

Introduction

Dear Colleague:

Welcome to the Association of Rehabilitation Nurses (ARN) Health Policy Tool Kit. The purpose of this tool kit is to educate and inform nurses, other healthcare professionals, and people interested in healthcare issues about the public policy and legislative process; encourage involvement in our government at all levels; and affect positive change in health policy for rehabilitation nurses and people with rehabilitation needs and their families.

This tool kit has been developed as an introductory guidebook that outlines the role of rehabilitation nurses in health policy advocacy, explains the public policy and legislative process, and provides tips and resources regarding how you can help bring about change.

Getting involved in the public policy process may seem intimidating, confusing, or just outside the realm of what you do. However, we believe that you will find—through the information provided in these pages—that having an impact on our nation's policymaking process can be easy, fun, and effective! We hope you find this tool kit useful and will share it with your family, friends, and colleagues. Can one person help bring about change? Just think of the woman who started Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) or the family that brought about Megan's Law. The creator of MADD lost a child to a drunk driver. She developed a grassroots movement that changed how the United States addresses drinking and driving. Megan's Law, which requires sex offenders to register and notify communities where they live, is another example of how one family turned tragedy into triumph. The family members' efforts after they tragically lost their daughter resulted in changes in both state and federal policies on public notification and potential risk. Elizabeth Smart's father decided that no family should experience what his family did when she was abducted, so he took his idea for a nationwide Amber Alert system straight to the White House and President Bush took action. Can one person bring about a result in one law? Absolutely!

To be responsive to changes in ARN's advocacy activities and ensure that rehabilitation nurses have the latest and best resources, this tool kit will be updated annually and appended with additional information. We would like to acknowledge and thank both the original project team that developed this resource as well as the reviewers who contributed to its most recent revision.

We appreciate your interest and thank you in advance for becoming involved in advocacy and health policy issues.

Sincerely,

Susan Wirt, BSN RN CCM CLCP CRP CRRN
ARN President