

MORE THAN EDUCATION

PUBLIC HEALTH & STATE-LEVEL ADVOCACY

Contrary to common belief among public health workers in Oklahoma, the **First Amendment** right to free speech protects your right to express your opinions about, support, and oppose legislation. **Public health workers can do more than educate** to inform policymaking and legislation.

Education vs Advocacy & Lobbying



Education - Providing nonpartisan information and resources without imparting support or opposition.



Advocacy - Active support or opposition to a general cause or idea.



Lobbying - Communication with a legislator that attempts to influence and/or ask for support or opposition on specific legislation.

Limitations for OK State Employees

- Federal and state laws have **limited ability** to restrict your free speech rights by regulating the **content** of your speech, **but may regulate** the **context** of your speech - the when, where, and how you advocate.
- It is best to avoid engaging in advocacy or lobbying 1) **during work hours**, 2) **on or using work property**, or 3) **while in workwear** (uniforms, work IDs, insignias, etc).

Guidance for OK State Employees

Public health workers **may advocate** and **lobby** 1) **outside of the work-place**, 2) **outside of work hours and capacity**, 3) using **personal property**, and 4) in **non-work attire**.



Sources: Political Activities, DOJ Justice Management Division Departmental Ethics Office, Accessed 2024; Lobbying Guide 2021-2022, OK Ethics Commission Accessed 2024. Questions? Contact oklahomapublichealth@gmail.com and visit www.opha.net/your-right-to-advocate for more info.