



TEACHER'S GUIDE

ADVOCACY IN ACTION

MAZON | A Jewish Response
To Hunger

OVERVIEW

Advocacy In Action is a unit that allows high school students to act out the advocacy process by participating in an advocacy scenario loosely based on MAZON's successful campaign in Minnesota to bring matching food stamp (SNAP) vouchers to farmers markets.

In the first session, students will learn background information on hunger and SNAP and start to think about different approaches to fighting hunger. In the second session, students will participate in an advocacy simulation. They will take on different roles — three state senators, MAZON organizer, farmers market owner, rabbi, etc. — and will have time to strategize together, figure out which other characters they can influence, and meet with their

peers who are acting as elected officials. The session ends with a town hall, where each student has a minute to present their position, and a final vote on the bill.

The goals of the activity are for students to (1) learn about the issue of hunger in America, SNAP, and the work that MAZON does, and (2) gain a deeper and more dynamic understanding of what change-making through advocacy looks like in practice.

NOTE: This program is designed to be taught in two sessions; each session is one hour in length. You may need to adapt the timing to work with your schedule.

PREPARE

→ **READ** through this Teacher's Guide, as well as the Advocacy Simulation Guide, in their entirety so that you are familiar with all the various components. Make any adjustments necessary to ensure that the lesson reflects your particular teaching style, your students, and the time allotted. Skim the character packets and additional materials to make sure that you have a basic understanding of hunger in America, SNAP, and the advocacy process.

→ **GATHER** the materials needed for this lesson:

- **Teacher's Guide** – print one copy of this guide to use during class
- **Advocacy Simulation Guide** – Print copies for each student
- **Character Packets** – print and staple or paperclip one copy of each character packet
- **Theories of Change handout** – Print copies for each student
- **John's Story** – Print copies for each student
- **MAZON's Minnesota Market Bucks Campaign handout** – Print copies for each student
- **Ways to Stay Engaged handout** – Print copies for each student

- **Name tags** – Either make name tags or bring tape and print copies for each student
- **City Hall Station** – Print one copy
- **Lobby Visit Appointment Sheet** – Print one copy
- **Paper and pens** for each student

→ **DIG DEEPER** to learn more about the specific issues covered in this lesson.

- **mazon.org/what-we-do/state-advocacy-projects/minnesota-project** – This page provides information about the actual advocacy campaign that this lesson is based on
- **mazon.org** – Browse the MAZON website to familiarize yourself with the organization and its work. Please reach out to MAZON staff for additional questions or guidance as you use this curriculum in your classroom or camp. We want to be a resource for you!
- A Short History of SNAP
www.fns.usda.gov/snap/short-history-snap
- A Closer Look at Who Benefits from SNAP: State-by-State Fact Sheets **www.cbpp.org/research/a-closer-look-at-who-benefits-from-snap-state-by-state-fact-sheets**

SESSION ONE

INTRODUCTION - GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

→ **PROMPT:** How does change happen?

- Begin with an open-ended discussion and after a few minutes start to guide the conversation by asking:
 - “What specific examples can you think of from the news or from history where people or organizations made changes in the world?” If they have trouble coming with examples, you can prompt them with examples from the chart below
 - “What strategies did they use to create change?”

→ **DISTRIBUTE** *Theories of Change* handout

- Ask students if they can fit the organizations and historical examples they came up with into one or more of these models. Let them know that many organizations fit into more than one model
- Have students discuss the advantages and drawbacks each model of change

EXAMPLES TO AID DISCUSSION:

	CHARITY	RESEARCH	ADVOCACY	ORGANIZING
ADVANTAGES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meets people's immediate needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides other types of organizations with research to back up their arguments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the potential to directly influence laws and policy, and therefore impact more people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directly represents the voices of the people being affected by policies
DRAWBACKS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not do anything to change the factors that create these needs Only impacts the people directly served 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not in itself lead to change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legislative/public policy change often takes a long time and it is harder to see how your efforts can have an impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually locally focused, and may have less power and/or influence than other types of organizations
EXAMPLES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salvation Army, Doctors Without Borders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> American Cancer Society, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> American Civil Liberties Union, NAACP (Brown v. Board of Education is an example of legal advocacy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occupy Wall Street, PICO, SCLC (many actions during the civil rights movement — marches, sit ins, boycotts, etc. — are examples of organizing)

BACKGROUND – FOOD INSECURITY & SNAP (15 minutes)

- **DISTRIBUTE** *John's Story* from *This is Hunger*, and after students have read it, lead a discussion about why they think people are hungry and how hunger can be solved. Guide the conversation by asking:
- What did this story make you think and feel?
 - Why was it so hard for John's family to afford food? Why do you think people are hungry?
 - What did John's family do when they could not afford food? What resources exist for people who are hungry?
 - Ask students what they know about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, also referred to as SNAP or food stamps. Fill in the gaps and explain to students the basics of how SNAP works (the purpose of the program, who is eligible, how SNAP participants collect benefits, etc.)

ADVOCACY SIMULATION – EXPLANATION AND ROLE ASSIGNMENTS (10 minutes)

- **DISTRIBUTE** *Advocacy Simulation Guide*
- Have students read guide out loud (stopping in the Guide at the section marked "Don't read until Session Two!")
- **ASSIGN ROLES:** You may assign students to certain roles, they may choose their roles, or you may have the select the roles at random by picking nametags out of a hat
- Remember multiple people can play one role! However, please make sure every character is filled before you start doubling up

ADVOCACY SIMULATION – PREPARATION (15-20 minutes)

- **DISTRIBUTE** character packets
- Have students read through the packets alone or in their character group
 - Ask students to write a "Letter to the Editor" from the point of view of their character, explaining why they do or do not support the bill (or if they are undecided, writing what about the bill they like and what they dislike).
 - Encourage them to be creative, and to imagine new ways to fill in any details about the character not included in their packets
- **COLLECT** the Letters to the Editor and review them before the next session
- Seeing how each student describes their position will help you determine who understands the issues and who may need extra help preparing before the advocacy simulation begins
 - Also collect the character packets and all copies of the SNAP background document, *Advocacy Simulation Guide*, and the bill

SESSION TWO

INTRODUCTION (2 minutes)

→ **WELCOME** everyone back and explain that this session will include time for strategizing, engaging in lobbying and coalition building, presenting testimony at the public hearing and finally the vote on the bill and any amendments.

The session will conclude with an opportunity to reflect on the process and outcomes of the advocacy simulation and how it relates to creating change in the real world.

→ **DISTRIBUTE** materials from previous class:

- Character packets
- SNAP Backgrounder
- Advocacy Simulation Guide
- The Bill
- Letters to the Editor

STRATEGY SESSION (8 minutes)

- Give students a minute or two to come up with a few sentences introducing their character and stating their position on the bill and why they feel that way.
- Ask students to introduce themselves as their characters to the rest of the group
- Read through the second half of the Advocacy Simulation Guide as a group
- Have students re-familiarize themselves with the information presented in the last session — the SNAP Handout, the Advocacy Simulation Guide, and their character sheets.
 - Distribute the additional packets for their specific characters and have them read through these materials as well
- To guide their reading, have them think about or write down answers to these questions
 - What are your character's goals for this exercise?
 - Who do you want to talk to? What are your goals for those conversations?

- Who do you think you might be able to learn from?
- Whose opinions do you want to influence? Do you have any leverage over them that would make them more likely to listen to you?

LOBBYING AND COALITION BUILDING (20 minutes)

- This is the students' chance to make their voices heard. The goal of this part of the activity is to convince the legislators to vote a certain way and to work with key allies/coalitions to effectively promote their message/priorities and propose amendments, if in line with their position
- (Details for how this part of the simulation activity should unfold are outlined in the Advocacy Simulation Guide)
- Give students a 5 minute warning to make sure they finish preparing their testimony in time for the hearing

PUBLIC HEARING & THE VOTE (20 minutes)

- Each character or character group will have a chance to offer testimony at the public hearing (limit statements to one minute each) and propose amendments
- Following the Public Hearing, the senators will have 5 minutes to privately determine their positions on the bill and/or any amendments. During this time, the Reporter will share their story with the class, and students can be prompted to say how well the article captures their side of the story.
- The senators will then be asked to vote publicly and offer a few words about how they decided whether or not to support the bill
- The votes are tallied and the bill's fate is announced

REFLECTION/CONCLUSION (15 minutes)

→ **GATHER** the group together, congratulate everyone on supporting their positions and engaging in effective advocacy, regardless of whether or not their side “won”

→ **ASK** students to reflect on the experience:

- What was exciting? What was challenging?
- Did you expect this outcome or did you think something different would happen?
- Which parts of the simulation felt true to life? Which parts felt most unrealistic?
- What did you learn from this activity about advocacy and creating change?

→ **OTHER QUESTIONS** you can ask students to reflect on the activity if time permits:

- Did some character’s opinions seem to have more influence than others? How did that affect the advocacy process in this simulation and in real life?
- How do politicians vote? Is it with their conscious, with their voters, with special interests, something different, or a combination of the above?

- What perceptions of SNAP users came into play during the activity? Were they accurate or inaccurate? How might these perceptions affect support for the program in real life?
- Did the reporter’s article accurately reflect the views of every character? How do you think the media affects the advocacy process in real life?

→ **REMIN**d students about the different models of change from the previous day, and have them try to place the organizations in the simulation activity into those categories

- Which organizations or which arguments seemed most effective? Why?

→ **SHARE** with the group MAZON’s *Minnesota Market Bucks Campaign*, the real-life example upon which this simulation activity was built.

CONCLUDING QUESTIONS

→ **WHAT CAN YOU DO** to create change and end hunger?

- How can you engage in advocacy to support anti-hunger efforts? Pass out *Ways to Stay Engaged* handout for students to take home

CHARACTER PACKET MATERIALS

EVERY PACKET INCLUDES:

- ☐ Character Info/Background
- ☐ Legislation Draft: Healthy Eating, Here at Home
- ☐ SNAP Backgrounder

SENATOR A

- ☐ No additional materials

SENATOR B

- ☐ Bible Verses for Senator B

SENATOR C

- ☐ No additional materials

END HUNGER NOW REPRESENTATIVE

- ☐ EHN Market Bucks Pilot Report
- ☐ SNAP Supports Work Infographic
- ☐ SNAP Impact Infographic
- ☐ Blog Post: Higher SNAP Benefits Mean More Groceries, Better Nutrition

MAZON ORGANIZER

- ☐ SNAP Series #3: Three Common Myths
- ☐ About SNAP
- ☐ This is Hunger Story Cards
- ☐ Quick Facts About Hunger in America Infographic

JOBS WITH JUSTICE ORGANIZER

- ☐ Report: The Relationship Between SNAP and Work Among Low-Income Households
- ☐ Letter to the Editor: Reject Higher Sales Taxes, Which Hurt Poor and Middle-Income Voters
- ☐ Blog Post: Adding a Work Requirement to MaineCare Would Harm Maine's Families

RABBI

- ☐ Blog Post: We Will Never Food Bank Our Way Out of Hunger
- ☐ Bible Verses for Rabbi

JEWISH COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- ☐ Op-ed: It's Never Been More Important to Donate to Hunger Relief Charities

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE LOBBYIST

- ☐ Article: Are SNAP Benefits Really Too Low?
- ☐ Blog Post: Shifting from Income to Sales Taxes Won't Boost State Economies

CONSERVATIVE POLICY CENTER ANALYST

- ☐ Article: Are SNAP Benefits Really Too Low?
- ☐ Article: Work Rules Benefit Many SNAP Recipients
- ☐ Article: Seattle Mayor Swaps Property Tax for County Sales Tax to Fund Homeless Programs

FARMERS MARKET OWNER

- ☐ Article: One Store Owner Fed Up With Food Stamp Abuse
- ☐ Article: Nutrition Benefits a Mixed Bag for Markets

FARMERS MARKET SHOPPER

- ☐ Article: One Store Owner Fed Up With Food Stamp Abuse
- ☐ Op-ed: Homeless Plan Despoils Award Winning Sugar House Neighborhood

REPORTER

- ☐ Newspaper Article Writing Guide
- ☐ Example News Article: U46 Board Rejects Late Breakfasts for Students