Tips on Effective Policy Education & Communication

- The goal is to provide decision makers with credible, compelling information and data in a timely manner.
- Work to building personal relationships with key decision makers and their staff members.
- Create alliances with allies and other stakeholders.
- Make your messages timely concise, and focused. Legislators are busy.
  - Provide good data and accurate information
  - Have an “elevator speech” ready
  - Acknowledge and address the other side of the issue/argument
  - Be unified and consistent with your messages.
  - Stick to your area of expertise
- Timing is important
  - Contact legislator prior to the session if possible
  - Make foundational arguments early in the debate
  - Issues are more focused later in the process
- In-Person communication is the preferred and most effective manner of communication
  - Opportunity for give and take
  - Body language and other non-verbal factors
- Correspondence can be effective from a constituent or expert
  - Letters, emails, and even faxes can work
  - Be as brief as possible (one page is best)
  - Leave it on a positive note
- Don’t be scared – Legislators are people too. Often you will know more than your legislator about substance abuse issues since they are dealing with so many issues. One legislator complained his knowledge was “10 miles long but only a foot deep.”
- Authenticity: Be yourself and let your passion shine through.
  - To find out who your state senator and representative are:
    1. Go to www.openstates.org
    2. Then type in Georgia
    3. Click on the Legislators Tab
    4. Enter your address in the box on the right to find your senator & representative.