

Defining Education, Community Service, Advocacy, and Direct Action - Social Justice Tools

Keep in mind there are various categories of advocacy or action within each definition, and that these areas **are often done in combination** to create impactful campaigns, or as the need(s) of a particular situation demand.

Examples: Food Insecurity (**Education** (raise awareness with statistics and stories of serving in a food bank, attend a simulation of poverty); **Community Service** (host a food drive, work in the food pantry); **Advocacy** (write postcards to the USDA to restore SNAP benefits with Mazon, a Jewish response to hunger); **Direct Action** (create signs and hold a march in the park by the USDA's local office).

****There are rules around advocacy and direct action, and each must be undertaken with care toward non-profit rules/guidance regarding lobbying (yes, we can do these things), but they must be limited in key ways, and done with impeccable care). We may never endorse, or appear to favor, a political party, or candidate.**

- **Education** is the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits. It involves teaching and learning, both formally (in schools or institutions) and informally (through experiences). Issue education focuses on a topic or issue that is pressing, and relevant, timely or subject of debate, or concern, for the community, or society. Education has the ability to raise awareness, or consciousness about an issue or problem.
- **Community service** involves individuals or groups performing unpaid work for the benefit of their local community or its institutions, i.e., organized volunteer activities. Examples include volunteering at a food bank, organizing a neighborhood cleanup, or tutoring children. Unlike simple volunteering as an individual act, community service is often organized and may be considered a hands-out action, but often is an indirect form of addressing an issue or problem (regarding its solution or prevention), depending on the activity: though it directly impacts those in

immediate need, it often does not address root causes of issues or needs. It emphasizes civic responsibility and aims to address community needs.

- **Advocacy** means speaking up for a cause or issue, supporting or defending a group or individual, and working to bring about change in attitudes, public policies, or laws. It can involve lobbying elected officials (legislative advocacy) raising awareness among the public, or working within legal frameworks.
- **Direct action** involves individuals or groups taking public, visible actions to achieve their goals directly, without relying on intermediaries like negotiations or traditional political processes. It aims to disrupt the status quo or highlight an issue to bring about change. Direct action can be nonviolent (e.g., protests, vigils or sit-ins). While for some, direct action can be violent (e.g., property damage, blockades), this is NOT a form of direct action 501(c)(3)s or synagogues engage in. Creative forms of direct action can include, walks, marches, and other forms of interaction with the public. Direct action typically involves being in the public square and can be combined with other forms of advocacy or protest. Its purpose is often to add visibility, to force those in power to respond to an injustice or unmet need by showing up, bringing attention to a need or issue and influencing others to do the same.