

Young Adult Council Blog Series

Impact of Grassroots Advocacy

February 7, 2023

Grassroots advocacy is where the power of the collective voice is utilized to spotlight the importance of a specific legislative cause. The Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action (EDC) capitalizes on the collective power of grassroots advocacy to push bills forward.

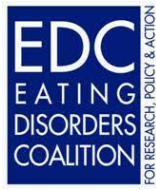
Grassroots advocacy shows that not only is a bill, program, or cause important to an organization but that it is important to individuals too. Through the [EDC Ambassador Program](#) and EDC's community participation in [action alerts](#), the EDC can help policymakers be confident that the causes we support are important to their constituents.

The EDC builds its grassroots advocacy base through Days of Actions, our Annual Advocacy Day, and organization collaborations. Our direct connection to policymakers is through our community- without it, we aren't able to fully leverage all the benefits of grassroots advocacy.

Read on to learn about EDC Young Adult Council Members, Annalee Drumm Najman Mahboub, dedication and passion to grassroots advocacy and what led them to become involved with the EDC.

What has been your experience with grassroots advocacy?

Annalee: While I had volunteered with numerous organizations whose mission was to register adults and young people alike to vote, it was not until I got involved with Congresswoman Mary Gay Scanlon's (D-PA-05) Congressional Youth Cabinet that I felt I was able to make a true impact. In September of 2021 I began serving on the cabinet with other politically minded young adults and during one of

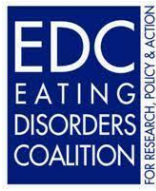


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our first meetings, we established that we wanted our focus for the year to be voter registration. Congresswoman Scanlon provided us with the resources we needed to educate ourselves on the nuances of registering to vote, important deadlines, and how to properly educate peers after they are registered. Much of the process was learning the ins and outs of voting ourselves. I soon realized that having a team to support my learning and process was crucial in my eventual success.

Only a year later, in September of 2022 before the Midterm Elections, I joined with members of the Cabinet to host voter registration drives at our respective schools. At this point, I believed I had enough first hand experience through phone banking and necessary skills to yield successful results. I am happy to say that I was able to register 100% of eligible voters with the Cabinet's average being 87%. Here, we recognized a lack of youth voter turnout, developed a plan, sought the proper resources, and collaborated. While the process sounds simple, it was hours of work (done mainly by students!!), and certainly a labor of passion. It was empowering to address this issue through a grassroots approach - having started with little to no resources and utilizing our local government for additional support I ultimately produced an incredible outcome!

Najman: At the Policy Initiatives Institute, grassroots advocacy has been a core tool in the pursuit of our mission goals. Drawing on values of coalition building, community contact, and media outreach I have had the cherished opportunity to observe the unfathomable ceiling of impact such campaigns can evoke. In June 2021 my organization had an opportunity to revisit this field through the [Youth Empowerment Policy Advocacy Initiative](#). While the campaign's legislative goals are still continuing to this day, its social impact has already partly sprung forth. Media coverage, online commentary, and endorsement from key figures such as the Congressional Future Forum Caucus has aroused a powerful collaborative discussion of our proposed policy. I mention this specifically because while not all campaigns are initially legislatively successful they often still give rise to an array



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of social and cultural innovation. Change simply does not end on the lawmakers desk - grassroots advocacy understands this through drawing both on the importance of legislative impact while also prioritizing community cultivation. Perhaps this dichotomy of bottom-up advocacy is what has powered its immense growth through the world. From passionate coalitions at universities and schools, to dedicated teams at non-profit organizations, and local leaders, grassroots advocacy continues to be a core skill set for any issue-passionate individuals.

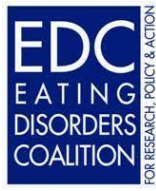
How did you learn about the EDC and why did you get involved with the organization?

Annalee: I learned about the EDC through my own research and as soon as I learned about their mission, I wanted to become involved! I chose the EDC specifically because the intersection of policy and work surrounding eating disorders was something I had not seen elsewhere. I felt as though the Ambassador Program and additional workshops would give me the opportunity to make meaningful connections and an impact on my community.

Najman: I initially learned about the EDC through my involvement with the Harvard STRIPED Coalition. After engaging in the Capitol Hill Advocacy Day, I was pleasantly surprised by the passion and dedication of many EDC members and chose to become further involved. Through its many programs, the EDC allows members to interact and connect with others advocating for similar causes - a main motivator for my initial involvement.

Can you share what you have worked on with the EDC, both through the Ambassador Program and on the Young Adult Council?

Annalee: Through the Ambassador Program I gave testimonies that were used to demonstrate my personal struggles, experiences, and the reason for my advocacy. I



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was also able to send many letters to my local representatives explaining why their support would be valuable for a number of different bills. On the Young Adult Council I have worked in the Legislative Department to produce social media campaigns and to spread awareness for the Kids Online Safety Act. This has included planning Instagram Lives, making promotional videos, and collaborating with an amazing team. It has been a fruitful and fulfilling experience.

Najman: On the Young Adult Council, I serve as the Co-Chair of the Legislation Department. I manage the creation of the YAC Corner in the EDC newsletter, prepare for presentations and events, and coordinate department activity and updates. Sharing personal stories and engaging in social media campaigns have also been core staples of the Ambassador Program. In regards to any individual looking into grassroots advocacy, the EDC Ambassador program truly is an interactive and enriching but easily maintainable way to get involved.

To get involved in grassroots advocacy, sign up to participate in our [action alerts](#) or sign up to become an [EDC Ambassador](#)!

The Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action is a Washington D.C. based, federal advocacy organization of advocacy organizations, academics, treatment providers, family/loved ones of children with eating disorders, and people experiencing eating disorders nationwide. The EDC advances the recognition of eating disorders as a public health priority throughout the United States. Additional resources can be found at eatingdisorderscoalition.org.