

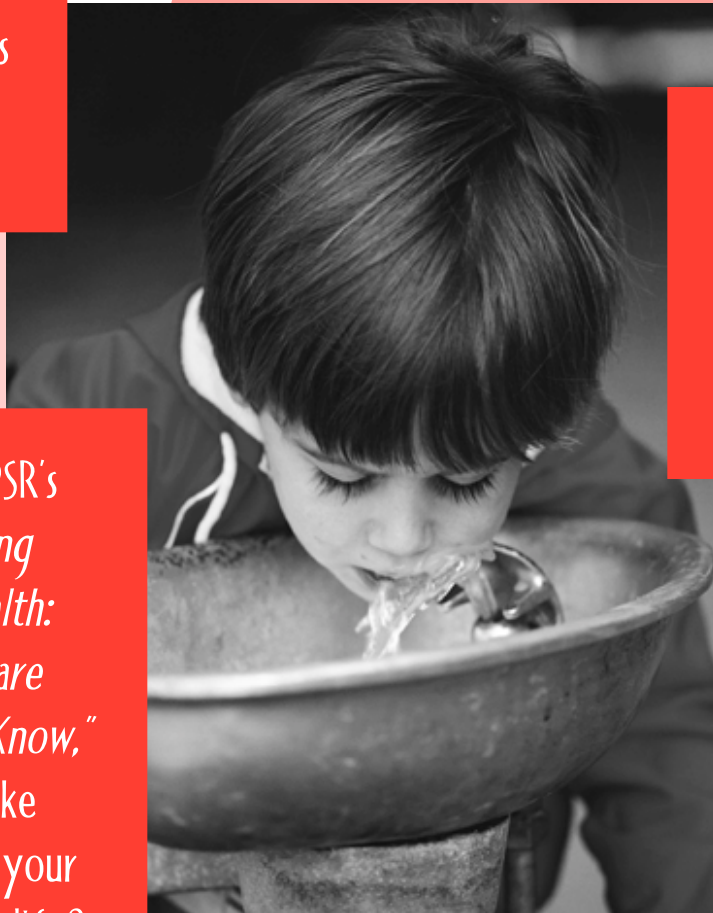
FROM KNOWLEDGE TO ACTION

A SAFE DRINKING WATER ADVOCACY KIT

Would you like to use your professional expertise to address links between health and the environment?

Do you want to take action to improve your community's drinking water?

Have you read PSR's primer, *"Drinking Water And Health: What Health Care Providers Should Know,"* and want to take the next steps in your practice and daily life?




YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE.

Turn the page to find out how to become a PSR safe drinking water advocate.

What's Inside...

Introduction: Become a Safe Drinking Water Advocate.....	3
Step One: Educate Yourself about Safe Drinking Water Issues.....	5
Step Two: Identify Effective Strategies for Action.....	7
▶ Strategy One: Work with Advocacy Groups	8
▶ Strategy Two: Inform Your Patients and Fellow Community Members.....	9
▶ Strategy Three: Speak Out to Your Elected Officials and Policy Makers	11
▶ Strategy Four: Write to Newspapers and Magazines	13
▶ Strategy Five: Organize Media Events	15
▶ Strategy Six: Serve on Drinking Water Advisory Committees.....	16
▶ Strategy Seven: Mobilize the Medical Community	17
Step Three: Broaden Your Perspective:	
Help to Build an Environmental Health Movement.....	19
References	19



WE WANT
SAFE DRINKING
WATER

Becoming A Safe Drinking Water Advocate

Across the nation there are few sources of public drinking water that are free from contamination. Depending on its geographic location and source, water can be contaminated with heavy metals, such as mercury, lead, and arsenic; human-made toxins, such as nitrates, atrazine, DDT, and chlorine by-products; and microbial pathogens, such as *Cryptosporidium* and *Giardia lamblia*. These substances can make their way into the water supply through source water contamination, distribution system contamination, water treatment by-products, and leaching water pipes.

The increasing contamination of the drinking water supplies in the United States has created serious public health problems in the country, although scientific and technological limitations make it difficult to assess accurately the full extent of the problem. It is currently estimated that up to 900,000 people fall ill and up to 900 die annually in the U.S. from waterborne infectious diseases, although other estimates range as high as 40-50 million cases of disease per year.¹ While the health

effects from exposure to water-borne chemicals are also difficult to assess, a growing body of scientific literature has linked an array of acute and chronic health problems to drinking water contamination, including infections, bladder and lung cancer, skin problems, developmental disorders, and pregnancy complications. Moreover, even drinking water that is considered safe by federal and state health standards may contain enough contamination to harm susceptible populations. These groups include young children, the elderly, immunocompromised individuals, and organ transplant recipients.

Improving the quality and the safety of drinking water requires multiple approaches, such as protecting source water, setting and enforcing stringent maximum contamination levels, conducting research on health effects, implementing safer treatment processes, and minimizing the use of water pipes that leech. Since the contamination of drinking water often results from agricul-

tural and industrial run-off into source water, protecting drinking water also requires broad efforts to promote sound agricultural and industrial policies, as well as the development of 'greener' technologies. From this perspective, safe drinking water advocacy is not just about protecting the immediate water supply, but also about creating a more sustainable and healthier global environment.

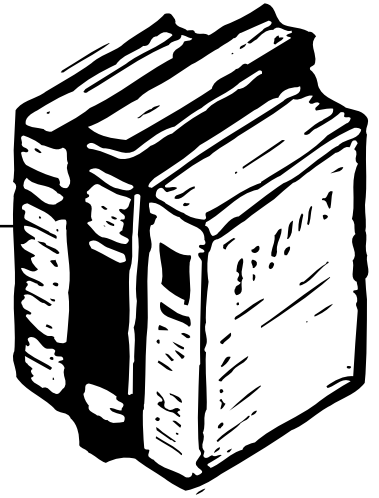
As an advocate who is also a health care provider, you can play a unique and important role in these efforts. Because of your expertise on health issues, you can affect the health of your patients and the public-at-large. You can work with activ-

ists, policy makers, political representatives and water utility companies to promote and enforce safe drinking water policies and practices. You can also mobilize your colleagues in the medical community to get involved and take action.

This action kit is designed specifically to provide you with concrete strategies for working to promote and enforce safe drinking water policies at the local, state, and federal levels. It is not meant to be an exhaustive list of advocacy tips but a guide to some initial steps for developing a safe drinking water action plan that meets both your interests and your community's needs.

1 American Society for Microbiology (ASM), *Microbial Pollutants in our Nation's Drinking Water*, ASM, Washington, DC (1999).

STEP ONE



Educate Yourself About Safe Drinking Water Issues

Before you can effectively advocate for safe drinking water, you'll need to build your knowledge base of relevant issues. Some of these issues include the quality of drinking water in your local community, current and proposed regulatory standards, source water protection, water treatment techniques, and enforcement of (Federal and State) regulations by your local water utility. There are various ways to get this information:

STUDY YOUR CONSUMER CONFIDENCE REPORT (CCR)

If you receive your water from a Community Water System, you should be receiving annual reports of your local drinking water quality from your local utility. Water utilities are required by EPA to mail CCRs to the home of each of their customers annually. Many CCRs can also be viewed on the internet through your utility's website or on Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) website at www.epa.gov/safewater.

As you read the CCR, be alert for contami-

nants that approach or exceed the maximum standard. Also note that contaminants that do not exceed the maximum contamination level (MCL) can still sometimes pose a health risk, especially for susceptible populations. In addition, since EPA only mandates water utilities to test for certain contaminants, there may be agents in your water for which your water utility did not test. There may also be agents for which your water utility tested, but whose results the utility decided not to report in the CCR. Call your utility, local or state health department, or EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline, (800) 426-4791, if you have questions.

INVESTIGATE YOUR LOCAL WATER UTILITY

By calling or visiting your local water utility, you can find out the source of your community's drinking water and how the utility is involved in protecting source water from microbial and chemical contamination. The utility should be able to provide you with a copy of the source water protection plan for your area. You can also find out the utility's water treatment process or arrange a tour of the water treatment facility.

STAY ABREAST OF REGULATORY DEVELOPMENTS AND OTHER CURRENT DRINKING WATER ISSUES

Federal and state drinking water standards are continually under review or revision by legislative bodies and oversight agencies. In some cases, existing standards are outdated, and may not be adequately protecting public health. There is always a great need for the informed public to voice its suggestions and concerns about regulatory changes, and often such participation can make a difference. For

instance, environmental health groups had an impact on EPA's decision in January, 2001, to lower the maximum contamination level for arsenic in drinking water.

Besides regulatory developments, there are many other important issues you should consider tracking. These issues may include new scientific findings on the links between drinking water and health, newly discovered contaminated water supplies in local communities, and decisions by water utilities to switch from one source of water to another.

Resources

PSR HAS SEVERAL RESOURCES FOR THIS INFORMATION:

- ▶ PSR's Safe Drinking Water Program (www.psr.org/dwater.html): The program also has available its 24-page primer, *Drinking Water and Health: What Health Care Providers Should Know*, a set of fact sheets on specific drinking water contaminants, and a resource guide to drinking water-related organizations and publications.
- ▶ PSR's *The Environment and Health Update*: Available in print or email form, this monthly newsletter provides information on the activities of PSR's Safe Drinking Water Program, in addition to the organization's other environmental health programs. It also provides information about new research findings, regulatory actions, and political issues related to drinking water and health.
- ▶ PSR's environmental health action alerts: These alerts are sent to you by email and provide you with information about upcoming events, legislative updates, or opportunities to take action.

If you would like to obtain copies of the drinking water publications or receive the update and action alerts, contact PSR's Safe Drinking Water Coordinator at (202) 898-0150 or info@psr.org.

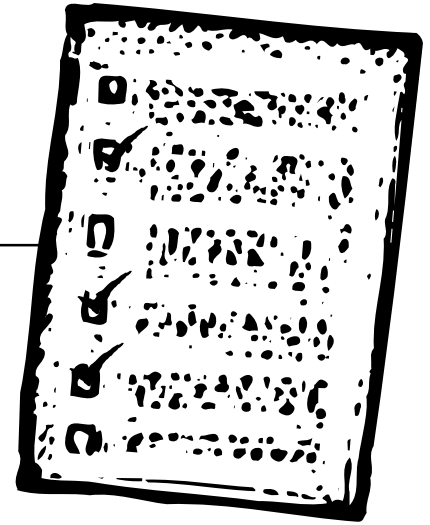
OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND AGENCIES THAT HAVE SUBSTANTIAL DRINKING WATER RESOURCES ON-LINE INCLUDE:

- ▶ Campaign for Safe and Affordable Drinking Water: (202) 895-0420 or www.safe-drinking-water.org
- ▶ Natural Resources Defense Council: (202) 289-6868 or www.nrdc.org
- ▶ Clean Water Action: (202) 895-0420 or www.cleanwateraction.org
- ▶ EPA's Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water: (800) 426-4791 or www.epa.gov/ogwdw

YOU CAN ALSO SUBSCRIBE TO THE FOLLOWING EMAIL NEWSLETTERS THAT FOCUS ON CURRENT DRINKING WATER ISSUES, BOTH OF WHICH ARE PUBLISHED WEEKLY:

- ▶ *EPA WaterNews* (to subscribe, send an e-mail message, leaving the subject line blank, to: listserv@unixmail.rtpnc.epa.gov)
- ▶ *SafeDrinkingWater.com NEWS* (subscribe at the website: www.safedrinkingwater.com)

STEP TWO



Identify Effective Strategies For Action

Once you have learned all you can about drinking water issues, define as clearly as possible the specific problem or problems on which you would like to focus. Do you want to raise public awareness about the contamination of your local water supply? Urge your local water utility to develop easier to read Consumer Confidence Reports? Push the EPA to adopt a stricter MCL for a particular contaminant? The more clearly you can articulate the aim and scope of the efforts, the more effective your advocacy work will be.

Depending on the nature of the problem or problems that you want to address, there may be different ways of taking action. The rest of this section discusses seven common strategies that drinking water advocates often use. Pick the ones that work for you, although remember that this list is not meant to be exhaustive. As you begin your work you may realize that you need other modes of action, so be creative and don't be afraid to take risks.

Also note that if you are new to drinking water advocacy, it is better to start small and pick projects that are "doable." It might be easier to tackle a problem at your local water utility before

taking on the EPA. Similarly, you might want to start by writing a letter to the editor before holding your first press conference. As you gain confidence, experiences and a knowledge base, consider taking on bigger or more challenging projects. Here are a few other tips to keep in mind as you decide upon your strategies:

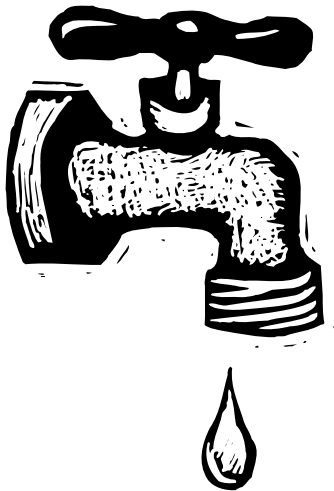
- ▶ **Be realistic about how much time you can spend on your advocacy work.** Even if you have only a few hours a week, you can make a big difference by contributing time to an existing grassroots organization or giving a few talks a year to community groups on drinking water issues.
- ▶ **Assess the resources that you have at your disposal.** These resources could include your budget, access to internet and computer technologies, professional and social networks, and expertise in a particular topic area. Think about strategies that are particularly suited to your resources.
- ▶ **Pick projects that match your interests and make use of your talents and skills.** If you like working with people, give talks to community groups or sit on an advisory board. If you love to write, work on the newsletter of your local advocacy group or

send out op-eds and letters to relevant newspapers and magazines. If you have some internet skills, set up a listserv or start a web-based discussion group.

► **Work with other health care providers on these efforts.** Not only can it ease some of your own workload, but by joining forces with others, you may also be able to tackle bigger projects.

STRATEGY ONE

Work With Advocacy Groups to Promote Safe Drinking Water



Getting involved with other people and organizations that work directly on local, state and national drinking water issues is a great way to learn about grassroots advocacy and to work on issues in your community. These organizations may promote the protection of source water or push for healthier water treatment techniques. They may also raise public awareness about drinking water issues, monitor the implementation and enforcement of federal and state contamination standards, or advocate for more comprehensive community right-to-know reports. PSR, Clean Water Action, and PIRG are all national organizations that depend on volunteer efforts of citizens for the advocacy work at their national offices and local chapters across the country. Your state or community may also have other local organizations working on environmental health and drinking water issues.

Here are a few of the organizations with which you can get involved. You

can also call Clean Water Action at (202) 895-0420 to get information about other groups in your area that may be involved in drinking water advocacy.

► **Physicians For Social Responsibility**

PSR's Safe Drinking Water Program develops educational materials on safe drinking water issues for health care providers, organizes a network of health care providers who participate in safe drinking water advocacy, and promotes safe drinking water policies and efforts at the local, state, and federal levels. In addition to its national office in Washington, D.C., PSR also has chapters across the country that are involved in local drinking water issues. If you and/or your local PSR chapter would like to get involved, contact PSR's Safe Drinking Water Coordinator, at (202) 898-0150 or info@psr.org. You can also get information from PSR's website at www.psr.org/dwater.html

► **Clean Water Action**

CWA organizes grassroots groups, coalitions, and campaigns across the country to protect our environment,

health, economic well-being, and quality of life. One of its main focuses is working for clean, safe, and affordable drinking water. For more information about CWA and/or to get involved locally, call (202) 895-0420. You can also obtain information from CWA's website at www.cleanwateraction.org

► Public Interest Research Group (PIRG)

U.S. PIRG and the State PIRGS work on an array of environmental issues, including clean water. For more information about U.S. PIRG, your state PIRG, or a campus PIRG chapter near you, call (202) 546-9707 or go to the PIRG website at www.pirg.org

STRATEGY TWO

Inform Your Patients And Fellow Community Members

As a health care provider, you are in an ideal position to inform the public about drinking water and health issues, as well as to encourage them to become advocates themselves. According to several recent studies, the general public trusts health care providers more so than other information sources to provide them with accurate information about environmental health risks. Also, when people rely on health care providers for this information, they are more likely to take action to reduce their exposure to environmental risks than if they had gotten their information elsewhere.²

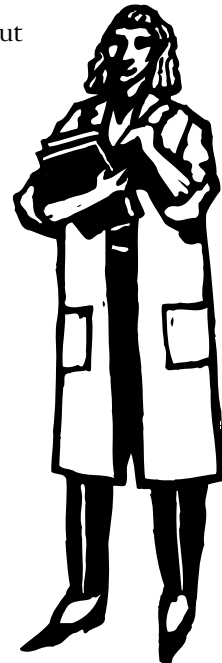
TALK TO PATIENTS AT YOUR OFFICE

Discuss drinking water issues with your patients directly during their visits.

Patients might also have questions about their water that they bring to you, so it is good to be prepared to discuss any issues that might come up. You can also leave material in your office for patients to read and bring home with them.

SPEAK TO COMMUNITY MEMBERS AT PUBLIC EVENTS AND GATHERINGS

To reach more people, you can volunteer to speak to community members at hospitals, town meetings, libraries, schools, and religious organizations. Topics could include the health effects from their drinking water, what people can do to reduce their risk, and how they can become advocates themselves.



² Griffin and Dunwoody, *Health Communication* 12(1): 81-107 (2000); National Environmental Education and Training Foundation (NEETF) and Roper Starch Worldwide, *The National Report Card on Safe Drinking Water Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviors*, NEETF, Washington, DC (1999).

REACH PEOPLE ON-LINE

You can also reach health care providers, researchers, citizens, and policy makers through various on-line discussion forums, including email listservs and web-based message boards.

Listservs

Listservs are email-based discussion groups where people can send and receive email messages to and from other members of the discussion group. Listservs are generally subscription-based, meaning that to post and receive messages on a list via your email account, you must sign up for the list.

These lists usually focus on a particular topic of interest to its subscribers.

Listservs are often great ways to provide information to a group of people. Subscribers to these

listservs can post announcements for upcoming events, articles from news sources or organizations, or their own thoughts and ideas about a particular issue. Often these

postings become a source of discussion among the list's subscribers, and may get passed on by subscribers to their friends and colleagues who aren't on the list.

Consider joining or posting to listservs set up by medical organizations or associations with which you may be affiliated, the community in which you live, or other social, political or professional communities or group to which you belong. For instance, the town of

Takoma Park, Maryland, has a listserv for its residents to discuss community issues with one another.

Web-based message boards

Web-based message boards are similar to listservs in that they provide a forum for individuals to exchange ideas and information about events, news reports, and resources. The difference between web-based message boards and email listservs is that messages do not come to your email account. Instead, messages are posted on a web site. Discussions take place as people view the messages that others have posted, respond to the ones they want, and/or start their own new message. In general you don't have to subscribe to these boards, although in some instances you need a password to gain access to them.

To reach broad array of people from the general public, consider posting to message boards that are run by Yahoo! (<http://messages.yahoo.com>) or Lycos (<http://boards.lycos.com>). Both have a number of environmental message boards related to drinking water with which you can participate. You can also start your own board.

If you would like to interact with a more specialized audience, go to Environmental Defense Discussion (<http://plaza.edf.org/discussion.nsf>). Environmental Defense, a national environmental advocacy organization, has a message board on its website with on-going discussions on drinking water-related topics such as "world ocean," "pollution and public health," and "environmental justice."



STRATEGY THREE

Speak Out To Elected Officials And Policy Makers

Elected officials and policy makers are key decision makers for safe drinking water practices. Whether or not they are allies to, or adversaries of, safe drinking water practices and policies, it is important to encourage them to support safe drinking water legislation and to express your support or disappointment for legislative decisions they have made.

It is also just as important to work with your local officials as much as it is to work with your state and national ones. While elected officials and policy makers at the state and federal levels are often primarily involved in regulatory decision-making, officials at the local level are responsible for making decisions to ensure that your community's water supply is safe, and that your water utility is running effectively and responsibly.

WRITE, CALL, AND EMAIL YOUR LOCAL, STATE, AND U.S. CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

Urge your Members to support legislation that will strengthen protections for drinking water. Representatives use calls and letters from constituents as barometers of public support, and letters from health care providers carry a special weight because of the professional status that health care providers hold.

Instead of handwriting letters to your elected officials, you can send them

emails. However, while emails are a quick and easy way to address your issue with your Members, they may have less impact than surface mail letters, so use email as an option for communicating with Members only when you don't have time to write a personalized letter.

SIGN UP FOR PSR ACTION ALERTS

PSR regularly emails our network of advocates with opportunities to sign-on to letters and to write or call elected officials and policy makers. To join PSR's advocate network, contact the organization's Safe Drinking Water Coordinator at (202) 898-0150 or info@psr.org and specify that you are interested in receiving action alerts on drinking water issues.

MEET WITH YOUR LOCAL, STATE AND CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

Meeting with your Members is the single best way to influence local, state and national legislation. Concerned citizens, and particularly health care professionals, can often convey PSR's concerns more effectively than staff policy experts. After all, only local constituents can truly convey the needs and interests of their particular state or



district. Note that August is a great time to schedule a meeting with your Members of Congress, who return to their districts and states starting in early August at the end of the summer session.

HERE ARE SOME TIPS FOR EFFECTIVELY LOBBYING YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS:

- ▶ **Plan to bring a group of health care providers to the meeting.** Sending a group message will have a bigger impact on your Member than if you went by yourself.
- ▶ **Set up your visit.** Make an appointment with the district office and explain what issues you will discuss and who will comprise your group. If your elected official is not available, make an appointment with a staff member who works on the relevant issue.
- ▶ **Plan your visit.** Carefully choose one or two very specific actions you want your Member to take. Prepare talking points to use in the meeting and prepare a fact sheet or packet of materials you can leave behind to reinforce your points.
- ▶ **Build a good relationship.** You need not agree with your elected official on every issue in order to work effectively with him or her. The common ground rules—promptness, honesty, good listening, and appreciation—will carry you a long way. Relationships are built over time, so plan to make this the first of many visits with the Member's office.
- ▶ **Make the best case for your position.** To lobby your elected official effectively, you must provide useful information on an issue he or she will vote on, demonstrate that you represent voters he or she needs in the next election, and make it clear you will credit the Member if he or she does the right thing. Make your case clearly, succinctly, and accurately.
- ▶ **Learn everything you can during your visit.** Ask specifically for your Member's position on the issue. Be polite, but don't allow equivocation. The more information you can collect, the better. What are the opposition's arguments? How many letters have been received? What other pressures from constituents and interest groups does your Member face?
- ▶ **Follow through.** Write a note thanking the Member for meeting with you. Restate your argument and confirm any information or commitments you were given. A letter restating what your elected official said is the best way to assure that his or her staff has gotten the same message. Share the information with like-minded organizations and constituents. Then watch the Member's actions. If he or she votes the wrong way, write to express polite but firm disappointment, and look for another opportunity to raise the issue. After a good vote, congratulate the Member and let your community know about his or her decision.

RAISE IMPORTANT ISSUES WITH POLITICAL CANDIDATES DURING ELECTION SEASONS

How can crucial public health matters be brought to the fore in this wild time of lobbying and debate? You can raise the issues as a citizen speaking up at the public appearances of political candidates. This method is effective at any level, from a city council race to the presidential campaign. As a constituent, you have the unique power to enhance the visibility of an issue by bringing a candidate's stand—or lack thereof—into the public view.

VOTE

Research the candidate's positions on safe drinking water and environmental health issues, and vote accordingly. Participate in get-out-the-vote efforts, and talk to voters about the environmental health positions of the candidates.

HOW TO CONTACT LOCAL, STATE AND CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVES AND POLICY MAKERS

If you don't know how to get in touch with your Congressional Representatives, use the Internet. PSR has a site on its web page that allows you to search for the contact information of U.S. Congressional Senators and Representatives. Visit <http://congress.nw.dc.us/physicians/>

Also, almost every state has its own homepage that will give you the contact information for both your local and state elected officials and policy makers. The addresses for the homepages of each state share a standard format, the only difference being the state's two-letter postal abbreviation. For example:

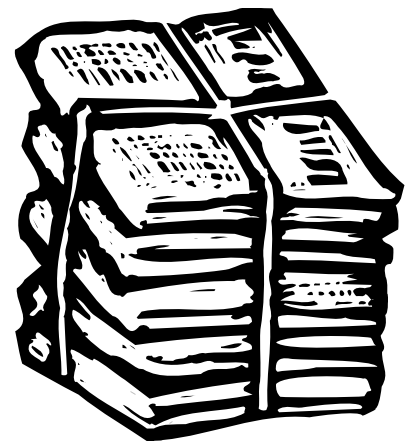
- ▶ Michigan: <http://www.state.mi.us>
- ▶ Kentucky: <http://www.state.ky.us>
- ▶ California: <http://www.state.ca.us>
- ▶ Maryland: <http://www.state.md.us>

STRATEGY FOUR

Write to Newspapers and Magazines

A very important component of safe drinking water advocacy is using the media to raise public awareness about the issues. Raising public awareness can increase the number of individuals and organizations who feel that they have stakes in the issues and may consequently take action in their personal

lives, communities, workplaces, and voting decisions. Since the media has the potential to reach hundreds, thousands, and even millions of people across the country, it can serve your public



awareness efforts well. Media coverage of safe drinking water issues also encourages political representatives, government agencies, water utilities and industries to remain more accountable to their constituents and to the general public. Listed below are a number of ways to use the media effectively.

LETTERS-TO-THE-EDITOR

Writing a letter-to-the-editor is an excellent way to get your message out to elected officials, the public, and your community. Letters to the editor are the

most widely read section of the papers (after the comics). You can use your letters to correct or interpret facts in response to an inaccurate or biased article or to praise/criticize a recent article or editorial that recently appeared in the paper.

To increase your chances of seeing your letters in print, be succinct and focused. Also make sure to highlight the regional angle of the issue, explain why the paper and its readers should care, and provide suggestions for how people can help. Mentioning your professional background and, if relevant, your PSR affiliation, can give credibility to your argument, as well as spread the word about PSR and its work.

OP-EDS

Op-eds, which, unlike letters-to-the-editor, are usually not directed to a specific article in the publication but

rather to a current event or issue in the news, also have a significant impact on public opinion. Using (and responding to) them can be a critical way to influence local and even national policy. Members of Congress closely follow editorials in their home districts and states. Voters often look to op-eds for divergent views on controversial issues.

While the strategies for writing letters-to-the-editor also apply to writing op-eds, there are several other points to keep in mind when writing the latter. Make sure to research the facts and to focus the article on one or two key points about the issues at hand. Include a snappy headline, but don't include jargon and footnotes—they often distract the reader. Also, call the paper to check for its formatting and length requirements, and a few days after it has received the op-ed, call the paper again to find out whether or not your op-ed is under consideration. If the paper has decided not to use it, ask for suggestions for how your piece could be improved to make it more appropriate for the paper.

PUBLISH YOUR LETTERS AND OP-EDS IN ON-LINE PUBLICATIONS

There are a growing number of web-based magazines and media sites that publish material from the public, such as Salon.com (www.salon.com) and Slate.com (www.slate.com). In addition, many print magazines and newspapers have on-line counterparts that publish letters and op-eds from the public.



STRATEGY FIVE

Organize Media Events

Often, the media will only report an ongoing environmental health issue if concerned citizens create a newsworthy “event” to highlight the issue’s importance, local relevance, or timeliness. In the case of drinking water, you may want to highlight the potential impact that EPA’s new maximum contamination standard for a particular contaminant will have on the water quality in your local community. Or you may want to call attention to significantly high levels of contamination that were indicated in your community’s most recent CCR. Join with other public health advocates and colleagues to garner media coverage on, as well as to raise public awareness about, drinking water issues in the following ways:

DEVELOP NEWS RELEASES

A news release is a written response to, or an announcement of, an important current issue or event related to drinking water, and it can generate media coverage if it is sent to the press in a timely matter. News releases can be sent by themselves or as part of an information kit about the issue at hand. They can also be used to announce an upcoming press conference or as part of the information packets that are given to reporters at press conferences. Reporters like news releases because these materials provide them with the makings of a newsworthy story.

When writing a news release, first decide who your audience is. Doing so will shape what you write and how you write it, and consequently whether or not your readers are drawn into your words. Provide the basics (who, what, when, where, why) up front and then add details. To make your release compelling, use a simple, attention-grabbing headline and lead sentence. Finally, provide contact names and numbers for follow-up questions, specify when a story can be used with “Immediate Release” or “Embargoed Until...,” and always follow up your release with calls to the appropriate reporters.

ORGANIZE A PRESS CONFERENCE

Organizing a press conference can be a great way to draw media attention to safe drinking water issues. At a press conference you put together a packet of material on the issue at hand, have several key individuals speak about the issue, and invite members of the press to attend. The media representatives ask you and your speakers questions about the issues that were raised in the speakers’ presentations and in the media packet. Then they report about the event and the issues that the event raised in their newspapers, news shows, and magazines.



The first step in organizing a successful press conference is to find a clear and newsworthy focus for the event. Think carefully about the overall message and the two or three main points you want to convey. Check with your speakers to make sure they plan to reinforce this message, and carefully design packets of materials for the press that reinforce your message again. Plan

logistical details far in advance, especially your message and most persuasive speakers, and give news media at least one week's notice. Make sure to select a convenient time and place for reporters, usually a morning early in the week. Also remember to never ignore anyone who ignores your event. Good follow-up can still get you a story.

STRATEGY SIX

Serve On Drinking Water Advisory Committees

Local, state, or federal advisory committees on drinking water, which consist of a mixture of scientific, medical, industry, and consumer representatives, often present reports and suggestions that water utilities and policymakers take into consideration when making their decisions. As you become more informed about drinking water issues and more active in your work, consider joining one of these

committees. To find out what positions may be open on local and state committees, contact your local water utility, or your county or state department of health. To find out about national advisory boards, contact the EPA's Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water and ask about the National Drinking Water Advisory Board (NDWAC) and its working groups.

A CLOSE-UP LOOK AT EPA'S NDWAC AND ITS WORKING GROUPS

Over the past decade PSR members have held positions on the National Drinking Water Advisory Council (NDWAC), which is coordinated by U.S. EPA's Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water (OGWDW). NDWAC, consisting of twelve members who sit on the panel for two-year terms, advises the EPA Administrator on all of the Agency's drinking water activities.

Currently NDWAC also has two working groups, with one focusing on contaminant

candidates and regulatory issues and the other focusing on research. NDWAC also has a Stage 2 Microbial/Disinfection Byproducts Federal Advisory Committee. Past working groups have focused on right-to-know issues, source water protection, capacity development, and health care provider education and outreach.

For more information about NDWAC and its working groups, call NDWAC's coordinator at (202) 260-5543.

STRATEGY SEVEN

Mobilize The Medical Community

The previous strategies in this section have discussed ways that health care providers can use their expertise and influence to mobilize the general community around drinking water issues. As a health care provider, you are also in a perfect position to encourage your medical colleagues to participate in these advocacy efforts. As more individual health care providers take stands on drinking water issues, more medical communities, organizations, and associations will join in the advocacy efforts. This can lead to a snowball effect, as more and more health care professionals bring more and more community members into the advocacy efforts for safe drinking water. Support from the medical community for safe drinking water policies can also have an enormous impact on the decision-making processes of policy makers and elected officials because it demonstrates a broad and collective concern for the impact of drinking water on health. Listed below are several ways to build support within the medical community.

INFORM YOUR COLLEAGUES ABOUT THE ISSUES

Bring up drinking water issues in casual conversations with colleagues, and consider giving formal talks on the subject. These talks include peer

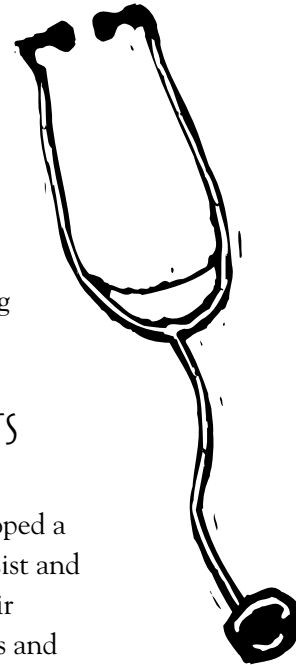
seminars, Grand Rounds, professional/medical society presentations, or even brown bag lunches in the office.

WORK WITH MEDICAL STUDENTS AND BECOME A MENTOR

Student PSR (SPSR) has developed a physician mentor program to assist and guide students as they begin their journey as both medical students and social activists. The next generation of physician-activists are eager to build on their medical training and physician status to improve human health on a global level. However, the daunting demands of residency and building a career, combined with responsibilities to families, often leave little energy or time for activism. Medical students need—and indeed want—physician mentors whose experience and assistance will help guide them on their path. For more information about SPSR's mentor program, contact Alyson Michael at (202) 898-0150.

INITIATE A MEDICAL SOCIETY RESOLUTION

A resolution is a policy position adopted by county and state medical societies, the American Medical Association, and a host of specialty societies. Other health-related professional organizations, such as the Ameri-



can Nurses Association, also have resolution procedures. Medical society resolutions demonstrate support for a policy by a highly respected and trusted segment of society. Thus, they can be extremely useful in educating and influencing legislators, other policymakers, and the general public.

When initiating a resolution, first determine the process and format for submitting a resolution to the particular group in which you are interested. Begin talking to other members of the society to build broad support for the resolution. If you can recruit a local member of your state or national society to support your legislation,

preferably a leader or delegate, the chances of getting it passed at that level increase dramatically. Also, when the medical association meets to consider your resolution, bring colleagues to speak in favor of the resolution; usually, any licensed physician can speak at state medical meetings. Make sure your speakers have the information they need to make their presentations; ask PSR for background materials. Finally, once your resolution is passed by the state association or a specialty society, it may be forwarded to the American Medical Association. PSR can help you identify AMA delegates you should lobby for support.

STEP THREE



Broaden Your Perspective: Help To Build An Environmental Health Movement

We hope that you found the strategies for action in this kit useful, and that the kit provides you with a foundation for doing the kind of advocacy work that best matches your interests, skills, resources, and community's needs. Don't forget to be creative, take risks, and encourage others to get involved.

As your advocacy efforts develop and grow, we also encourage you to pay attention to the ways that safe drinking water issues intersect with other environmental health issues, including, but not limited to, children's health, reproductive health, climate change, agricultural and pesticide use reform, and environmental regulatory system reform. Your

efforts to promote safe drinking water, then, are part of a growing broad-based environmental health movement. The success of this movement depends on participation from health care providers such as yourself.

If you have further questions about this action kit, contact PSR's Safe Drinking Water Coordinator at (202) 898-0150 or info@psr.org. Also contact us if you would like to know more about the links between drinking water issues and other environmental health issues on which PSR works. These issues include climate change, persistent toxic substances, air pollution, antibiotic resistance, and children's environmental health.

This is a publication of Physicians for Social Responsibility. For reprint information or for additional copies, please contact: Physicians for Social Responsibility, 1101 14th Street, NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20005; Phone: 202-898-0150; Fax: 202-898-0172; Homepage: <http://www.psr.org>

PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Robert K. Musil, PhD, Executive Director
Sharon Newsome, Senior Director, Environment and Health Program
Susan West, MPH, Director, Environmental Health and Education and Outreach
Karen Perry, MPP, Associate Director
Karen Hopfl-Harris, JD, Associate Director for Policy
Carolyn, Poppell, ScM, Staff Scientist
Lara Hensley, Organizer for Climate and Health
Laura Rasar, MPH, CHES, Outreach Coordinator
Barbara Ley, MA, Safe Drinking Water Coordinator
Amanda Slagle, Outreach Assistant
Laura Ephraim, Program Assistant

PRIMARY CONTRIBUTORS

Barbara Ley, MA
Carolyn, Poppell, ScM
Amanda Slagle
Laura Ephraim

Copyright 2001 by Physicians for Social Responsibility, All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced without permission of Physicians for Social Responsibility, the U.S. Affiliate of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War.

Physicians for Social Responsibility
1101 14th Street, NW
Suite 700
Washington, DC 20005

PSR



Nonprofit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Permit No. 4297
Washington, DC