

Lifelong use of skills learned by doing community pediatrics

Many pediatricians spend time working with their communities on various projects or serving as a volunteer, either through the local schools or other community organizations. Perceived time constraints and a lack of adequate funding may keep some pediatricians from participating more, others may feel that they do not have enough time to make a valuable impact. However, it is very possible to contribute toward a larger cause even with very small investments of time or money. Setting priorities and identifying easy ways to participate in community activities can be a pediatrician's first step toward a more invested relationship with the community.

Practice Passive Activism

Some forms of action on behalf of kids take virtually no time at all. This is called passive activism. Passive activism involves making

Activities That Take More Than an Hour a Month

Speak Out

People pay attention to a physician who takes the time to meet with a legislator or speak at a public hearing. By participating with a CBO, the resident can become informed about important legislation and boost the CBO's lobbying efforts. An example of this is a resident who became a local media expert on children's nutrition just because she was a doctor volunteering with a food bank. It didn't take her much time to talk to reporters, but the publicity was a huge boost for her CBO's cause.

Campaign

The next time an election comes around, don't simply sit back and watch from a distance. Get involved! Study the candidates and their issues by reading and watching their debates. Then choose a candidate and volunteer.

Register Voters

In some communities, residents can check out a registration book and register voters on the spot. Residents can also let people know about absentee ballots. Pediatricians can get many parents registered by putting the forms in the clinic waiting room.

Apply for Grants

Most projects of substance need financial support. A surprising amount of grant money is available for those who take the time to research and apply. Writing grant applications is a skill that improves with practice and can be a valuable tool throughout life.

Gaining Representation on Boards and Councils

To gain representation on a community board or council, first find the agency or council that supports members' having a voice in governing. Ask about becoming an advisor to the program. Boards of agencies often meet for about one hour every three months.

Other Actions You Can Take: Advanced Activism

- Volunteer.
- Work at a free clinic.
- Start an organization for a cause that needs one.
- Become a philanthropist.
- Run for office!

While the activities at the end of this chapter may be very demanding, the ones at the top are within everyone's reach. You can make a difference.

Resources

Lewis BA. The Kid's Guide to Social Action: How to Solve the Social Problems You Choose—And Turn Creative Thinking into Positive Action. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing Inc., 1998.

Community Toolbox: Work Group on Health Promotion and Community Development.
Community Toolbox: Bringing solutions to life. University of Kansas in Lawrence, Kansas.
<http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu/>

Grants Web

www.research.sunysb.edu/research/kirby.html

Nonprofit Gateway: Federal Citizen Information Center, Office of Citizen Services and Communications. FirstGov for Nonprofits. www.nonprofit.gov

The Foundation Center

www.fdncenter.org