



# Advocating

## for the Counseling Profession as a Graduate Student

*Advocacy is our most effective tool for promoting progress and change in counseling.*

To protect and advance the counseling profession, ACA engages in several strategic efforts that have proven effective in securing needed support from legislators, policymakers and other stakeholders:

- **Monitoring legislation and policies** in federal and state legislatures and regulatory agencies to develop and execute effective advocacy strategies.
- **Building relationships** with policymakers, licensure boards, agency representatives, and the counseling community to strengthen our collective voice and impact.
- **Supporting advocates** by crafting strategic messaging to clarify the counseling profession's position on legislation and policies.
- **Providing research and analysis** that educates public officials and empowers them to make informed decisions that support the profession.

**Advocating for all counseling practice areas** supports the profession as a whole and helps in future legislative efforts. Your grassroots advocacy guides and inspires those in federal and state legislatures, as well as licensure boards, to recognize and support the advancement of the counseling profession.



As a graduate student, you play an essential role in advocacy efforts because you **AMPLIFY** the counseling profession's voice in critical spaces such as Capitol Hill, state legislatures and licensure boards.

**Your Voice Matters:** Elected officials and policymakers are interested in issues that affect their constituents and you are one of those constituents. As a member of the counseling profession, you have the power to influence policies that support your field, your colleagues and your clients.

**Your Expertise Matters:** The expert knowledge that you are developing, combined with your practical experience, provides you with the insight needed to explain how bills and state regulations affect counselors, clients and communities to decision-makers who may lack the knowledge necessary to decide whether to support or oppose legislation.



Legislation enacted today affects the counselors, clients and communities of tomorrow. As a graduate student today, you are one of those counselors of tomorrow.

## You Have a Story to Tell

*"It is understandable that counselors at all levels of professional experience may be nervous about getting involved in government affairs or legislative advocacy. However, remember that you already possess the tools needed to succeed. You do not need to be an expert on government or public policy to be an advocate. Legislators simply need to hear your story and your experiences as a counselor because they are not in the counseling field — you are. You are an expert on your profession. Remember, legislators are people just like you. They want that connection, communication, and community involvement as much as you do. Simply talking to them about your passions and concerns can create real, lasting, positive change."*

—Jennifer Toof,

ACA Public Policy and Legislative Committee member, graduate student



To learn more and find what you need to become an effective advocate, visit [ACA's Advocacy Resources](#) and [Legislative Agenda](#) pages.

For additional support with your advocacy efforts, contact the ACA Government Affairs team at [advocacy@counseling.org](mailto:advocacy@counseling.org).

# QUICK ADVOCACY GUIDE

## FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

### Connect with ACA's Government Affairs team

#### STEP 1

Sign up for alerts to stay up to date on all of ACA's calls to action.



#### STEP 2



Contact your legislators using ACA's messaging feature.

#### STEP 3

Learn more about ACA's advocacy initiatives and access resources

to assist you with contacting your lawmakers.



#### STEP 1

Get to know your state's licensure board:

1. Visit your state's licensure board website. Register to attend a licensure board meeting.
2. If the opportunity presents itself, introduce yourself during the meeting.
3. Continue attending and taking part in meeting. You don't have to attend every meeting, however, the more meetings you attend and participate in, the more familiar you become with and to the board its members.

#### STEP 2



Attend community meetings and legislative hearings:

Join a town hall, council meeting or state legislative meeting and share your story.

#### STEP 3

Working on a class project?

Contact legislators' or policymakers' offices to request a meeting with the representative to discuss the information you need to complete your project. Find your legislators' contact information at: <https://www.counseling.org/government-affairs/actioncenter>



### Build Relationships with Policy-makers and Other Decision-makers

#### STEP 1

Visit legislative websites

to sign up for your state's Senate and House Health and Education Committee newsletters and stay updated on your state legislature's actions.

#### STEP 2



Set up news alerts to receive policy and legislative updates related to counseling.

#### STEP 3

Follow your local and state representatives on social media (primarily Twitter) to be updated on local policy development. Respond to and share their posts.



### Monitor Local Policies