



# **ATHLETES** **FOR ACTION**

**INTRODUCTION/UNIT 1**





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# INTRODUCTION: LIZ HARRIS



ATHLETICS





# UNDERSTANDING ADVOCACY



# WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

Advocacy is a fundamental practice that **empowers individuals and communities to create meaningful change**. It goes beyond mere vocal support; it involves **active engagement** in promoting a cause or proposal. In the context of protecting girls' sports, advocacy serves as a vital tool to ensure that young girls have equitable opportunities and a supportive environment in athletics.





# DEFINING ADVOCACY

## Key Activities:

### **Raising Awareness:**

Informing the public and stakeholders about the issues affecting girls' sports, including disparities in funding and policies.

### **Campaigning:**

Organizing efforts to mobilize support for specific initiatives or changes in policies.

### **Lobbying:**

Engaging with policymakers to influence legislation and regulations that impact girls' sports.

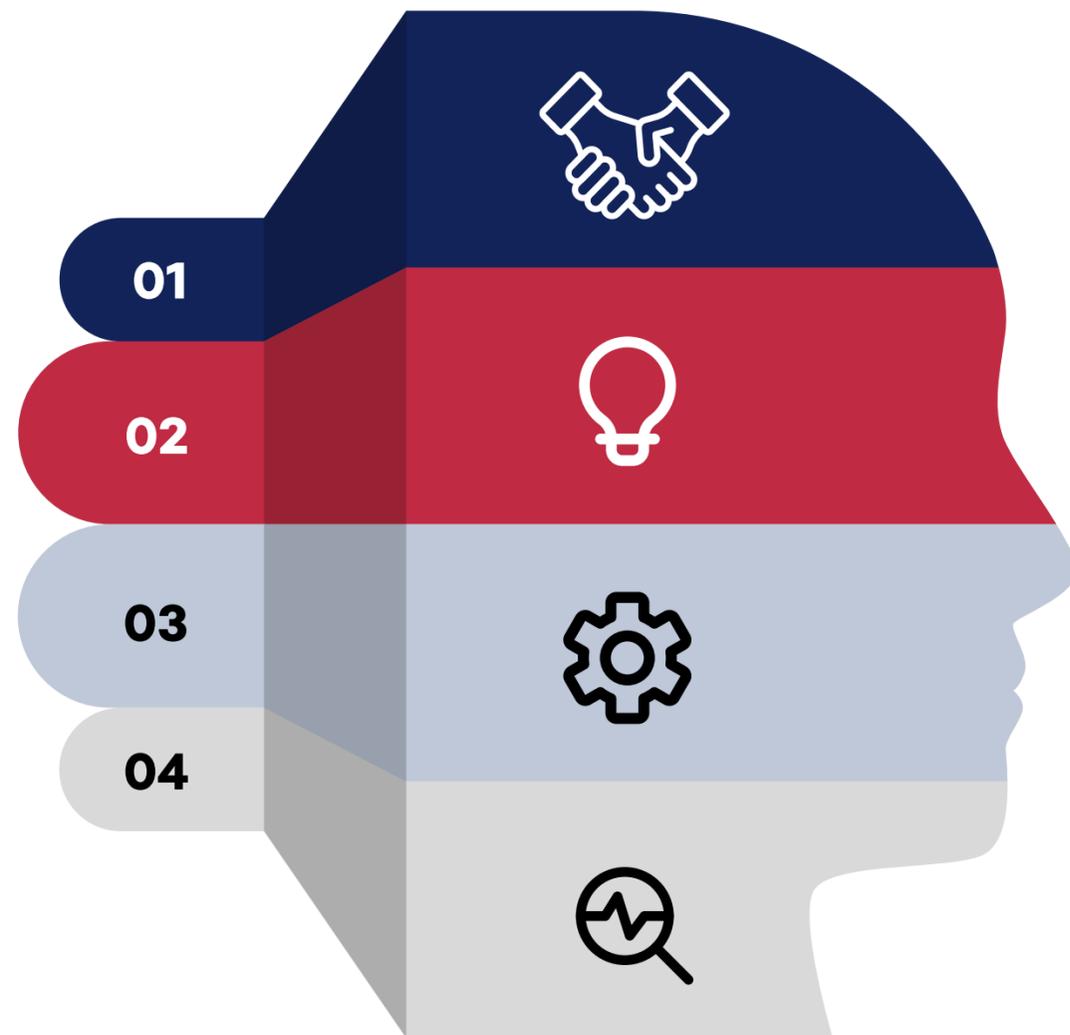


When advocating for girls' sports, actions can range from challenging the inclusion of biological boys in girls' competitions to advocating for fair funding and resources for female athletes. Each of these efforts contributes to the overarching goal of creating an empowering sporting environment for young girls.





# OBSERVING ADVOCACY



Patience is essential in advocacy, as meaningful change often requires time, especially within schools, communities, and varying levels of government

Engaging stakeholders and community members

Providing accurate and relevant information

Demonstrating compassion and understanding

Tailoring messages to resonate with specific audiences



# PRINCIPLES OF ADVOCACY



# PRINCIPLES OF ADVOCACY

To be effective in advocacy efforts, it's important to understand and embrace the following key principles:

## 01

### Education

Knowledge is a powerful tool. Providing clear and compelling information about the benefits of girls' sports and the existing disparities can build a strong case for change. Educating stakeholders fosters understanding and support for advocacy initiatives.

## 02

### Collaboration

Teamwork enhances advocacy. By collaborating with parents, coaches, educators, and community leaders, advocates can unify their efforts, share resources, and amplify their influence. A united front is often more persuasive and impactful.

## 03

### Persistence

Advocacy is often a long-term commitment. Change may not happen overnight, and advocates must be prepared to face obstacles. Demonstrating dedication and resilience can inspire others to join the cause and maintain momentum for change.

## 04

### Messaging & Style

Effective communication is crucial. Advocates should convey their messages with a blend of knowledge, authority, and compassion. This requires practice and self-awareness to communicate effectively without letting emotions like anger or resentment cloud the message.



# GROUP POLL



Understanding the basics of advocacy is essential for anyone involved in promoting girls' sports. By focusing on education, collaboration, persistence, and effective messaging, advocates can create a meaningful impact. As you explore the various dimensions of advocacy, consider where your interests lie and how you can contribute to this important work.

**Do you prefer speaking or writing when advocating for a cause? Which have you found more success with?**





# EDUCATION

**TITLE IX: “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance”**

## **Historical context:**

Before Title IX, opportunities for women in sports were severely limited. **The prevailing attitudes in society often viewed women as less capable athletes compared to men**, reinforcing the idea that competitive sports were primarily a male domain. This belief was reflected in the limited funding and resources allocated to women’s sports programs in schools and colleges.

As women began to advocate for their rights and equality in various aspects of life, the need for a federal law that would ensure equal opportunities in education and sports became clear. **Activists, educators, and legislators worked tirelessly to highlight the disparities and push for change, culminating in the introduction and passage of Title IX.**



## **Importance of Title IX:**

Title IX has had a profound impact on women’s sports. **Prior to its enactment, only about 1 in 27 girls played high school sports. Today, that number has risen to approximately 1 in 2.** This increase in participation has not only provided young women with opportunities to compete but has also fostered a sense of empowerment, confidence, and teamwork that extends beyond sports.

Understanding Title IX is essential for anyone involved in education and athletics. Knowledge of this law helps students, educators, and coaches advocate for equitable treatment and opportunities, ensuring that the progress made over the past decades is preserved and built upon.



# COLLABORATION

Engaging in advocacy for girls' sports hinges on recognizing and harnessing the influence of key stakeholders. Each group plays an essential role in fostering an environment that promotes and supports female athletes. Here's a closer look at these stakeholders and strategies to effectively engage them.

## 01

### Parents

Parents are often the most passionate advocates for their daughters in sports. Their emotional and practical support—through volunteering, fundraising, and lobbying for equal opportunities—can be transformative. Involve parents in advocacy discussions to empower them. Parents often have wisdom and life experience that can guide you through difficult situations. Sharing your experiences can lead to valuable insights but you can also help your parents

## 02

### Coaches & Educators

Coaches significantly influence athletes' development and can foster inclusive environments that build confidence in young female athletes. They are also key to maintaining the integrity of girls' sports. Provide training sessions for coaches on gender equity and inclusivity in sports. Encourage them to mentor young female athletes and advocate for their needs.

## 03

### Schools & Administrators

School sports administrators shape policies and ensure equitable access to resources for female athletes, playing a crucial role in the operational aspect of girls' sports. Collaborate with school administrators to assess current policies, identify gaps, and advocate for changes that support girls' sports programs.

## 04

### Local Organizations & Community Leaders

Community organizations (recreational leagues, sports clubs, youth programs) can provide essential funding, training, and mentorship opportunities. Community leaders can rally support and awareness around initiatives for girls in sports. Build partnerships with local organizations to enhance resources for girls' athletics. Organize community events that highlight the importance of girls' sports and solicit support from community leaders.



# ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

## 01 **Communication**

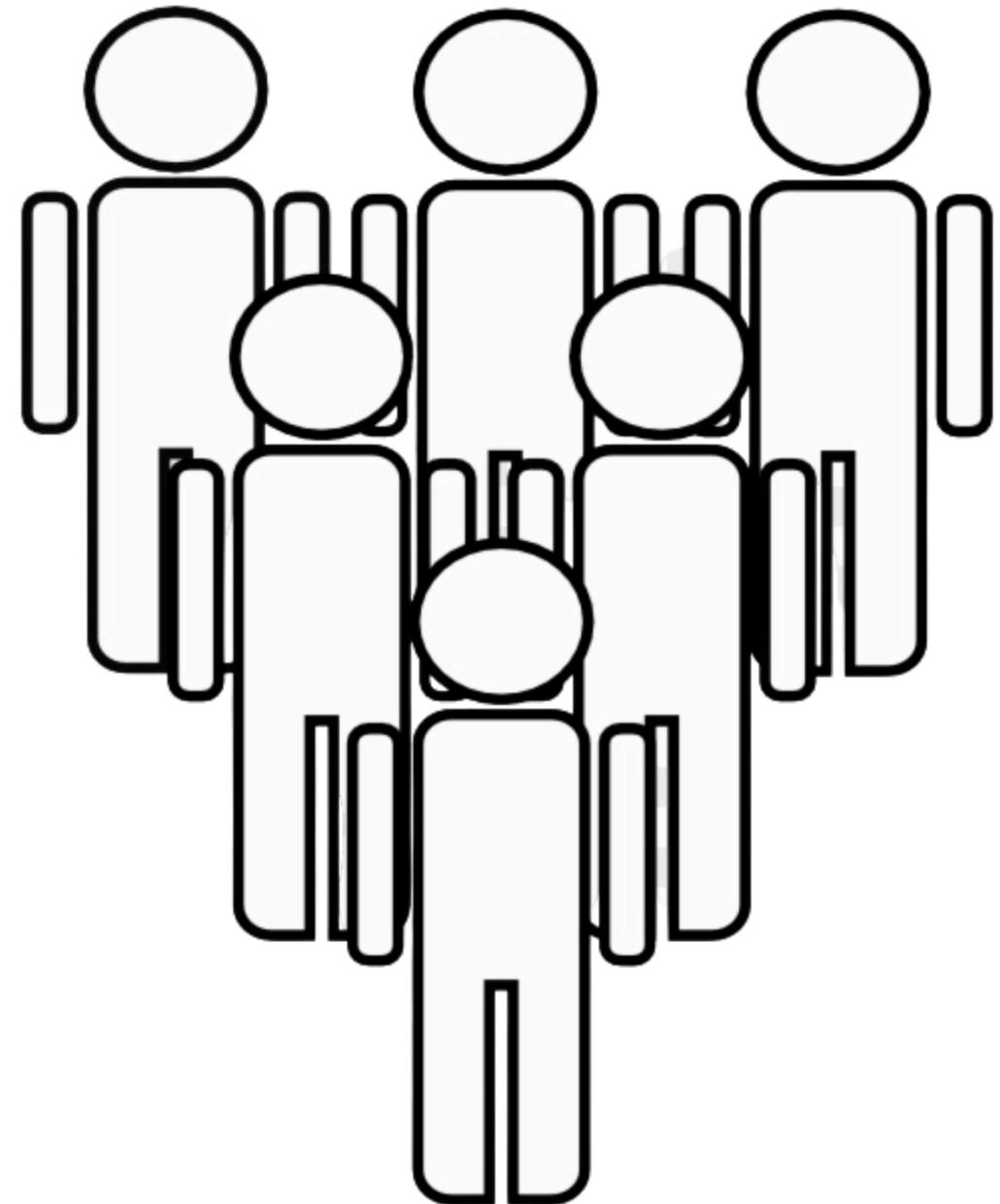
Maintain regular communication and share success stories, progress updates, and important developments in girls' sports to keep stakeholders informed and invested.

## 02 **Education**

Organize workshops, seminars, and training sessions aimed at educating stakeholders about the benefits of protecting girls' sports.

## 03 **Recognition**

Acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of stakeholders. Recognizing their efforts through awards, public shout-outs, or feature stories can motivate continued support and engagement.





# PERSISTENCE

Absolutely, advocacy is indeed a long-term commitment that requires dedication, resilience, and passion. The journey can be challenging, often filled with setbacks and obstacles, yet the **small victories along the way can serve as powerful motivators. Each new generation of athletes and stakeholders brings fresh perspectives, energy, and enthusiasm**, which can reinvigorate the movement and inspire others to join the cause.



Moreover, the collective effort of seasoned advocates and newcomers creates a **rich tapestry of experiences and ideas, fostering innovation and adaptability within the advocacy community.** As younger athletes become involved, they not only learn from the established advocates but also contribute their unique insights, helping to shape the direction of the movement.

Celebrating small wins is crucial, as these achievements build momentum and encourage continued engagement. Whether it's raising awareness, influencing policy changes, or creating supportive environments, **every step forward is significant.** It's this combination of perseverance and the infusion of new energy that can lead to meaningful and lasting change in the advocacy space.





# MESSAGING & STYLE: AUDIENCE

## Parents

They seek to understand how participation in sports can benefit their daughters, both personally and academically.

## Coaches & Educators

Their focus lies in the practical implementation of sports programs, winning games and ensuring a positive experience for all athletes.

## Administrators

They prioritize inclusivity and the overall impact of sports on school culture and student engagement.

Recognizing the unique motivations and concerns of your audience is crucial. Each group—parents, coaches, educators, and administrators—has specific interests.

By identifying these motivations, you can tailor your messages to connect with each audience's priorities.



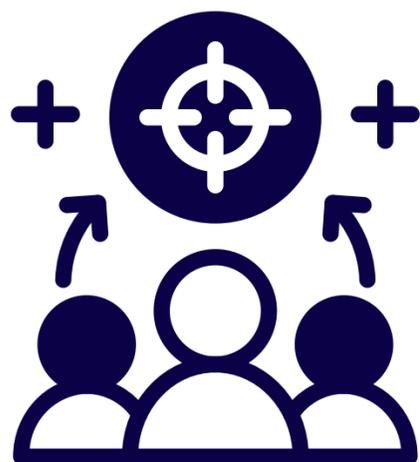


# MESSAGING & STYLE: PERSUASIVE MESSAGES

To strengthen your advocacy, consider incorporating the following elements into your messaging:

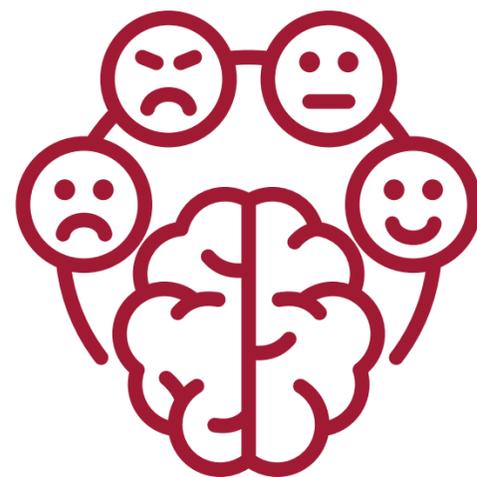
## Clear Purpose

Define your objectives clearly. Whether you're pushing for individual private changing rooms and/or preventing biological boys from competing in girls' sports, a well-articulated purpose is essential.



## Emotional Appeal

Personal stories and testimonials from young female athletes can create emotional connections. Sharing experiences emphasizes the transformative power of sports and motivates others to act.



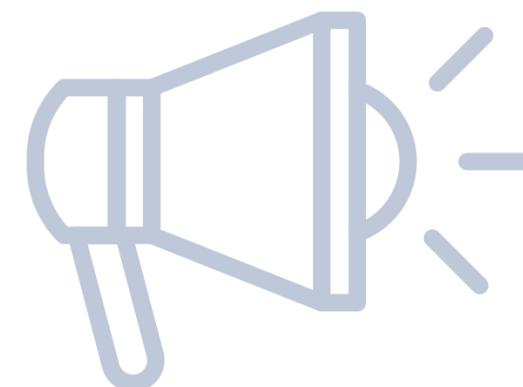
## Facts and Data

Support your messages with credible statistics and research. Highlight the benefits of sports on girls' mental health, physical well-being, and academic performance. Evidence-based arguments reinforce the necessity of supporting girls' sports.



## Call to Action

Encourage your audience to take specific actions. Whether it's signing a petition, attending a community meeting, or sharing information, a strong call to action fosters a sense of urgency and involvement in the cause.





# MESSAGING & STYLE: ENGAGING CHANNELS

01

## Social Media

Utilize platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to connect with parents and community members. Regular updates about events, athlete achievements, and advocacy initiatives can build support and engagement.

02

## Newsletters and Emails

Tailor content for different stakeholders through newsletters and direct emails. Addressing specific interests—such as updates geared towards parents compared to those for educators—can improve engagement.

03

## Community Meetings

Hosting forums or town hall discussions allows for live interaction. This face-to-face engagement can facilitate real-time feedback, fostering a collaborative atmosphere for sharing ideas and solutions.





# MESSAGING & STYLE: EFFECTIVENESS TRAINING

To enhance your communication skills, consider participating in or organizing workshops that cover:

**01 The Art of Storytelling:** Learn how to effectively share compelling narratives in advocacy.

**02 Using Data Effectively:** Understand best practices for incorporating statistics in your discussions.

**03 Engaging Stakeholders:** Explore techniques for fostering dialogue and involvement in various settings.

By refining these communication strategies, advocates for girls' sports can craft impactful messages that resonate with diverse audiences. This approach not only drives awareness but also mobilizes support, ultimately leading to meaningful change in the landscape of female athletics.



# EXPLORING YOUR ADVOCACY STRENGTHS



# STEPS TO EXPLORE YOUR INTERESTS AND STRENGTHS

It's great that you're reflecting on your communication skills and styles! Understanding your strengths and preferences can significantly enhance your effectiveness as an advocate. Here are some tips on how to evaluate and develop your skills in writing, speaking, and interpersonal communication:

**02**

## Seek Feedback:

Ask friends, colleagues, or mentors for constructive feedback on your communication skills. They can offer insights into your strengths and areas for improvement that you might not have noticed.



**04**

## Set Goals:

Once you've identified your strengths and areas for growth, set specific, measurable goals for improvement. For example, if you want to become more comfortable speaking in public, aim to present at a certain number of meetings or events over the next few months.



**01**

## Self-Assessment:

Take some time to identify what you enjoy and where you feel most comfortable. Do you prefer expressing your thoughts in writing or speaking in front of a group? Do you find one-on-one conversations more engaging? Consider keeping a journal of your experiences with communication to track what feels natural and what challenges you.



**03**

## Practice:

Like any other skill, communication improves with practice. Join groups or clubs that focus on public speaking, engage in writing workshops, or participate in community discussions. The more you practice, the more confident you'll become.





# STEPS TO EXPLORE YOUR INTERESTS AND STRENGTHS

## 06 Reflect on Your Experiences:

After each communication opportunity, take a moment to reflect on what went well and what could be improved. This practice will help you grow and adapt your style over time.



## 05 Utilize Resources:

Make use of available resources, such as books, online courses, and local workshops. Many organizations offer training in advocacy and communication skills that can provide you with valuable tools and techniques.



## 07 Embrace Your Unique Style:

Remember that everyone has their own communication style. Embrace what makes you unique, and don't feel pressured to conform to a particular mold. Authenticity can be a powerful tool in advocacy. By focusing on your communication skills and continuously seeking improvement, you can become a more effective advocate. The journey may take time, but with persistence and the right resources, you can make significant strides.





# GROUP POLL



**What do you believe  
are your greatest  
advocacy strengths?**





# RELEVANT & INTERESTING ARTICLES & VIDEOS

**It is incredibly valuable to read and listen to thought leaders in this space. Athletes like Riley Gaines, Paula Scanlon, and Elizabeth Eddy are courageous women who have shared their experiences and expressed their views through spoken and written word. We can learn a great deal from them.**

**01**

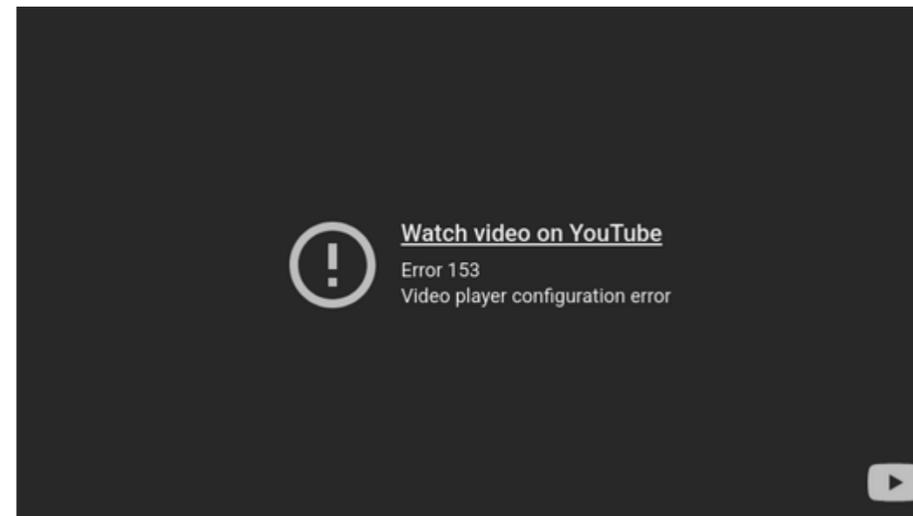
<https://nypost.com/2025/10/27/opinion/national-womens-soccer-league-must-adopt-gender-standards-to-keep-growing/>

**02**

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/RZ1800cBlgA>

**03**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIFDZbVrtx8&t=10s>





# UNIT 1 RECAP



# KEY TAKEAWAYS



## Title IX As The Foundation of Women's Sports

Understanding the history, purpose, and impact of Title IX is essential for effective advocacy, as it has been the primary driver of increased participation and equity for girls and women in athletics since 1972.



## Courage, Compassion, and Clarity

Speaking out in today's climate can invite criticism, but meaningful advocacy depends on the willingness to articulate beliefs thoughtfully while maintaining empathy and avoiding harm to others.



## Education, Collaboration, Persistence, and Strong Messaging

Successful advocates combine accurate information, teamwork with key stakeholders, long-term commitment, and clear, audience-specific communication to create sustainable impact.



## Stakeholder Engagement

Parents, coaches, educators, administrators, and community leaders all play vital roles, and coordinated engagement across these groups strengthens policy influence and community support.



## Communications Skills

Tailoring messages to different audiences, blending data with personal stories, using multiple platforms, and continuously refining communication skills are essential to influencing public opinion.