

*Monday, February 11, 1:30PM-3:00PM  
Concurrent Breakout Session A*

***Educating Policy Makers about Birth Defects***

Moderator: Carolyn Mullen, March of Dimes

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

This session will provide a variety of perspectives regarding advocacy for authorizing and funding of birth defects programs. Included in the presentation will be an overview of the federal legislative process, examples of successful state advocacy, keys to effectively communicating with policy makers, and an interactive discussion on participant's experience with advocacy. This session is designed for anyone interested in providing advocates and policymakers with technical assistance to support birth defects programs, as well as background information for those participating in meetings with Members of Congress on Tuesday.