your bill, U if you are unsure, summarize why it's important they support state licensure. After you are finished, make sure to show this list to your legislative sponsor to get their feedback before you start meeting w/individuals/groups.

KEY DME PROVIDERS - Which DME providers do you need to support your bill?

- EXAMPLE – ABC MEDICAL – S – Their support is important, because they have 20 locations throughout Ohio.
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LEGISLATORS - Which legislators do you need to support your bill? **Tip- look at the legislative committees that will look at your bill and what legislators are on those committees – they have the most influence. Get direction from your bill sponsor**

- EXAMPLE: SENATOR BROWN – S – He sits on the budget committee that will approve state licensure

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ADVOCACY GROUPS- Which advocacy groups do you need to support your bill? **Tip- look at advocacy groups whose participants rely on medical equipment that are a part of competitive bidding –Senior and disability groups**

- EXAMPLE: Iowa Lung Association – U – They have 10,000 members in their group that rely on oxygen

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OPINION LEADERS – Who are opinion leaders that would help advance your bill? **Unions, church leaders, chamber of commerce, city council leaders, etc...**

- EXAMPLE: Bishop McCormick – U – He is closely tied with senior issues in the Charleston area

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STEP 7: PUT TOGETHER YOUR TALKING POINTS – See DME Licensure Talking Points

STEP 8: MEET WITH YOUR LEGISLATIVE SPONSOR

- Present your prospect list to your legislative sponsor and get his/her opinion on the following...
 - Are we missing any key individuals/groups that should be added to the prospect list?
 - Would it be appropriate for you to have conversations with any of these people?
- Begin bill draft - Work with your legislative sponsor to draft a bill. Confirm when finalized bill needs to be sent to drafter and when it will have a bill number.
- Identify Funnel Dates – Dates set by legislative leaders when a bill needs to pass from committee to committee. Funnel dates trim down the number of bills to be dealt with throughout the legislative year.

See - Model language on state licensure - Make modifications as needed

STEP 9: BEGIN PLANNING AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

A well-crafted communications strategy amplifies your grassroots efforts by engaging your supporters and adding light to your issues. The good news is that we live in a digital age where information spreads easily on the Internet through multiple mediums. The bad news is that everyone is competing for publicity. However, if you put together an effective communications strategy you will save yourself stress and your efforts have a good chance of sparking the attention of local media, constituents and legislators!

How to execute an effect communications strategy

- Engage local media – Newspapers, TV news stations, radio
- Engage supporters via email
- Be active online

Reach out to media at appropriate times with a press release:

- When your bill is assigned a number
- When you hold a legislative event
- When you go to the Capitol to lobby for your bill

What is a press release?

A press release is an official statement issued to media with information about a particular issue. A press release gives the media a heads up on news throughout their area.

How to write a press release

1.) *Appropriate formatting* – Press releases have a [certain format](#), AP Style.

2.) *Ask – Why would anyone care?*

Your press release is one of hundreds that come in per day. When you write your release, keep in mind no one cares about your issue. It's up to you to MAKE them care. A question to ask yourself when writing your release – Why should anybody care about this? Also, make sure to put the most important information at the beginning of the release to keep the reader engaged.

3.) *Keep it to one page* – Press releases aren't written to give the media all the details about your issue. It's just bait to lure them in. Keep your thoughts short, concise and to the point. Your goal is to get covered!

4.) *Strong headline* - Imagine you are a newspaper editor or television producer. It's 4 p.m. and you have been working since 6 a.m. You open up your inbox and see a flood of emails and press releases. You start scrolling down – which release would you open? Answer – A release with a short and striking headline.

Same press release, different headline options, which one do you think got picked up by media?

1. The Sing me to Heaven Foundation introduces H.F. 2022
2. H.F. 2022 introduced to help Iowa families
3. Bill moves forward to help Iowa families who have lost a child

If you guessed 3, you are correct! The headline is concise, summarizes the press release, and the editor knows it will spark the interest of readers!

Resources on writing a press release:

- ***See – Sample Press Release***
- [7 tips for writing a killer press release](#)
- [Press release format guidelines](#)

Engage your supporters via email

Your supporters should get all the information about your grassroots efforts first! They will be your biggest fans and will **help push your bill passed the finish line.**

1. Put together email lists for the following
 - All supporters of DME licensure (ALL)
 - State association members who support DME licensure
 - Advocacy group supporters who support DME licensure
 - Legislators who support DME licensure
 - Opinion leaders who support DME licensure
2. Schedule when you are going to email your supporters. Our suggestions...
 - Before your bill drops
 - When your bill drops
 - When there are upcoming events they should attend
 - During the big push – encouraging them to reach out to their legislators to support the bill
3. Write your email
 - Identify the purpose of your email
 - Select which email lists should receive your email
 - Write content to fit the interests of your audience(s). For example, the way you talk to state association members about DME licensure may be vastly different than the way you talk to the leader of a senior group who isn't very familiar with DME
 - Make sure your subject line is strong (especially important with legislators)
 - Keep your email concise
 - Include a strong call to action at the end – What do you want the individual to do after they read your email?
 - Always include contact information so people can reach out to you if they have questions or comments

BE ACTIVE ONLINE

Does your state association have an identity online? If not, this may be a perfect time to do so! Things you must have today:

- Website

- Facebook page
- Twitter page (optional)

WEBSITE – HOME BASE

Your website is home base for all information related to your grassroots efforts to pass DME licensure.

Things to post on your website-

- Information about the importance of DME licensure for
 - DME providers
 - Seniors
 - People with disabilities
 - Community
- The state licensure bill language
- Upcoming legislative events you will be a part of or lead (i.e. – Capitol visit days)
- Latest news about your grassroots efforts to pass DME licensure

FACEBOOK PAGE

Facebook is one of the most recognized and used social media sites online. If you don't have a Facebook page, now is the time to create one.

- Update your page 1-2 times per week to keep your audience engaged.
- Post updates on your grassroots initiatives
- Post photos of events you are a part of
- Post photos with your supporters when you meet with them
- Share articles that your association is mentioned in
- Post event dates

TWITTER PAGE

Twitter is gaining a LOT of traction in the home care industry and is a great tool to grab the insights and attention of insightful leaders in your state.

- Follow those that support your grassroots initiatives
- Tweet regularly – 4x's per week
- Include content from your website in your tweets
- Tweet at influential leaders
- Ask people who support your association to re-tweet your content

STEP 10: TEMPERATURE CHECK MEETINGS UNTIL BILL DROPS

Purpose – Meet with the groups/individuals on your prospect list to see how they would feel about DME licensure in your state

STEP ONE – ASSIGN

Pull up your prospect list. Assign an individual within or outside your state association to meet with the individual/group face to face. **Best practice- Assign someone who already has a relationship built with the contact.**

STEP TWO – CONTACT PROSPECT

Assigned individual reaches out to the prospect to set up a meeting. Contact them, introduce yourself (if you don't know them) and ask if they would have time in the next two weeks, because you would

like to get their thoughts and opinions on something important. (Do not give away too much information about what your legislative initiative yet, because if they oppose what you are doing they will not meet with you at all.)

STEP THREE – MEET WITH PROSPECT

It's meeting day! Gather your thoughts and keep the purpose of the meeting in your mind-- to see where the prospect stands on state licensure.

****Put together talking points for your prospect – See DME Licensure Talking Points****

What to bring to the meeting

- Your business card
- Information on your state association (if applicable)
- Information on competitive bidding and how it effects your state
- Supporter packet **Found in the resource center of www.vgmdclink.com**
 - State licensure bill explanation and key points
 - Document – **Why supporting state licensure is important**
 - Document - **Take Action: Help pass state licensure**

In the meeting

- Get their contact information – Name, position title, phone number and email address
- Talk casually for a little bit to break the ice and transition into talking about competitive bidding, how it affects you and how it does or will affect the people they care about
- Talk about competitive bidding and how it is affecting your state. Bring up DME licensure as a prospective solution and see how they would feel about it in their state
 - If you feel that the prospect strongly supports state licensure, give them the supporter packet and ask them if they would be a partner in helping pass the bill
 - If you feel that the prospect strong opposes DME licensure or are uncertain, thank them for their time and their thoughts on the issue

After the meeting

- Fill out ***Meeting Recap Form*** and send to the leader in your state association
- Thank – send the prospect an email thanking them for taking the time to meet with you

*****Once someone says they will support your state licensure bill, give them a DME licensure supporter packet*****

STEP 11: CREATE A VOTE CARD ONCE THE LEGISLATIVE YEAR BEGINS

*Identify the number of legislators you will need to pass the bill. Put together a vote card with the names of senators and representatives and next to their name write if they will vote YES or No on the bill. ****This is an ongoing process*****

STEP 12: PLAN CAPITOL LOBBYING DAYS

One of the most effective ways to let elected officials know your organization's views on the issues is through grassroots lobbying. Lobbying provides legislators with the information they need to make the best decisions for their constituents. The education you can provide may be critical to the decisions they make.

Elected officials pay attention in mass numbers. It is important for the elected officials to hear both sides of the issue before making their decisions. They want to know the cause and effect the issues will have on both sides.

- 1) **Determine the date (at least three months in advance).** Look up the legislative calendar at <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/>. Give plenty of time to coordinate your efforts and gather other supporters. It is recommended to have at least two lobby days a year in order to keep the topics fresh. We suggest February and March. Coordinate the dates with other suppliers, advocate groups, opinion leaders in your community. Big numbers says a lot to legislators!
- 2) **Determine your format for your lobby days** – Groups have all different formats in which they lobby at the Capitol. You can plan a social event, forum or reception inviting all legislators to attend. Maybe an ice cream social or breakfast. Just be sure you will be able to address each legislator individually. If the venue is not within walking distance from the Capitol, you may need to provide transportation. Also make sure the venue is large enough to accomodate all invited guests. Is it accessible to people with disabilities?
- 3) **Email legislators when you are coming**
- 4) **Recruit advocates (ongoing, at least three months in advance)** Remember, big numbers says a lot to legislators! Reach out to your supporters and other suppliers in the state, health care workers, physicians, physical therapist, advocacy groups, and local politicians. The best way to recruit people to your team is by talking to people about the issue. Ask for their support
- 5) **Gather the contents for your lobbying packet. (ongoing, have ready two weeks prior to event)** You will want the following items prepared for your lobby day:
 - a) Key points of the DME licensure bill and why it's important for the state
 - b) An agenda of the day's activities/meetings/appointment list
 - c) A map of office locations
 - d) Talking points on the issue for everyone in your group. (email/mail to attendees at least a week before the event)
- 6) **Prep your group - Meet with supporters in person or via or conference call 1 week prior to event**
 - a) The purpose of your prep meeting is to make sure everyone is well educated on the issue.
 - b) Prepare for possible questions from the legislators. Think of both sides of the issue. Why might someone oppose your issue? What would your rebuttal be?
- 7) **Invite media to your lobby day (two days prior to event)** Media can play a powerful role in your event. If the media covers your lobby day and mentions the issues about which you will be meeting with legislators, pressure will be added to the legislators to support your view. Send a press release to local media in your area and press at the Capitol. Designate someone to take pictures at the event. You will want to these for any press releases.
- 8) **Day of the event** -Make sure to arrive early and gather your group to go over materials and the plan one more time!

- 9) **After the event** - Immediately following the event, you will want to send a press release to your newspapers. VGM's Action Center can help find your local newspapers, contact information. <http://www.vgmdclink.com/action-center.php>. You will also want to write/email a thank-you note to the elected officials and participants. This will remind them of issue and any promises that were made.

STEP 13: PUSH HARD – 3 MONTHS BEFORE BILL IS BROUGHT TO THE FLOOR

- Lobby at your state Capitol
- Ramp up press attention and communications strategy for bill

The VGM Team is here to help!

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