

INTERNATIONAL OVERDOSE AWARENESS DAY 2023

Advocacy Basics and Toolkit Use Guide

WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

There are many definitions for advocacy and many ways advocacy can be done.

Here's one short and useful definition: "Advocacy is the practice of actively speaking out about an issue that affects people or a community in order to gain support for change". People in the IOAD community perform advocacy every time they host an event, share campaign messages, or speak out about overdose.

However, many definitions of advocacy talk about it in terms of engaging with elected officials, policymakers, and leaders on specific policy reform and other recommendations that will bring about change for a group of people or the community.

IDEAS FOR ADVOCACY

Campaign for better naloxone training and access (e.g. for police officers): successfully getting naloxone into the hands of more frontline responders, like police officers, will reduce the number of overdose deaths in your community.

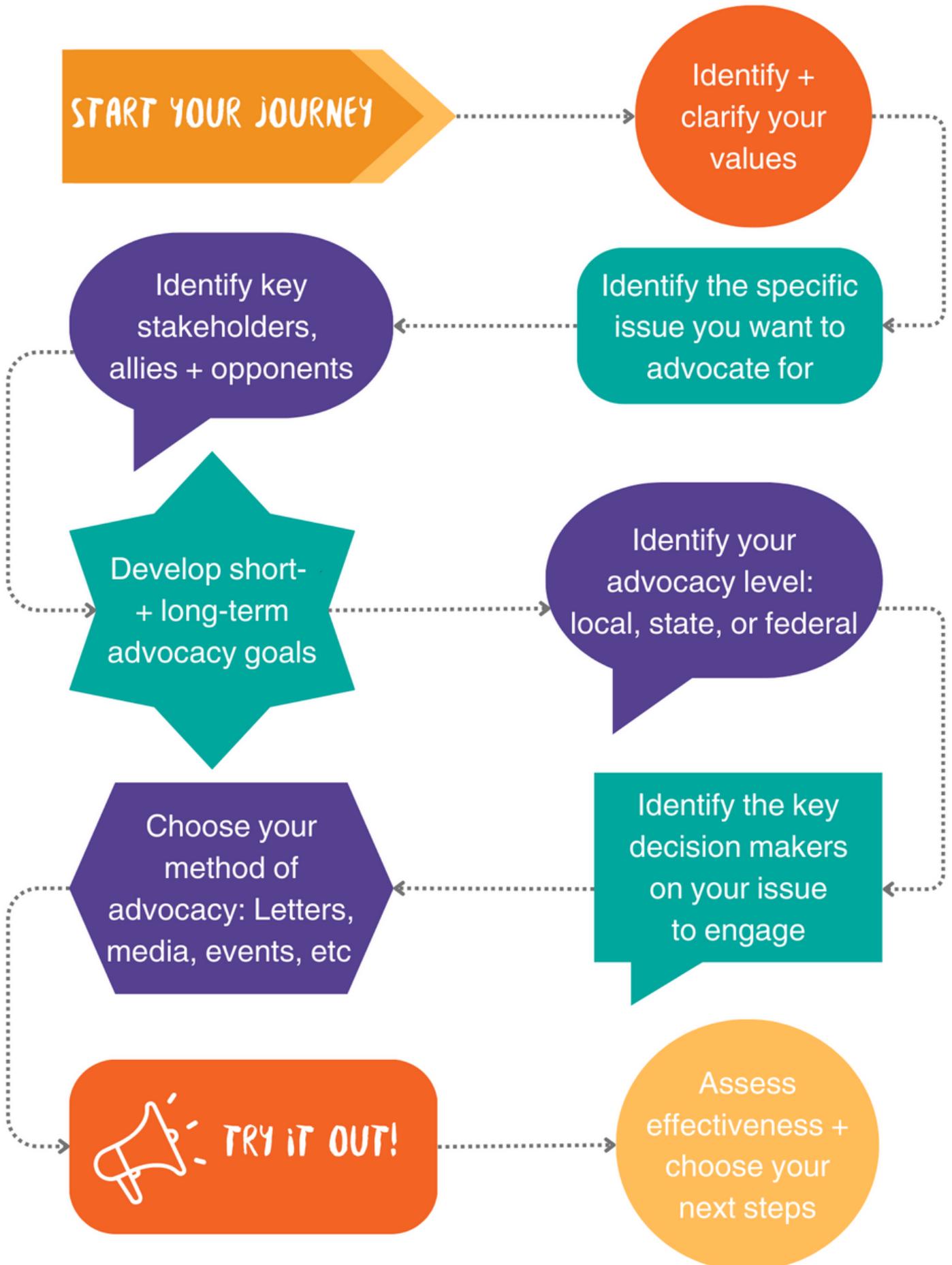
Call for an end to punitive drug laws: the War on Drugs has cost billions of dollars and many thousands of lives either lost or ruined by people being convicted and incarcerated for drug-related offences. Overturning these punitive laws, ending pre-trial detention for people charged with drug-related offences, and expunging the records of people convicted of minor possession offences would be a big step forward for justice.

Start a petition or a letter-writing campaign: politicians may not see the importance of an issue unless the community makes it clear that change needs to happen. Organising a petition (there are many ways to do this online) or a mass letter-writing campaign about an important drug-related policy issue to get politicians paying attention to the overdose crisis.

Campaign for your local elected official to make a policy announcement on August 31: International Overdose Awareness Day is the perfect occasion to announce more funding for needle exchanges, treatment services or mental health services, or to announce a new evidence-based drug policy. Petition your local elected officials to respond to the crisis in your community with an announcement on August 31.

ADVOCACY PATHWAY

Here is a useful diagram that shows the common steps taken on an advocacy pathway.



WHAT'S INSIDE THE ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

The Advocacy Toolkit contains four compelling letter templates that can boost the impact of your event and help you make a difference in your community.

1. **Mayoral Proclamation:** Urge your mayor to officially declare August 31 as International Overdose Awareness Day.
2. **IOAD Purple Buildings:** Request for a local landmark to be lit up in purple on the night of August 31.
3. **Event sponsorship:** Seek sponsorship from businesses and organizations for your IOAD activities.
4. **Policy reforms:** Reach out to your local elected officials to advocate for policy reforms to reduce overdose harms in your community.



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