



State Networks

State Level Advocacy
Resources, Guidelines,
and Parameters



ACSI School Networks In General

In each state, ACSI hopes that member schools will network, meet and coordinate with each other to share best educational practices, discuss trends in Christian discipleship and academics, develop and share professional development opportunities, and for mutual support and encouragement. . . even if they are not formally involved in a specific effort (such as the 'FSI Leadership Network' or the 'Public Policy & Advocacy Leadership Network').

ACSI School Networks and State Advocacy Efforts

ACSI member schools have found that by coordinating and working together to have a unified voice, they can positively impact public policy and the public perception of Christian education at the state and local levels. Done through voluntarily working together, ACSI school leaders can have a more influential voice in representing Christian schools' interests to policymakers and engaging others in their community to support the interests of Christian education.

A Joint Venture to Provide Resources to State Networks: ACSI USA Leadership; Communications, and Legal/Legislative Issues Departments

The ACSI Legal Legislative Department, ACSI USA Leadership, and ACSI Communications Department work in conjunction with each other to help train, equip and provide resources to the ACSI School Networks and school leaders to assist them in their efforts to represent themselves and promote the interests of ACSI schools and Christian education in their state and local communities.

ACSI School Networks and State Advocacy Leadership

Leadership in these ACSI school networks will, obviously, be provided by ACSI school administrators and their representatives. Leadership may come from ACSI school administrators, ACSI State Representatives, ACSI Field Representatives, ACSI District Representatives, and other volunteers that have been approved by the ACSI USA regional leadership and the ACSI Legal/Legislative Issues Department.

At times, advocacy for all the ACSI schools in a state may occur through the efforts of one individual representing the group.

Preferably, ACSI school leaders in a state will work together to have a more significant impact through combined efforts.

It is understood that not all school leaders can have the same level of involvement. Some may be committed to other ACSI activities and efforts. Therefore, ACSI encourages organizing and sharing tasks among each state's network of ACSI schools to support all areas of activity that ACSI school leaders are involved within any particular state.

ACSI School Networks and Working with Outside Organizations

Both the main membership and leadership in an ACSI network group are naturally limited to ACSI schools. However, other like-minded individuals, organizations, and non-ACSI schools may be affiliated as *coalition partners* of an ACSI state network if their beliefs and core values are not contrary to ACSI's doctrine and core values.

Additionally, ACSI state networks and school leaders may work in cooperation with any other group or school to achieve their advocacy goals as long as that cooperation does not bring public ridicule or disparagement upon Christianity in general.



ACSI State Network Advocacy Guidelines

1. Purpose. ACSI State Networks should seek to:

- a. Promote the understanding of the benefit and public good that comes from the presence of private Christian schools in the community.
- b. Represent the interest and viewpoint of Christian schools with those involved in making or influencing public policy in their state and local government.
- c. Connect and work with other state policy groups (ex. CAPE, Catholic Conference, Family Institutes, and other religious organizations) to advance common purposes and goals.
- d. Coordinate with ACSI USA Leadership and ACSI Legal/Legislative Department in areas of public policy interest and concerns, and with ACSI Communications Department for communications support. Such areas (federal and state) may include:

Early Education – Access, licensing, choice, etc.

Accreditation – State recognition or requirements of faith-based accreditors.

Testing – Mandates related to norm-referenced testing, curricular testing.

Academics – Requirements related to classroom content and curriculum.

Staffing – Policies related to employment practices, teacher credentials, training, or other related standards.

2. Policy Priorities. All efforts should be in furtherance of one of the following priorities:

- a. *Religious Liberty* – Religious liberty means that all Americans should be free to worship and live out their faith in meaningful and God-honoring ways. Religious freedom means that parents should be able to freely choose a faith-based school to meet education and curricular requirements for their children that may exist in each state. Religious liberty also means that schools should have the right to operate and staff their institutions in a manner that is consistent with their doctrinal beliefs and Christian faith. Standards of admissions and mission that relate to the religious tenants of the faith-based school should be protected.
- b. *Educational Freedom/School Choice* – This policy priority recognizes that parents best know their children's unique academic and social needs and that it is the parent, not the government, who has the primary duty and responsibility of directing a child's education. Freedom to choose has little meaning if there are not options from which to choose. Therefore, the government should support and not limit educational opportunities for families.
- c. *Limited Government Involvement/Regulation* – Private schools are the most accountable educational entities in the country as they respond daily to parents' concerns. If a private school does not perform well and provide the level of quality that a parent expects, they can immediately withdraw from enrollment and place their child in the public schools or another private school. For this reason, and also to respect the limits government should have for private institutions in a free society, government regulation and oversight of private schools should be limited.
- d. *Christian Schools As a Public Good* – A society enjoys more innovation, prosperity, and opportunity when there is a free marketplace of ideas, abundant options for learning and growth, and freedom of choice. Christian schools fulfill a critical role in meeting the needs of individual students, creating a diversity of educational options for all families in the community, and enriching the overall culture of each state and municipality. Specific efforts should be spent to communicate the benefit Christian schools have on the community as a whole and the positive outcomes enjoyed by the general public.



ACSI state networks are authorized and should feel comfortable advancing policy positions described above. However, ACSI state networks would need to gain permission from appropriate ACSI leadership before speaking on any other issues to ensure that ACSI is willing to have its name associated with such other matters.

- 3. Positive Presentation.** ACSI State Networks should continually share the positive message of who and what ACSI schools are, the great benefit they provide, and why everyone in the community should support private Christian education.
- 4. Other Requirements and Limitations.** As a voluntary association of fellow ACSI schools within a state, a state network primarily represents and provides a voice for that specific state's school group, not for all schools across the nation nor for ACSI as an international organization.

As a condition of using ACSI's name/logo, all ACSI state networks must comply with and support ACSI guidelines regarding the use of its ACSI's name/logo, ACSI's Statement of Faith, and ACSI's policy positions.

ACSI's statement of faith and core values can be found in every school's ACSI membership materials, and ACSI's Communications Department will issue updated policies and style guides governing the usage of ACSI's name and logos.

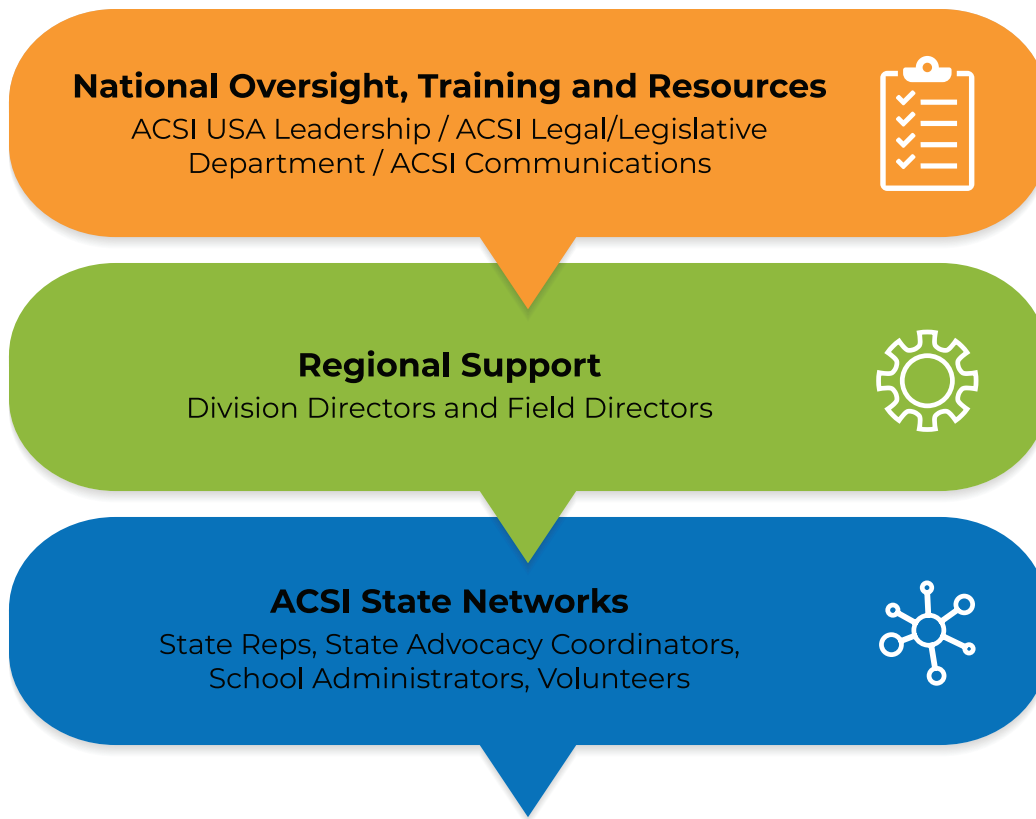
Materials and Support

ACSI's Legal Legislative Department, Communications Department, and USA Leadership will work together to provide state network groups the following:

1. Advocacy Training and Materials – basic advocacy toolkits, how-to's, and sample docs.
2. Automated Communication Tools – access to an online system that allows for the distribution to multiple persons, for individual signature and use, letters to public officials that are automatically populated with the appropriate office addresses and suggested content for the letter.
3. Assistance and Advice – Insight and assistance from other ACSI state leaders, ACSI USA leadership, ACSI's Legal/Legislative Issues, and Communication's Departments, along with other experience volunteer school leaders.
4. National Level Training – Priority for attendance at the ACSI Legal/Legislative Issues Department hosted annual training conference in Washington DC each fall will be given to those involved in state network advocacy work.
5. State Specific Resources – Specific state logo for each state network group; state-level email lists (includes the ACSI member list but may also have other entities that are supportive of ACSI advocacy priorities who desire to be on the list); state-specific website and tools are also in development.



Structure



While the ACSI USA leadership, with its network of Division Directors and Field Directors, will have the most day-to-day oversight of activities in each state, the Senior Counsel for Policy and Advocacy will be the primary resource in providing policy direction, decision-making, strategy, resources and advocacy training, particularly at the state level. He will work directly with the Director for Government Affairs to advance federal/national policy to harness the power of local voters who naturally have the most significant influence with elected officials at all levels. The ACSI Communications Department will provide key communication assistance, guidance, and tools. In conclusion, this will be a joint effort of the ACSI USA Leadership, Communications, and Legal Legislative Departments to support the efforts of individual state advocacy networks across the nation.

