

ADVOCACY NEWS

ADVOCACY ACTION

Calling All Advocates!

By Jim Fivecoat, OAC Chairman

Being Resourceful: OAC's New State Advocacy Resource (STAR) Program

In attempting to describe the Obesity Action Coalition's (OAC) new State Advocacy Resource (STAR) Program, I was reminded of a recent trip to Washington, DC. During my stay in the nation's capital, I made a side visit to the National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices.

My goal that day was to educate the members of the Center's Healthcare Division about the mission and the great work that is taking place at the OAC. At the end of this meeting, I was thanked for my time and efforts and also for my willingness to be a "resource" to the Center on obesity issues. I left feeling totally energized and excited.

The dictionary defines "resource" as a source of support, or source of information or expertise. When you stop and think, having someone call you a resource is a pretty cool thing. I believe all OAC members have been a resource at one time in their life – many on a continuing basis. We all have provided support to our family and friends throughout the years and we all can be a constant source regarding what it's like to be overweight or obese, or provide care for someone suffering from this disease. That's what the OAC's new STAR program is all about – stepping up in your state or territory to serve as the OAC's resource and representative at the local level.

We all have our radar up when we read or hear about new policies that unfairly discriminate or limit the rights of the overweight/obese. Those who live in their state's capital city surely receive a disproportionate amount of information about what the Governor and state legislature are up to. Keeping close tabs on changes in health insurance coverage policies for medical weight-loss management or bariatric surgery can be extremely helpful. What you do with this information can be of tremendous importance to the OAC.

The OAC is looking for a few good advocates. If you, or someone you know, would like to become an OAC STAR, please visit the "Advocacy" section of the OAC Web site. We'll help you make sure that access to care and the rights of the overweight/obese are protected in your state!



About the STAR Program

The purpose of the STAR program is to support and communicate the mission and goals of the OAC before the state legislature and regulatory agencies. The STAR program seeks individuals who are interested in volunteering their time and wish to make a strong impact in state advocacy initiatives. Responsibilities of STARs may include the following:

- Serve as OAC scouts at the local level in each state and territory of the United States – reporting back to the OAC when policy action is warranted in their respective state
- Voluntarily represent the OAC on state-based legislative and regulatory activities, such as monitoring legislation, meeting legislators and/or other elected or appointed officials, attending and/or testifying at legislative hearings
- Function as a local spokesperson for the OAC with the local media

Application to the OAC STAR program is an ongoing process. STARs are able to nominate themselves or be nominated by others. Applications are reviewed by the Board of Directors or a nominating committee designated by the Board. For more information on the STAR Program, visit the "Advocacy" section on the OAC Web site at www.obesityaction.org.