



IMPACT! How Consumers Have Shaped Health System Delivery Reform

The Center’s partnerships with our state-based advocates have taught us that moving meaningful consumer engagement from the aspirational to the actual is very difficult. This is especially the case when working with consumers with complex health and social needs.

The good news is that, through the work of our state-based partners on the ground, we’ve cracked the code! In collaboration with our partners, we’ve figured out how to recruit and organize consumers, identify potential leaders, train and support those leaders so they can effectively represent consumer interests on policymaking bodies, and develop a pipeline of new leaders that can continue to impact policy moving forward, no matter what the state’s political makeup.



Photo courtesy of Alabama Arise

So what is the secret? All of the following aspects come into play:

- **Credibility** – Because the work of organizing and supporting consumers is relationship-based, to be effective it must be done by organizations that have history and credibility in the community they are organizing.
- **Funding** – All of these organizations have received funding support from the Center and others that has allowed them to invest in the staffing resources needed to build a base of educated, effective consumers.
- **Technical Assistance** – These organizations have also received policy and other technical assistance from the Center, which has allowed them to learn from other states and move forward more quickly.
- **Time** – We have found it takes a minimum of two years of consistent work to develop an effective pipeline of consumer advocates and it further takes ongoing effort and investment to maintain that pipeline.
- **Continuity** – These organizations are focused on organizing a constituency that will provide the kind of continuity needed to rectify the existing power imbalance between consumers and other stakeholders in the health care system.
- **Collaboration** – Consumer advocates and consumers working together is what creates consumer power in a community or state, power that is sufficient to go toe-to-toe with more traditional stakeholders.

Check out the [full report](#) to see exactly the kinds of concrete changes our partners in six states drove by engaging the people most affected by our health system.