

# The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network **Volunteer Handbook**



*Together, we CAN change the future.*



[acscan.org](http://acscan.org)



ACS CAN, the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society, supports evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem. ACS CAN works to encourage elected officials and candidates to make cancer a top national priority. ACS CAN gives ordinary people extraordinary power to fight cancer with the training and tools they need to make their voices heard. For more information, visit [acscan.org](http://acscan.org).

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# A Letter from Our President

Dear Volunteer,

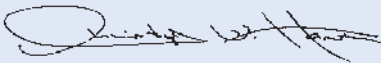
Welcome and thank you for your dedication in helping us fulfill the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) mission. We are so happy to have you aboard. In 10 years, ACS CAN has grown from just an office in a room with a phone and a goal to a leading health care nonprofit with clear strategies, united volunteers, and a strong voice. Every day, we are seeing an impact on cancer policies at the federal, state, and local levels because of our actions. We look forward to the day when cancer is a postscript in medical journals. Until then, we must all work together to keep our message consistent and our goals clear.

To ensure we remain effective, we continually review and assess our tools. We know and appreciate that many of you are using them to great success, and we hope this handbook will serve as an additional resource. We've compiled tips, tactics, and other "stuff" that you can use every day as an ACS CAN advocate.

As you become familiar with ACS CAN, please take a minute to let us know how we might support you as an advocate. You can reach us anytime at [advocacyinfo@cancer.org](mailto:advocacyinfo@cancer.org).

Thanks again for all that you do.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Hansen".

Chris Hansen

*President*

*American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network*

**Tab 1:**  
**Getting to Know ACS CAN**

# Getting to Know ACS CAN

## Learning objectives:

- **Be able** to state what the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) can do to impact cancer policy.
- **Be able** to communicate ACS CAN's policy priorities and accomplishments.
- **Be able** to pitch ACS CAN to potential new members.



## Together, We CAN Defeat Cancer

ACS CAN, the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society, supports evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem. ACS CAN works to encourage elected officials and candidates to make cancer a top national priority. ACS CAN gives ordinary people extraordinary power to fight cancer with the training and tools they need to make their voices heard. ACS CAN does not endorse candidates and is not a political action committee (PAC). Learn more by visiting the ACS CAN Web site at [acscan.org](http://acscan.org).



## What's the Difference?

The American Cancer Society and ACS CAN are independent organizations that share the same goals: to save lives from cancer and to diminish suffering from the disease. The Society and ACS CAN take different routes to meet these shared goals.

What ACS CAN does	What the Society does
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Leads a national grassroots movement of cancer survivors and their families to fight cancer through advocacy</li><li>• Holds lawmakers accountable for votes on cancer-related issues</li><li>• Educates the public, lawmakers, candidates, and the media about cancer issues</li><li>• Publishes voter guides and sponsors candidate forums</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Funds research</li><li>• Provides cancer information to the public</li><li>• Educates the public on cancer treatment, prevention, and early detection</li><li>• Works in local communities to help cancer patients</li><li>• Provides funding for advocacy and public policy work</li></ul>

## ACS CAN Talking Points

### **America CAN make cancer history.**

We know that:

- Sixty percent of all cancer deaths are preventable.
- Tobacco use accounts for nearly one-third of all cancers.
- One-third of cancer deaths are attributable to overweight/obesity, inactivity, and/or poor nutrition.
- Scientific breakthroughs are leading to better screening tests, treatments, and cancer-preventing vaccines.
- Breast, cervical, and colon cancer screenings save lives by detecting cancer early, when it is easier and less expensive to treat.
- Inadequate access to timely, quality health care is one of the greatest barriers to winning the war on cancer.



# ACS CAN Talking Points

## **ACS CAN works to ensure decision makers at all levels are doing everything they can to fight cancer.**

ACS CAN sets its policy priorities and actions to address the following:

- The Affordable Care Act, passed in March 2010, has the potential to make a difference in the lives of millions of people living with cancer. We will continue to work toward proper implementation of the law, which will help the nation's health care system transition to one that provides individuals with access to affordable, quality health care that emphasizes prevention and early detection.
- The federal government is the largest source of cancer research funding. In order to meet the goal of eliminating death and suffering related to cancer, we must ensure federal funding is sustained every year.
- Smoke-free laws, higher tobacco taxes, and well-funded tobacco control programs are proven ways to reduce tobacco-related illness, and we will continue our efforts in these areas.
- After a 10-year fight, we helped to pass The Family Smoking Prevention and Control Act which gives the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) unprecedented authority to regulate the production, marketing, and sales of tobacco products. Now our focus is implementation, which will force the tobacco industry to stop the marketing practices targeting youth and to stop misleading consumers; to disclose ingredients of their products; and to use larger and more effective warning labels on tobacco products.
- Currently, fewer than 1 in 5 low-income and uninsured women are able to take advantage of breast and cervical cancer screening and treatment due to insufficient funding for state and federal programs. We will continue to advocate for more funding for both state and federal programs.

## ACS CAN Talking Points

### **ACS CAN is the nation's leading cancer advocacy organization.**

- ACS CAN works every day to increase government funding for cancer research and programs.
- ACS CAN is committed to working community by community and state by state until all restaurants, bars and workplaces are smoke free.
- ACS CAN serves as the voice of cancer patients and survivors in Washington, D.C., and in every state legislature in the country.
- ACS CAN empowers volunteers by providing the trainings and tools to help make cancer a national priority.
- ACS CAN educates the public, lawmakers, candidates, and the media about the importance of the government's role in defeating cancer.
- ACS CAN holds lawmakers accountable by publishing voter guides and sponsoring candidate forums to get them "on the record" about their positions on key cancer issues.
- ACS CAN supports evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem.

1-1:

## Practice “pitching” ACS CAN.

### Find someone with whom you can practice your ACS CAN talking points.

Incorporate the answers to the following questions in your pitch:

1. What is ACS CAN?
2. What has ACS CAN accomplished?
3. What issues is ACS CAN working on?



**Tab 2:**  
**Understanding Your  
Role in the Advocacy  
Volunteer Structure**

# Understanding Your Role in the Advocacy Volunteer Structure

## Learning objectives:

- **Be able** to understand the advocacy volunteer leadership structure.
- **Be able** to articulate key volunteer leader roles and responsibilities in order to help recruit others.



## Description of the Advocacy Volunteer Structure

ACS CAN's continued success depends on the strength of its volunteers. In 2006, ACS CAN implemented an advocacy volunteer structure, which is built around Ambassador Constituent Teams (ACT!s). These teams handle the critical volunteer activities that support ACS CAN's local, state, and federal advocacy campaigns.

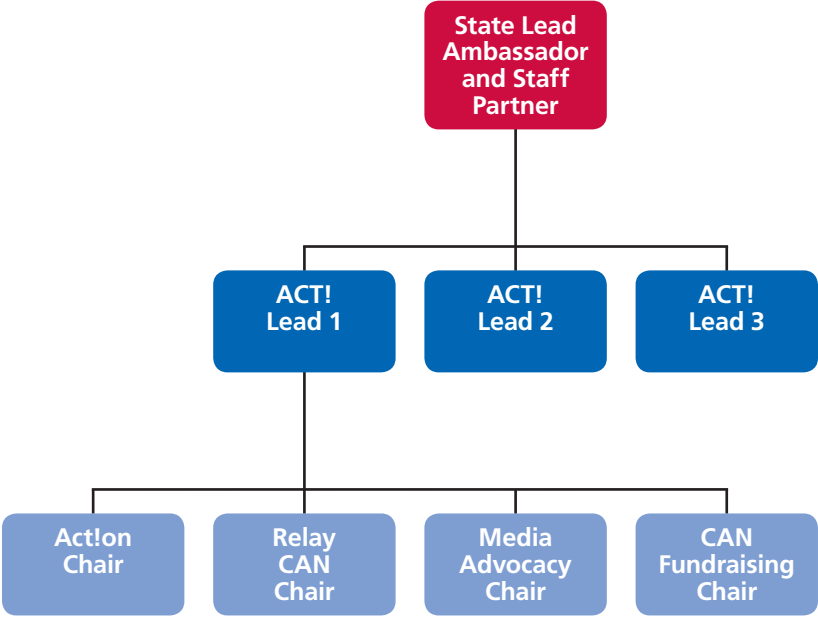
One State Lead Ambassador (SLA) represents each state, as well as the District of Columbia. SLAs serve as the main contact for their U.S. senators and oversee their states' ACT!s in their respective congressional districts. Each ACT! is led by an ACT! Lead, who works with the SLA and Division staff partners to recruit and support volunteers who specialize in these areas\*:

- Integrating advocacy into American Cancer Society Relay For Life®
- Fundraising
- Media
- Mobilization

This approach energizes existing volunteers, nurtures a new generation of volunteer leaders, and inspires others to join the ACS CAN movement.

\*The roles these volunteers serve in are typically referred to as CAN Chairs.

# Diagram of the Advocacy Volunteer Structure



## Ambassador Constituent Team (ACT!)

**Each member of an Ambassador Constituent Team (ACT!) has a clearly defined role that contributes to the group's overall function. The positions mirror the most critical components of successful advocacy campaigns.\***

### State Lead Ambassador

Works with staff partners and fellow volunteers to set recruiting, fundraising, training, and legislative campaign goals for the state and is the key volunteer contact for the state's US senators.

### ACT! Lead

Leads the Ambassador Constituent Team (ACT!) and serves as the primary volunteer contact with the member of Congress and other lawmakers from their district; recruits and brings together other local volunteers, called CAN Chairs, to lead district efforts in four specific areas: advocacy through Relay For Life events, ACS CAN fundraising, media advocacy, and mobilization.

### Relay CAN Chair

Provides resources and training on advocacy activities undertaken at Relay For Life events or within the Relay community in conjunction with Society Relay staff and volunteers.

### CAN Fundraising Chair

Plans and implements ACS CAN fundraisers in the district.

### Media Advocacy Chair

Works closely with Division communications staff to build relationships with and monitor local media; serves as a local spokesperson when appropriate; and disseminates appropriate ACS CAN information via social media networks and other outlets.

### Act!on Chair

Bolsters ACT! mobilization, carries out campaign activities, organizes ACT! communications, and cultivates volunteers.

You can learn more about the volunteer structure at [acscan.org/volunteerstructure](http://acscan.org/volunteerstructure).

\* Active team roles may vary according to state and Division.

## Exercise 2-1:

# Test your knowledge of the roles in the Advocacy Volunteer Structure!

1. Initiates and maintains contact with U.S. senators:

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2. Develops and implements fundraising ideas for their district:

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3. Serves as the key volunteer contact with U.S. representatives:

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4. Builds relationships with local media:

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5. Provides resources for and information on training at Relay For Life events:

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6. Helps mobilize ACTs! and carries out campaign activities:

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**Tab 3:**  
**Honing the Necessary Skills**

# Honing the Necessary Skills

## Learning objectives:

- **Be able** to apply tips on volunteer recruitment, involvement, recognition, and retention.
- **Be able** to have more effective meetings with decision makers.
- **Be able** to apply strategies to help improve ACS CAN membership recruitment and fundraising.
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# Volunteer Recruitment Tips

- **Know what volunteers you need.**

When someone comes to you wanting to volunteer, know where you might use them.

- **Be prepared!** Know your organization, and be prepared to “share the vision” and the specific job responsibilities with your potential recruit.
- **Ask!** Many people may not be interested in your organization or program because they have not been asked to become involved.
  - Ask one-on-one. Blanket invitations (“If anyone is interested ... see me after the meeting.”) rarely get you the volunteers you need.
  - Be able to articulate what kind of time commitment you think the role will entail.
- **Celebrate diversity.** Diversity (i.e., race, gender, experience, socioeconomic, age) is important in any volunteer structure.
- **Reach outside your “comfort zone.”** Go to other organizations and those outside your social circle for volunteers.
- **Follow through, follow through, follow through!**

(Source: Kathy Luetete, American Cancer Society, Learning Design & Delivery)

## ACTION TOOLS

### Facebook & Twitter

Follow ACS CAN on Facebook and Twitter to see regular updates on our activities, accomplishments, and action opportunities.

**Facebook:** [acscan.org/facebook](https://www.facebook.com/acscan)

**Twitter:** [twitter.com/acscan](https://twitter.com/acscan)

### Messages

Text “Volunteers” to 30644 to join ACS CAN’s mobile action network. It’s the fastest way to receive legislative updates and a great tool for recruiting new volunteers.

# Volunteer Recruitment Tips

**Be creative in attracting volunteers, offering a variety of positions to groups of individuals who may have been overlooked in the past. A few ideas:**

- **Short-term Volunteers**

These individuals are interested in activities that are short in duration, with a definite start and end date, including annual or periodic events.

- **Family Volunteers**

Many individuals view volunteering as a great chance to do something as a family. This is an important resource to tap, because having an entire family telling of a struggle with cancer can provide a powerful message. Families would be ideal for periodic volunteering.

- **College Volunteers**

College towns provide a deep well of volunteers. Contact organizations within the institution, both social and academic, to present the ACS CAN message and cultivate an opportunity for increased involvement.

– For more information on working with college volunteers, please visit the Colleges Against Cancer® page at [cancer.org](http://cancer.org).

- **Virtual Volunteers**

Create Web pages, email alerts, and other sources of Web-related involvement, allowing individuals to volunteer from the comfort of a home or work computer.

- **Volunteers with Disabilities**

Individuals with disabilities are a vast, but underused, source of volunteer talent. Volunteering is a way to participate in meaningful, productive work.

(Source: ServiceLeader.org)

## Volunteer Involvement Tips

- **Share goals.** Make sure everyone is on the same page in terms of goals.
- **Have an action plan.** That is the only way to know how to use your volunteers.
- **Don't recruit and then not utilize your resources.** Use volunteers in all that you do. Be creative.
- **Empower them to do their job!** Train volunteers, give them the tools/materials they need, give them information they need to represent ACS CAN in their communities, and be a resource for them.
- **Let them do their jobs!** The job/task may not be done exactly the way you would have done it, but that's OK. It might even turn out better.
- **Don't try to fit them into your "box."** Again, a diverse group comes up with diverse ideas and solutions. Encourage that creativity.
- **"Titles" often scare people.** Give them the job first. Once they see they are able to do a job well, they can more easily accept the title.
- **Remember that people sometimes like to volunteer for jobs that are different from what they do every day.** Give them that opportunity to express their interests.
- **Don't carry "dead weight."** Give volunteers a graceful way out if they are not able to do the job, or talk to them about a smaller task, perhaps in a different area.
- **Learn to delegate!**

# Volunteer Retention and Recognition Tips

- **Recruit the right person.** Time crunches often happen where you need to recruit a volunteer quickly. Unfortunately, if you recruit the wrong person or don't take time to train/equip them properly, you end up with the job being done incorrectly and/or the job being done by you.
- **Identify the reason.** Understand why each person volunteers and then nurture that reason.
- **Be there, be accessible, be visible.** Try to be available, accessible, and visible to your volunteers so they know you're a resource.
- **Let them know you need them.** Let your volunteers know that you need them in order for the program/project/event to be successful.
- **Clearly communicate their role and responsibilities during recruitment.** Volunteers who know up front what is expected will be more likely to a) get the job done and b) stay around for a while. Partnership agreements and job descriptions are the best tools for this.
- **Build RELATIONSHIPS!** Relationships build trust. Trust builds honesty. Calling volunteers once a month does not make a relationship. Relationship-building must be done in person – it cannot be done solely via email or voicemail.
- **Say thank you!** Donors should be thanked seven (7!) times before you ask them again. Do the same thing for our most valuable asset – our VOLUNTEERS!
- **Keep in touch.** Write a note to say they're doing a great job! Don't communicate with them only when you need something. Send them a holiday card. Give them a quick call.
- **Affirm their satisfaction about the work they are performing.**
- **Say "thank you!" (again, and again, and again ...)**

## Exercise 3-1: Remember why you got involved!

Take a few moments to remember why you are involved with ACS CAN by thinking about these questions:

- Are you a cancer survivor, or a friend or family member of a cancer patient or survivor? If so, how did your experience influence your work with ACS CAN?
- Did someone recruit you to become involved? If so, what did that person do or say to convince you how much your work was needed?
- Are there individuals you can think of at this moment who could become passionate ACS CAN volunteers, but they haven't been asked properly or by the right person?
- What events or activities offer great opportunities for people to get involved?

As much as a personal story can be effective in motivating people on Capitol Hill, it can be just as effective in recruiting volunteers. Discuss your answers with others to practice talking about your passion for the fight against cancer.



# Lobbying Basics

**Lobbying legislators is about persuading them to do what you want. There are five main categories of legislators to think about:**

## **1. Champions**

All issues need a group of legislators who are committed advocates. What they can do for you is make the case to their colleagues; help develop a strong “inside” strategy; and be visible, public spokespeople. They need good information and visible support outside the Capitol.

## **2. Allies**

This group of legislators will be on your side but can be pushed to do more – to speak up in party caucuses or on the floor.

## **3. Fence-sitters**

Some legislators will be uncommitted on the issues, potentially able to vote either way. These are your key targets. Your lobbying strategy is to put together the right mix of “inside” persuasion and “outside” pressure to sway them your way.

## **4. Mellow Opponents**

Another group of legislators will be clear votes against you, but they are not inclined to be active on the issue. With this group, it’s important to keep them from becoming more active by lobbying them enough to give them pause but not enough to make them angry.

## **5. Hard-core Opponents**

Finally, there are legislators who are leading your opposition. It is important to isolate them; to highlight the extremes of their positions, rhetoric, and alliances; and to give other lawmakers pause about joining them.

(Source: The Democracy Center)

## Tips for Effective Lobbying

- Research your legislators' backgrounds, committee assignments, and voting records on health and cancer issues.
- Develop relationships with your legislators by routinely visiting, writing, and calling them. Let them know you're a constituent.
- Don't overdo your lobbying. Only write, call, or visit when you have something to say.
- Invite your legislators to visit your local cancer center to demonstrate the importance of cancer research funding.
- Put a human face to the issue. Lobby with your personal stories and real-life experiences.
- Ally yourself with other like-minded groups to demonstrate broad support; collaborate with others.
- Don't forget the media. Get your message out through letters to the editor, op-ed pieces, etc., to influence your legislators and public opinion.
- Always be positive and courteous.
- Remember to thank each of your legislators for a job well done.



# How a Bill Becomes a Law: To Be Effective, Know the Process

Is your memory of high school civics a little hazy? Take the time to refresh your memory on the basics of the legislative process. Here are some general guidelines:

- A bill is introduced in at least one chamber of the legislature.
- It is then assigned to the committee or committees that oversee the issue the bill addresses.
- Often, the bill is referred to subcommittee for further consideration.
- The committee decides to approve, amend, defeat, or table the bill.
- If the bill goes forward, either amended or in its original form, the full chamber considers the bill.
- If both chambers, the House and the Senate, approve the bill, it goes to a conference committee to work out any differences or discrepancies.
- If both chambers approve the final bill, it continues on to the governor or president, who can either veto or sign the bill.
- If vetoed, the House and the Senate have the opportunity to override the veto by a vote.

(Source: Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest)

## Exercise 3-2:

**Know Your Elected Officials****Fill out the following:**

<b>Your U.S. Senators</b>		
Name		
D.C. Office Phone Number		
State Office Phone Number		
Address for Contact		
Email/Web Site Address		

<b>Your U.S. Representatives</b>	
Name and District	
D.C. Office Phone Number	
State Office Phone Number	
Address for Contact	
Email/Web Site Address	

# Know Your Elected Officials (continued)

## Your State Senators

Name		
District Number		
State Office Phone Number		
Address for Contact		
Email/Web Site Address		

## Your State Representatives

Name	
District Number	
State Office Phone Number	
Address for Contact	
Email/Web Site Address	

## Hook, Line, and Sinker

Hook, Line, and Sinker is a simple strategy to help you with your advocacy efforts. Using this approach will help ensure that you cover the key points to make your legislative ask strong and effective.

This approach can be used in different situations, including:

- Visiting your elected officials
- Making a request by phone, email, or letter
- Speaking to the media
- Testifying in a committee hearing



# Hook, Line, and Sinker

## **Hook: Introductions**

Everyone should briefly introduce themselves at the start of the meeting. Consider sharing a few unique details to underscore the fact that your group represents a broad cross section of constituents in your congressional district.

## **Line: Stories and Statistics**

Provide the decision maker with local stories and/or basic statistics about your chosen issue. This could include sharing personal stories and experiences. Decision makers especially appreciate real-life examples that put a human face on an issue.

## **Sinker: The Request**

Stay on message! Make a clear request of the decision maker. Ask for a commitment, and then listen carefully to the response. Decision makers often need some time to consider supporting or opposing a proposed change, but they often share important insights into their thought process. Please remember to thank them before you leave!

## Exercise 3-3: **Practice Hook, Line, and Sinker**

Practice Hook, Line, and Sinker at your next meeting.

Split up into small groups of three to five people. This way, members of your group can alternate playing the role of the volunteer spokesperson and the decision maker.

Only one person needs to deliver the Sinker. However, every person should deliver their own Hook and Line.

One round of Hook, Line, and Sinker should be done in eight to 10 minutes, but it also depends on how many people are in the group.

Practice! Practice! Practice!



# ACS CAN Membership Recruitment and Fundraising

Fundraising is a critical part of our mission. Here are some simple tools to help you feel more comfortable approaching potential members. The easiest way to get others involved is to encourage them to become members of ACS CAN. It only costs \$10 a year and includes:

- **Personalized Legislative Toolkit** – everything a person needs to take action on behalf of ACS CAN
- **Membership Card**
- **Access to a Personal “I CAN” Web Page** – an online place to tell your story and raise money for ACS CAN

Need a creative way to recruit new members? Try using the Five I’s for quick results! Use these ideas as a guide when approaching potential members.

- **Impact** – Tell them what ACS CAN is trying to achieve.
- **Inspiration** – Tell them your advocacy story.
- **Information** – Tell them what ACS CAN is working on now.
- **Inclusion** – Tell them how the voices and dollars from thousands of ACS CAN members will be heard and make a difference.
- **Interaction** – Tell them about [acscan.org](http://acscan.org), [twitter.com/acscan](https://twitter.com/acscan), and our Facebook page, where they can stay up to date with the latest information.

# Your “I CAN” Page

## Create an “I CAN” Page

Visit [acscan.org/icanpages](http://acscan.org/icanpages) to create your “I CAN” page, where you can tell your story, ask your friends and family to take action, and help advocate on behalf of ACS CAN.

## Top Five Tips for a Successful “I CAN” Page

- 1. Just because you’ve created an “I CAN” page doesn’t mean people are donating** – The key to a successful page that raises money is a volunteer’s outreach to friends, family, and coworkers. When you create your page, set some goals for yourself. For example, decide how many emails you would like to send out and how much money you would like to raise within a certain timeframe; then, make it happen.
- 2. Update your “I CAN” page with new text and pictures** – The goals of ACS CAN aren’t going to change anytime soon, but the ways we achieve our goals change often. By keeping your “I CAN” page updated with new ACS CAN information, your friends, family, and other donors will learn why ACS CAN is so valuable.
- 3. Share your “I CAN” page through Facebook and other social media tools** – Social media sites are great for informing people what you care about. Once you’ve created your “I CAN” page and your personalized short Web address, post it to your status update and ask friends and family to visit your “I CAN” page to make a donation. Do this every month with a new ACS CAN success story, and it will be seen by many people.

## Your “I CAN” Page (continued)

- 4. Advertise an ACS CAN fundraiser on your page** – So you’ve decided to host a small ACS CAN fundraiser, such as a bake sale or car wash. An “I CAN” page is the perfect way to collect donations online and to advertise what you’re doing! Update your “I CAN” page text with the type of event, as well as the date and the time. Then send an email to everyone in your address book to ask for their support.
- 5. Check your page often** – We all know that ACS CAN’s legislative battle is an ongoing process. Fundraising for ACS CAN is, too. Be sure to visit your page frequently, and use the reports within the tool to see how many emails you’ve sent out, who has opened your messages, and who has donated. And view other volunteers’ “I CAN” pages for ideas and success stories.



## Tips for ACS CAN Fundraising

### How do I host an ACS CAN fundraising event?

You're ready to take the next step in the fundraising world and help plan an event for ACS CAN. You have your idea, but where do you go from there? These next six points should be your guide in creating a successful event.

**Planning** – Talk to your staff partner, and get other volunteers involved. Set your attendance and fundraising goals, as well as the date, time, and location of the event. Then, determine with your staff partner the pros and cons of inviting a legislator. Your staff partner will be able to do all of the necessary work getting your event approved by ACS CAN.

**Host Committee** – Remember, you're a dedicated volunteer, but you can't do everything alone. Creating a Host Committee to help with aspects of the event such as invitations, food, entertainment, etc., may be a very worthwhile step. Ask other ACT! Leads, local ACS CAN members, a local legislator, or a local business owner to chair your committee, and ask friends, family members, and coworkers to help in the planning.

**Inviting Participants** – The most important tip: It doesn't matter *what* you are inviting participants to, but *who* does the inviting! When you contact people you know to join you for a cause you believe in, they will come, but you have to do the asking! Your staff partner can help with invitation lists that include local ACS CAN members and local Society donors. And feel free to use your own holiday card lists and wedding invite lists to find participants.

## Tips for ACS CAN Fundraising (continued)

**Sponsors & Donations** – To make the most profit from each event, find sponsors to pay for or donate to your event. For example, your grocery store may be willing to donate party platters; a local bakery may make a custom cake; and a friendly company may donate cash to help cover the cost of entertainment. The sky is the limit when it comes to sponsors: describe the successes of ACS CAN, bring handouts when you approach them, and create sponsorship benefits, such as their name and logo on the invitations, to get them excited.

**Event** – The day you've been waiting for is here. Organize your volunteers to take tickets; guide your attendees and speakers; and thank your attending VIPs, sponsors, event chair, and host committee. After all of your preparation, be sure to enjoy yourself!

**Post-event** – While it may seem like your event is over when the last guest leaves, that's just not the case. A few days after the event, meet with your staff partner to draft thank-you letters and to discuss what went well and what can be improved upon. The first year of hosting an event will always be the hardest, and if you maintain the relationships that you've created this time, they'll more than likely participate again next year.

## Introduction to Direct Action Organizing (DAO)

*Cancer is a political issue.* Every day, our elected and appointed officials make critical decisions about a variety of cancer issues, including funding for research, ensuring coverage for effective cancer screenings, mandating smoke-free workplaces, improving access to cancer care, and many others.

It is increasingly important to have well-trained advocacy volunteers and staff who can effectively organize and win these important political battles in our ongoing campaign against cancer.

One proven organizing model we use at ACS CAN is called Direct Action Organizing (DAO). DAO provides a strategic framework by which we can organize the many people affected by cancer and motivate them to take action to win on our issues and build an even stronger advocacy organization.

Throughout the year, we provide nationwide DAO training opportunities. The goal of the training is to have you – our key volunteers – begin to “think like organizers.” As such, you can help empower our growing number of grassroots advocates to effectively interact with their elected officials and to continue to win on the issues that improve the lives of cancer patients, their families, and caregivers.

DAO training is an excellent opportunity for demonstrating how we can wield the power we have – our committed, passionate, informed volunteers – to help defeat cancer. Please contact your staff partner if you are interested in learning more or attending a DAO training.

**Tab 4:**  
**Taking Action**

# Taking Action

Taking part in ACS CAN's legislative campaigns on the national, state, and local level is fun and easy to do. There are activities and campaigns that we focus on year-round, and you can help to lead our campaigns to victory.

Here are some activities you can do each month to keep yourself and your fellow advocates engaged in our campaigns. For help or more information on any of these activities, contact your local advocacy staff partner and check out [acscan.org/volunteerstructure](https://acscan.org/volunteerstructure) frequently for updates.

## **January:**

Each January, the president makes the annual State of the Union address to the nation. During this address, the president's legislative priorities are laid out to Congress and our nation. ACS CAN volunteers can take part by hosting a State of the Union Watch Party to see if the president mentions cancer or any of our other legislative priorities during the speech. Following the address, Congress starts to work on its federal budget priorities.

## **February:**

Congress typically celebrates President's Day with a congressional recess. During recess, members of Congress will return home to see constituents and hear their concerns. This would be a critical time to contact your members of Congress and let them know that you want them to support more funding for cancer research. Visit our campaign page at [acscan.org/research](https://acscan.org/research) to find out how you can take action.

## **March:**

Colon Cancer Awareness Month is celebrated in March, and this is a perfect time to let elected officials know that they have a role in fighting colon cancer. Visit [acscan.org](https://acscan.org) to learn more about our campaign to fight colon cancer and what you can do to take action.

## Taking Action

### **April:**

Participate in a congressional spring recess event. Contact your local advocacy staff partner for the most up-to-date legislative messaging.

### **May:**

Send a special Mother's Day message to those special ladies in your life, encouraging them to join ACS CAN in the fight against breast cancer. ACS CAN is fighting breast cancer by working to ensure that uninsured and underinsured women have access to mammograms.

### **June:**

Help us celebrate the more than 11 million cancer survivors in this country. Honor all survivors by calling your members of Congress, and urging them to support more funding for cancer research and the National Institutes of Health and National Cancer Institute.

### **July:**

Congress recesses for Fourth of July, but we know that you won't stop fighting cancer. Send a letter to the editor of your local newspaper, urging lawmakers to do their part in supporting ACS CAN's legislative agenda. You can ask your staff partner for a sample letter to the editor.

### **August:**

Members of Congress return to their districts in August to work directly with their constituents. Check out [acscan.org](http://acscan.org) to review our current legislative priorities, and then stop by the office of your member of Congress with a personal note about how these priorities matter to you. It's also a great time to remind them you'll be stopping by their office in Washington, D.C., during our annual Leadership Summit and Lobby Day in September.

# Taking Action

## **September:**

Join ACS CAN at its annual Lobby Day on Capitol Hill this month in Washington, D.C. Host a house party to let your friends and family know what you are doing to fight cancer and what you will be doing in Washington to advance our legislative agenda.

## **October:**

Take part in Breast Cancer Awareness Month by sending a letter or making a phone call to your elected leaders. Urge them to fully fund the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program. Currently, fewer than one in five eligible women is able to be screened due to inadequate funding for this program. Help us let Congress know that this is unacceptable.

## **November:**

Fight tobacco during the American Cancer Society Great American Smokeout®. Call or email your members of Congress, and urge them to support our tobacco legislation this legislative session.

## **December:**

With the end of the year, it's time to celebrate our victories and prepare for the next year of success. Visit your local elected officials' offices, and give or send them holiday cards, thanking them for their support, as well as providing a "wish list" of cancer priorities that you want them to accomplish in the new year.

## **Teamwork – Turning Leadership into Action**

As an ACS CAN advocate, you play a key role in the fight against cancer in your community, in your state, and across our nation. By working closely together with your staff partners and other volunteers, you are building a grassroots army that decision makers at every level of government must acknowledge. And, just like building an army, we need strong leadership, capable recruits, and basic training to be effective in our fight. We also need to be able to put real power behind our actions to show that we mean business.

As individuals, we don't have much power, but collectively, we do. As you may know from participating in Relay For Life events, working as local teams across the nation can be extremely successful.

Likewise, each advocate needs to build and work with a team to move our shared mission forward. Advocates must take initial and ongoing actions to organize the team and expand its capability. The next several pages provide specific suggestions about how to accomplish this.

# SLAs' Team-building Activities

## If you are a State Lead Ambassador (SLA)

A large part of your role as a State Lead Ambassador (SLA) is to head a team of Ambassador Constituent Team Leads (ACT! Leads) in each congressional district in your state. Working with your state staff partner, you will help recruit, train, and mobilize ACT! Leads and coordinate activities with other key volunteer leaders such as those from Relay For Life and Making Strides Against Breast Cancer events, as well as SLAs from other states.

- 1. Recruit effective ACT! Leads** – A committed ACT! Lead in each congressional district in your state ensures that every member of Congress has contact with a skilled ACS CAN constituent leader. The ACT! Lead is the “point person” in each district and is tasked with building a local team of additional cancer advocates needed to exert the power to win on our issues at the local, state, and national levels. Check with your staff partner for recruiting “best practices” and to generate leads.
- 2. Communicate regularly with your ACT! Leads** – This can be done in person, by phone, or electronically over the Web using email or social networking sites like Facebook. Share issue information, alerts and upcoming meetings, or other activities with these key members of your state team. Help them plan specific strategies and tactics to employ during each campaign. Inform them about online or other trainings that may enhance their advocacy skills. Inquire about what else they may need to perform their important role in building and mobilizing their local teams.

## State Lead Ambassadors (continued)

- 3. Facilitate in building the ACT!** – Monitor how each ACT! Lead is working to build an effective Ambassador Constituent Team in their district. Suggest best practices you have learned from trainings and your own experience. Recognize volunteers who may be ready to become Ambassador leaders in their district. Report back to your staff partner on each team's progress.
- 4. Have fun!** – Help your ACT! Leads plan a potluck. Give team members leadership or speaking roles in state lobby days and at group meetings. Give special recognition to those who go "above and beyond." Celebrate victories together!



# ACT! Leads' Team-building Activities

## If you are an Ambassador Constituent Team Lead (ACT! Lead)

- 1. Build your local district team** – No ACT! Lead can do this job alone. Work with your SLA and staff partner to identify and recruit other Ambassador leaders and volunteers (Advocates) to form a local team of committed cancer fighters in your district. Working together locally in large numbers makes us a more powerful force. We highly recommend each team recruit an Ambassador leader focused on each of four CAN Chair roles: Media Advocacy, Act!on, CAN Fundraising, and the team relationship with Relay For Life events. In turn, each Chair should build a team made up of additional Ambassadors and Advocates who can help with the work. This is your team and you should work with them to set goals and expectations.
- 2. Keep your team informed and active** – It is critical that you set up a regular communication process with your team so that you can update and mobilize your team members throughout your district. You should set up regular meetings (or conference calls) with your chairs as needed to discuss team matters, update issues, and a plan of action. In most situations, information must be communicated quickly and accurately to have an effect on your local decision maker. When we act together locally in large numbers, we can have a much larger impact!
- 3. Have fun!** – As with any team, build in activities where you can get to know one another. Hold a team meeting at the new restaurant in town. Celebrate a victory with your staff partner when they are in the area. Recognize the hard work of your team chairs and report “best practices” back to your SLA and staff partner. Remember – teamwork is contagious!

NOTE: We currently have trainings on both Leadership (which includes Recruiting, Retention, and Recognition) and the Role of CAN Chairs. Please contact your state staff partner for more information or if you need additional resources.

## ACT! Chairs

As you recruit each of your team chairs, realize that each of them has an important role in our structure. Here are some suggestions about how to get them started.

**Media Advocacy Chair** – Working with the ACT! Lead, the Media Advocacy Chair should build a list of local media contacts in print, radio, and television. They should monitor the media in their area to find out who is usually reporting on cancer-related issues, or public policy issues in general. This can be done by “clipping” newspaper stories, or simply noting which electronic outlets are covering our issues. When appropriate, use these contacts to send out approved press releases, letters to the editor, event information, or other material to build that relationship. The Media Advocacy Chair can also use social media sites on the Web to share appropriate ACS CAN information about our campaigns.

**Act!on Chair** – The Act!on Chair should build a contact list of all the members of the ACT! This list should include all active Team Chairs and their committees, as well as other critical relationships in the district (e.g., Relay Leaders, Making Strides Chairs, etc.). Working with the ACT! Lead, the Act!on Chair should devise a process for easy communication with all or some of the team for meetings, events, or widespread mobilization, including advocates who have opted to stay in touch with team activities. This may involve creating and maintaining phone trees, email lists, or other communication channels. The Act!on Chair should also take the lead in logistical support for tactics the team may undertake (e.g., finding appropriate venues for a press conference, setting up a meeting with a district office, and calling to remind everyone to show up at the appointed time). The Act!on Chair may need to recruit additional members to the committee for geographical purposes (e.g., some members may be in a different area code, or may be more familiar with certain areas of the district).

## ACT! Chairs (continued)

**CAN Fundraising Chair** – The CAN Fundraising Chairs must acquaint themselves with ACS CAN and become familiar with the purpose and legal parameters of the organization. Reviewing the ACS CAN Frequently Asked Questions material is a good start. Working with their ACT! Lead, they should seek out local fundraising opportunities, such as house parties and having everyone set up personal I CAN pages, as well as inform the ACT! Lead of large donor possibilities that could be pursued by ACS CAN staff. They can also contact “lapsed” ACS CAN members in their district and make a personal pitch to rejoin and become an active part of the local team. The CAN Fundraising Chairs may recruit other members to help with these efforts as necessary.

**Relay CAN Chair** – Relay CAN Chairs build ongoing relationships with their local Relay For Life events. They inform and motivate Relay participants to FIGHT BACK through advocacy by taking steps to defeat cancer through legislative action. By letting Relay participants know about advocacy and why joining ACS CAN is so important, they become part of the nationwide grassroots movement that is helping to place cancer at the top of the nation’s agenda.

Relay CAN Chairs serve as a resource for each Relay committee and Relay Advocacy Chair in their local district, and they are involved with legislative campaigns and ACS CAN member recruitment.

## Online Resources

ACS CAN is committed to providing you with the tools and training you need to flourish in your role. For more information and resources, please visit the following Web sites, which contain general information that will help you succeed in your role.

### **[acscan.org](https://www.acscan.org)**

This is the official site of ACS CAN and the primary source of tools, resources, and information on ACS CAN campaigns, state pages, and action opportunities.

### **[acscantraining.org](https://www.acscan.org/training)**

This 30-minute training includes background on ACS CAN and our volunteer structure, the organization's policy priorities, and the roles and responsibilities of our volunteers and how volunteers contribute and impact ACS CAN's legislative successes.

### **[acscan.org/leaders](https://www.acscan.org/leaders)**

This volunteer Web page serves as a virtual community in which you can find information, access tools, and share best practices. Available on this page are links to training modules on several ACS CAN priority issues: breast and cervical cancer screening, colon cancer screening, Medicaid, and tobacco cessation.

### **[relayforlife.org/relay/tr](https://www.relayforlife.org/relay/tr)**

This page, which is from the American Cancer Society Relay For Life Web site, provides training materials and resources on different skills used in the Relay world that could be applied to advocacy – team development, leadership development, event development, and fundraising.