



The Finnish Association for Mental Health  
National Focal Point Training  
Helsinki, April 23-24, 2009

## How to lobby national / local / regional authorities?

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### **The Finnish Association for Mental Health**

- was founded in 1897
- has 54 local mental health associations, appr. 4500 individual members and 36 organisational members
- has its main focus on promotion of mental health
- collects and disseminates information on mental health, proposes initiatives and publishes reports, trains professionals and volunteers and publishes books and journals
- responds to social challenges by employing new models to promote mental health and provides help and assistance in crises
- stimulates interaction between individuals and communities, while activating citizens to work for the welfare of their own communities
- through its cooperative networks, offers support and promotes mental health (about 150 partners)
- actively influences legislation, proposes initiatives, draws up reports and participates in collaborative projects, expert work groups and committees
- dozens of experts from diverse fields are involved in FAMH's work through its subcommittees and committees

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### **Main points of the strategy**

The Finnish Association for Mental Health, as national health organisation and NGO, aims to promote mental health as well as to support and develop constructive and preventive mental health work, mental care and rehabilitation, other mental health services as well as voluntary civic activity on mental health sector.

The activities are based on understanding mental health as a resource of an individual and in the society. The factors protecting mental health can be reinforced and the influence of the risk factors can be diminished or removed. Decisions that support or damage mental well-being are reached in all spheres of the society. Therefore FAMH emphasizes the importance of promotion and support of mental health as well as the importance of preventive work on individual, organisational and societal level.

The goals and focuses are on defending justice and equity, on responding to anguish of everyday life as well as on promoting the caring culture as counterforce to the market and competition culture.

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### **In Finland**

- Communities are responsible for organising social and health services
- The activities carried out by the communities are controlled by the government by means of state subsidies, national programmes as well as legislation
- The communities can purchase services from NGOs and enterprises

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**Finnish non-governmental organisations (NGO's)  
have a long history and an important role in the development and  
construction of Finland's welfare society.**

- ***The core tasks of NGO's are the following:***
  - advocacy
  - voluntary work
  - influential and expert activity
  - provision of forums for socialisation and participation
  - development of services

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**Lobbying = influencing on every societal level**

- local level
- regional level
- national level
- international level

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### **Lobbying =**

- influencing on legislation
- participation in drafting programmes
- statements and declarations
- disseminating good practices
- campaigning
- communication, media

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### **Important:**

- Both reactive and proactive activity
- Following the societal development essential for the own core task
- To be involved already in the planning phase of renewal of legislation or other significant projects
- Identifying key actors and key partners
- Good argumentation: a special task of the NGOs is to follow up the "weak signals" rising from their own grass roots which can not yet be seen in the statistics and researches

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**Top important:**

- Networks, networks, networks!!!
- Politicians on all levels (local, regional, national) and from as many parties as possible
- Essential civil servants on all levels
- Media
- Universities and other research institutions
- Other NGOs

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**Examples /FAMH**

- The first national non-medical consensus meeting that published recommendations for the promotion of mental health
- Models for the formulation of mental health programmes
- Mental Health Political Consultative Committee (invited members from political parties represented in the Finnish Parliament)
- Mental Health Academy (influential people who represent various segments of society)
- Mental Health Pool (core people in national mental health work from NGO's, national administration, trade unions)
- Active role in a two-year planning project for a National Mental Health Programme started by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health

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