



ACS Today

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Summer 2013

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Recent & Upcoming Appearances

Zero to Three

Lori McClung of ACS led two sessions at the national Zero to Three State Policy Action Team Meeting in Stowe Vermont in May-- Developing an Infant-Toddler Policy Agenda and Effectively Communicating Your Infant-Toddler Policy Agenda. Zero to Three Policy Center is a nonpartisan, research-based resource for federal and state policymakers and advocates on the unique developmental needs of infants and toddlers. This conference is exclusively focused on strategies and best practices for national Infant-Toddler related policy and communication issues. Find out more about Zero to Three at www.zerotothree.org

First Things First Early Childhood Summit 2013

Building Strong Systems

First Things First's annual conference is a unique opportunity for supporters of early childhood education and health to meet and share innovative strategies that help kids be ready for school and set for life. Participants can choose from more than 75 presentations on a range of topics related to early childhood. ACS President Lori McClung will present at two sessions, one on Early Childhood Federal Funding streams and another about building and deploying a model for leadership among volunteers. Learn more about the conference at www.azftsummit.com

Summer is here, but the work of advocating and communicating never takes a holiday. In this issue you'll meet an incredible public servant who is reinventing the way local government provides health and human services to children and families. You'll also gain a clearer understanding of advocacy and lobbying to help achieve your mission.

"Not Your Average Job and Family Services Director"

The Franklin County Department of Job and Family Services (FCDJFS) department, in Columbus, Ohio, doesn't work like one might expect. As Director Anthony S. Trotman explains, "I'm not your average job and family services director." He credits a visionary Board of County Commission with allowing him the autonomy to be visionary, and a staff willing to embrace change.

FCDJFS plays a large and vital role in working with low income families get the support they need to help themselves and their families, administering human services benefits like food stamps, childcare, Medicaid, job training, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), refugee social services and more. In 2012, the agency managed \$2 billion in payments for more than 200,000 clients.

Trotman's accomplishments since joining FCDJFS a year ago are inspiring: improving the culture and customer service, strengthening welfare to work strategies, and implementing innovative ways to better serve the public.

There was already a hardworking staff in place when I started, and they were facing some significant challenges," Trotman explains. "The agency's service was traditionally structured so that clients had to physically come to our offices. As cases increased, it made it harder for case managers to serve clients in a timely manner. We all wanted to change that." [Continued on page 2](#)

Know the Difference Between Lobbying and Advocacy

With the advent of social media tools, political processes in our country have become more open to more participants. It's easier to "make some noise" to generate public support for your cause and get the attention of lawmakers. But many nonprofits are still afraid that they'll run afoul of lobbying laws if they engage too exuberantly in public debate. Here are five key definitions that will help you wield your influence like a pro without fear of overstepping your bounds.

Advocacy is an umbrella term, and involves identifying, embracing and promoting a *cause*. Filling the airwaves with messages **broadly** supporting public education without targeting an elected official or a specific bill is a form of advocacy. So is educating elected officials about the importance of an issue in **general** (such as health care), offering training on how to engage in the advocacy process, conducting and sharing research, inviting a legislator to see and tour your organization, and working

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WHAT'S NEW

ACS Client Scores Great Media Coverage

ACS client Every Child Succeeds (ECS) received high profile media attention on July 7th with a frontpage story in The Cincinnati Enquirer and a feature on Cincinnati.com. The article highlighted the successes of ECS in reducing infant mortality, the continuing need for home visitations to high-risk new mothers, and the persistent lack of funding to further expand the program in several Cincinnati neighborhoods, where more than 200 families are on the waiting list.

In the article, Libby Doggett of the Pew Charitable Trust Home Visitation Campaign praised the program, saying, "Every Child Succeeds is the gold-standard of home visitation programs. If you need a solution to infant and toddler deaths, you need look no further." To read the full article: <http://news.cincinnati.com/article/20130707/NEWS01/307070018/IN-DEPTH-Program-keeping-more-babies-alive?gcheck=1>

ACS New Client: Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority

Great work is only half of an organization's success; the other half is sharing the story. That's why the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority recently hired ACS to help boost its communications muscle. ACS will provide the Port with a new set of messages that clearly demonstrate its value to turn the surrounding community and residents into supporters. We'll also supply the Port with a multi-year communication plan that is rooted in research and built on solid strategies for accomplishing short and long-term communications goals. Learn more about the Cleveland-Cuyahoga Port Authority at: www.portofcleveland.com

"Not Your Average Job and Family Services Director"

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Trotman began communicating often with staff about changing the way FCDJFS provides services. His team created a new web portal and a telephone interview system so clients could access services and benefits from their homes. FCDJFS call center answer rates (a center's ability to respond to incoming inquiries) are now at 80% (the industry standard) and 90% of client requests are fulfilled within 24 hours.

Trotman also restructured FCDJFS's job placement practices, streamlining the application and placement processes, hiring a contractor to manage work placement on a day-to-day basis, and insisting on real-time data collection to show outcomes. As a result, the rates for work participation among Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) recipients skyrocketed from 19% to 53.4%, and 1,700 individuals have moved into jobs and off public assistance.

Now, FCDJFS is working to become more innovative in the ways it provides services and works with others in the county. "For example, we've traditionally funded programs to serve kids, and those to serve adults, but never done a program serving both together," says Trotman. "I want to find ways to sustain levels of instruction and education for kids at home. Ultimately I want to get enough data to influence Congress to change the welfare to work portion of TANF to include an education component that can decrease the cycle of poverty."

ACS is helping with this work by helping FCDJFS examine its alignment within the community, engaging other organizations to determine how they can best work together to increase outcomes as a whole. "The ACS team is helping create a strategy that really addresses core issues by engaging multiple community stakeholders and gathering critical feedback. We're asking stakeholders whether we're funding the right things and what else we could do, then using that information to formulate a long-term strategy to decrease the cycle of poverty. ACS is also helping us discuss how to reorganize internally to help deliver the services the county really needs."

What's it like working with ACS? "Their knowledge of job and family services, early childhood education, urban school districts, and their approach to analyzing community needs is really going to help us create a long term strategy that is ultimately going to help us serve this community," says Trotman.

As the new FCDJFS strategic plan emerges, ACS also will develop and help implement a multi-level communications strategy to help explain the agency's newly defined role to a wide variety of stakeholders. Although that work is yet to be done, one thing is certain: it will be anything but "average." ▲

ACS Team Spotlight

Malissa Bodmann

A former journalist and a savvy communications strategist, Malissa Bodmann, is a perfect partner for ACS. Before forming her own company, Compelling Communications, LLC, eight years ago, Malissa gained experience as a journalist covering news at the Ohio Statehouse and serving as an account executive for an information technology and outsourcing company and a Cleveland-area marketing communications firm.

Malissa is skilled at working with the media, crafting news releases and pitches and securing media coverage in publications such as *The Plain Dealer*, *Crain's Cleveland Business* and *The Wall Street Journal* and on broadcast media such as WKYC, WEWS and WCPN. She has written and implemented strategic marketing plans; created taglines; helped clients update their identity systems; researched, written and edited brochures, newsletters and Web site copy; and even trained clients' staff on how to use key messages to describe their services and products.

Today, Malissa helps ACS clients by evaluating and leading media relations efforts, creating strategic communications plans, and crafting messages that resonate. Learn more about Malissa and her team's work at www.compellingcommunicationsllc.com

Know the Difference Between Lobbying and Advocacy

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with the media. Every nonprofit can engage in each of these kinds of advocacy.

Lobbying is a specifically focused form of advocacy, with the purpose to influence *legislation*. Asking elected officials to support a **specific** bill about public education is lobbying. So is meeting with those representatives directly to request their support a pending piece of legislation. Nonprofit lobbying activities are defined and guided by IRS rules.

Direct Lobbying is when an **organization** attempts to influence **specific legislation** by stating its position to a **legislator** (or other government employee who participates in the **formulation of legislation**) through its staff or members. If your organization ask its members to meet with or send messages to an elected official asking them to support HB123 or some other piece of legislation, that's direct lobbying.

Grassroots Lobbying happens when an organization asks the general public to take action on **specific** legislation. In simplified terms, grassroots lobbying must meet three tests:

1) mentions a specific piece of legislation, **2)** has a point of view on the legislation's merits *and* **3)** encourages the general public to contact elected officials. Organizing a rally to oppose a voter ID bill, or offering nonpartisan voter education about a bill to conserve natural resources are all examples of grassroots lobbying.

The **"(h) Election"** is a special designation afforded by the IRS to nonprofit organizations that provides clear guidelines as to exactly how much money a nonprofit can spend on lobbying activities. The rules governing lobbying activities for nonprofits that do not have an (h) election are quite murky and vague, driven by an unclear directive that they can do only an "insubstantial" amount of lobbying. Nonprofits with an (h) election can spend up to 20% of their first \$500,000 of exempt purpose expenditures on lobbying.

FOR MORE INFORMATION contact Lori McClung at lori@advocacyandcommunication.org or go to www.councilofnonprofits.org ▲

Be Empowered.

Want to learn how communication, strategy development or advocacy can move your organization forward? ACS is available for training sessions or conference presentations. Contact us for more information. Want more suggestions on improving your communications or strengthening your advocacy work? Contact us at info@advocacyandcommunication.org or call us toll-free at 1-877-372-0166.

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Advocacy & Communication Solutions, LLC, helps organizations utilize strategies in advocacy, communication and organizing to achieve success. For more information about ACS please contact us at info@advocacyandcommunication.org.