



Center for African American Recovery Development

RCO Toolkit

Resource 5.2

Legislative Advocacy Guide for Black-Led RCOs



Downloadable Resource 5.2 Legislative Advocacy Guide for Black-Led RCOs

Purpose

Black-led RCOs are more than service providers — we are freedom builders. Advocacy is not an option; it is a responsibility. This guide helps us take our place at the tables of power and, when necessary, build new tables of our own.

Why This Matters

Our ancestors organized boycotts, marched across bridges, and raised their voices in halls that never wanted to hear them. Today, we inherit that same charge in recovery.

Every policy that locks our people out of treatment, that underfunds our organizations, that criminalizes instead of heals — those are not abstract issues. They are life and death.

When Black-led RCOs show up in city councils, statehouses, and Congress, we carry with us not only data and demands, but the spirit of those who taught us that silence is complicity. Advocacy is how we turn recovery into justice.

Core Advocacy Priorities

- **Bring the Community to the Table** – No policymaker should talk about recovery without hearing directly from the people most impacted.
 - **Build Power, Not Just Partnerships** – Coalition work isn't about photo ops; it's about shifting resources and rewriting laws.
 - **Raise Voices Through Storytelling** – Our testimonies are not weakness; they are evidence. They carry weight legislators cannot ignore.
 - **Develop Peer Advocates** – Every person in recovery has the right to become a policy leader. Advocacy must be taught, shared, and multiplied.
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Essential Skills for RCO Leaders

- Speaking truth to power while holding cultural ground
 - Framing recovery not as charity, but as racial and social justice
 - Training peers to step into policy arenas with confidence
 - Turning community wisdom into legislative language
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Practices & Activities

1. Griot Testimony Circle (30 minutes)

- *Setup:* Gather peers to share recovery stories as griots — truth-tellers of the community.
- *Instructions:* For each story, identify one policy that would have changed the outcome.
- *Debrief:* Rewrite each story into a 2–3 minute legislative testimony.

2. Power Map the Statehouse (20 minutes)

- *Setup:* Draw your statehouse. List legislators who control recovery policy and funding.
- *Instructions:* Circle those who ignore Black voices. Star those who may be allies.
- *Debrief:* Plan your first 3 outreach targets.

3. Coalition Covenant (25 minutes)

- *Setup:* Identify community partners (civil rights orgs, faith leaders, public health allies).
 - *Instructions:* Draft a short “covenant” that names your shared advocacy goal.
 - *Debrief:* Commit to one joint action in the next quarter.
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Quick Checklist

- ✓ Identify 3 policymakers you will meet with this quarter
- ✓ Craft one griot-style testimony rooted in lived experience
- ✓ Join or strengthen at least one coalition
- ✓ Train at least one peer to step into advocacy leadership