MODULE 6 – FINDING RESOURCES
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Moving on to choosing our resources, I want to ask. Choosing your resources is time-consuming and crucial in making your argument. When we were working on our first policy paper that examined implementing parity for behavioral health services in Florida, we kept these questions in the back of our mind, as we searched for and assembled our resources.

What are the objectives of this research? Exactly what issue is being addressed? What is at stake? What are the politics? Who are the players? What are the alternatives or options? What is the goal, or the goals, of the decision-maker or decision-makers? And what possible impacts will there be?

These questions begin the research process as to topic, where you might look for information, and what resources you may need. They also keep you focused on, what is the point of this brief, the claims you're making, who your audience is, what their goals may be, what alternatives do you want to offer, and what are the impacts on the existing system or practice that you want to change?

When we prepared our first report on parity, we looked at a range of federal, state, private, and popular literature referenced in the national debate. We had to establish authoritative standards and definitions for state and national data and terminology. We collected passed and failed bills and actual legislation. This included a view of the national, state, and trade newspapers, organizations dealing with policy analysis, legal resources such as Westlaw and LexisNexis, and state and federal government agencies.

We looked at financial, actuarial, and insurance sources, as well as state government analyses, such as congressional and legislative banking and insurance committees and staff analyses, as well as business resources, health and human-resources management, and the academic literature that examined mental health financing and utilization cost reviews. We also looked at meta analyses and comparative-effectiveness reviews of mental-health programs. Finally, we covered Florida data-- analysis of state and federal parity legislation, current and pending; copies of the actual legislation, for wording; any analysis prepared by committee staffs and advocacy groups.

For the first report we prepared on the impact of parity on the state of Florida, we had collected over 800 print and electronic documents. In addition, hours were spent on the phone, tracking down corporate documents and industry data. All documentation, including the phone log-- which tracked who we called, and why-- was located on the table under the flow chart on the wall, arranged by categories.

Two of the best resources we found were the staff analyses created for members of Congress and the state legislatures. The Congressional Research Service covers the Congress. Online Sunshine makes accessible the Florida Senate and House issue briefs, mandatory review projects, summaries of legislation, and bill information reports by session. You can also sign up to track legislation during the session which keeps you informed and up-to-date.