

*Wednesday, January 21, 1:30-3:30PM
Concurrent Breakout Session*

Birth Defects Legislation

Moderator: Melanie Lockhart, March of Dimes National Office of Government Affairs, Washington, DC

Speakers: Melanie Lockhart, March of Dimes National Office of Government Affairs, Washington, DC

Jorey Berry, March of Dimes Texas Chapter, Austin, TX

Senator Paula F. Junlander (D) – invited, Utah State Legislature

Senator Lyle Hillyard (R) – invited, Utah State Legislature

Conni Wells, Parent Advocate, Florida

Advocacy plays a critical role in both establishing and maintaining the operation of birth defects surveillance programs. Advocacy is essential in helping to develop effective legislation and funding to support surveillance programs, and in helping to set priorities for policy makers. In an environment where public health surveillance programs must continuously compete for scarce funding resources, an effective advocacy strategy often makes the difference between which programs receive funding and which ones to do not.

This session will provide a variety of perspectives regarding advocacy for legislation to authorize and fund birth defects surveillance programs. Included in the presentation will be a national overview on state and federal legislation, a case study on successful state advocacy, comments by state legislators on what policy makers need to know to support surveillance programs, and a parent's experience in advocating for legislation.