



ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

***The U2FP Guide to
Effective Advocacy***

***Made Possible by a Grant from The
Craig H. Neilsen Foundation***

Advocacy Empowers

There's nothing more satisfying than being heard, or more soul-enriching than refusing to hide or be silent.

YOU can change the World

YOU can do it in your community

YOU can do it at your computer

YOU can do it with your phone

What you give to advocacy will come back to reward you many times over.

WE can make a difference

WE will bring the promise of curative therapies to reality.

"So many of our dreams at first seem impossible, then they seem improbable, and then, when we summon the will, they soon become inevitable."

Christopher Reeve

INTRODUCTION TO ADVOCACY

WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

Advocacy is a word used to describe actions taken to change "what is" into "what could be". Simply put, advocacy is the act of speaking up for ourselves or others.

For the purpose of this guide and in keeping with the mission of Unite 2 Fight Paralysis, the term advocacy will be used to describe actions that may be taken to further the pursuit of curative therapies.

Why should YOU be a citizen advocate for paralysis cure research?

If you are reading this guide, you are likely all too aware of the price demanded by paralysis. Given that even the most highly-paid lobbyist is only guessing about the realities of life with paralysis, can they truly persuade their audience that cure research is crucial, and that delays are life-threatening? A pro lobbyist's insider knowledge and political relationships are invaluable, but they aren't as compelling as the sincerity of someone who is personally affected. When paralysis struck your life, you became qualified to speak out for cure research, simply by virtue of your life experiences.

What does it take to be an effective advocate?

An effective advocate is an educator. The casual observer perceives that paralysis is simply a matter of moving around via wheelchair, instead of walking upright on 2 legs. It is likely that anybody who is speaking to an advocate about paralysis is precisely that uninformed. An effective citizen advocate will be able to:

COMMUNICATE THE DAMAGE: Convey the actual costs paid by the paralyzed, whether in the form of physical limitations, pain, family strife, or loss of income. The need for cure research will then be self-evident.

TALK ABOUT THE PROGRESS: Relate the progress that has been made in this field and what hope is shining just beyond the horizon. You needn't have a PhD in neuroscience to advocate. In fact, the more simply you are able to express scientific breakthroughs, and SPECIFICALLY HOW THEY COULD IMPROVE YOUR LIFE, the more likely your information will stick with your audience.

ADAPT: Advocacy opportunities are found in the oddest places. Good advocates tend to see these opportunities and take advantage of them. Public awareness can be raised while waiting in line at a theme park, speaking to your child's teacher, or milling around at the post office. If somebody seems interested, educate them!

CUSTOMIZE: Tailor your talking points to what most *personally* affects your specific audience. Devoted family types, strict fiscal conservatives, and people with paralysis afflicting someone in their lives...Know your audience, and then use the right approach for each occasion.

WRITE & SPEAK WITH CONFIDENCE: Advocates must have the power of their convictions and the belief that what they are striving for is of utmost importance.

PERSIST: Advocacy is not a sprint. It is a marathon. Polite persistence is a key trait found in most effective advocates. The squeaky wheel gets the grease. Follow up with another email or phone call after visiting your legislator or contacting the media.

TYPES OF ADVOCATES

Any person with a passion for the cause is capable of effective advocacy. Your personality will be a determining factor in what type of advocacy best suits you. Do a bit of *honest* self-analysis; certain personality traits will make you more comfortable in one area of advocacy but not another. You don't have to force yourself out of your personal comfort zone immediately, or ever.

To select a field of advocacy, ask yourself if you are:

Persistent?

Afraid of confrontation?

Shy?

Articulate?

Afraid of public speaking?

Gregarious?

Skillful at recognizing social cues?

Better at working solo?

Passionate?

Impatient?

What are your proven strengths? Perhaps you excel at written communication, or are somebody who never met a stranger. You may have a gift for organization, or for visualizing events that have never before occurred. You may have that quality that enables you to motivate others; maybe you have a list of powerful contacts and the touch for networking. A knack for budgeting and managing money is a powerful asset, as is knowledge of such tools as computers and software. Talent with photography or graphics is a great way to touch the public.

When you assess yourself honestly, what are your weaknesses? Do you possess a hot temper, sloppy work habits, or lack of imagination? It is better to acknowledge these things to yourself before you embark on a major advocacy project. Some very effective advocates are solitary creatures. Conversely, many effective teams are forged by cooperation between those with divergent talents.

Nobody is a perfect advocate, and nobody is hopeless. An honest self-appraisal will carry you far when you begin deciding what types of advocacy you prefer to engage in. Remember-No matter what your gifts may be, there is a niche for you in the work of pushing for paralysis cure research.

It is also important to know that extreme skill is not always extremely persuasive. Some of the most effective letters have been written by an advocate possessing passion, although lacking a degree in Communications. Flaws in grammatical skills can often be countered with sincere conviction.

The Community Advocate

Raise Public Awareness

Remain visible in your own community; it's a critical component of awareness.

Educate the populace during chance encounters.

Distribute educational material at community events.

Speak to your local Rotary or other service group about paralysis and the potential for a cure.

Submit your photo and story to U2FP's "Bridges 2 Hope".

Sign up for U2FP's newsletter, and forward our updates and Action Alerts to friends and family.

Join U2FP's Cause Page on Facebook, "Promote Curative Therapies Now", and invite your friends to join.

Examples of 30 Second Elevator Speeches:

"What does Unite 2 Fight Paralysis do?"

We're people affected by spinal cord injury. We work with the community to push research forward so we don't have another generation in wheelchairs.

"I hear they can make embryonic stem cells out of your own skin now, so we don't need to use human embryos."

We need to pursue all forms of stem cell research, because we don't yet know how any of these therapies will work in human beings. If we stop any avenue of research, we will lose critical time in the effort to cure serious injuries and disease.

Plan and organize an event or action in your community.

Host a booth to distribute cure info at the county fair.

Organize a local SCI Support Group.

Work with a local theater to show movie(s) about paralysis.

Examples: "Rory O'Shea Was Here"

"The Sea Inside"

"Murderball"

"My Left Foot"

Advocacy Films (more are coming – contact U2FP for info on how to order):

"Hope Deferred"

"The Accidental Advocate"

Cultivate relationships with local reporters most likely to be interested in your story. Contact them about:

- Major progress in your life (starting college, etc.)
- Scientific breakthroughs affecting paralysis
- Legislative visits

See the section on "The Media Advocate" for more information.

The Joe White Story



Joe (l) with Rep. James Langevin (D-RI)

Joe White's family and his hometown of Valparaiso, Indiana, have supported him in all of his efforts since 2003, when he was paralyzed from the chest down after being thrown from a mechanical bull at the county fair. It is only natural for Joe to give back to that community. His inquisitive nature and outgoing personality make him a born advocate. Though he has a wide range of methods and strategies; Joe is always creative with his advocacy.

Just one year after his accident, he organized and remains the director of the Northwest Indiana Spinal Cord Injury Group. Joe also organizes an annual walk to raise funds for research and to distribute educational information about paralysis and U2FP, as well as a summer documentary film series at the local theater. His doctors are kept updated on the latest progress in cure medicine and related legislation. When he is attending a national cure event, Joe calls his local newspapers to make sure others in the area are aware of the event as well.

Yet, his most effective tactic may be the most informal . . . Joe's casual encounters have a way of leaving his neighbors happily well-educated. A friendly nature and charming smile may be the most effective advocacy tools of all, and Joe White deploys them effortlessly - to the benefit of all concerned.

The Media Advocate

THE ALMIGHTY INTERNET

The Internet has changed the face of advocacy more than anything since the printing press. The web offers opportunities to connect with people from all over the world, the ability to spread critical information to every group remotely affected, and real-time communication potential that has never before been seen. In a group with limited mobility, such as the paralysis community, the Internet is especially vital.

This Toolkit for Advocates is but one example of the power of the Internet. You may have received a hard copy of it when you attended a Unite 2 Fight Paralysis event. It is even more likely, though, that you found it on the Internet and (we hope) bookmarked it as a resource.

Message Boards: Such “boards” are places for people with common interests to virtually congregate. There are many of them dedicated to the realities of paralysis. Participation on such message boards enables people to work together for a common goal. For instance, many successful Call-Ins have been organized by one or two people on message boards, and been effective at gaining legislative attention.

The founders of Unite 2 Fight Paralysis “met” on an Internet message board for people affected by spinal cord injury called CareCure Community (<http://sci.rutgers.edu/>). U2FP still has a “virtual” office; years later our founders continue to work together via the Internet.

Networking Sites: There is enormous communication power on sites like Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, etc. They offer an opportunity to reach out beyond the paralysis community to your friends, family, and general public, and share information about paralysis with them.

Most often the communication is casual, not didactic, and can be very effective. Politicians, corporations, and media representatives are now tapping into the power of these sites, and they can be a major instrument of change.

Visit Unite 2 Fight Paralysis on Facebook to connect with supporters worldwide:

<http://www.facebook.com/home.php#/group.php?gid=2514416746>

and our Causes page, **"Promote Curative Therapies Now":**

<http://apps.facebook.com/causes/158475>

Tap into **U2FP's Advocacy Forum on the CDRF website:**

<http://www.ChristopherReeve.org/unite2fight>

Forward these links to your friends and post them to your profile.

Research Source: Advocates need sound, reliable statistics if they hope to educate legislators or the general public. Internet sources have to be approached with healthy skepticism, but good data is available free of charge for those determined to find it. The Reeve Foundation recently released powerful data on the prevalence of paralysis and spinal cord injury:

http://www.christopherreeve.org/site/c.mtKZKgMWKwG/b.5184189/k.5587/Paralysis_Facts__Figures.htm

News Alerts: Register to be alerted when a news item is released about spinal cord injury cure research; it's an excellent way to ensure you have the latest information on the subject. Google Alerts is currently a great resource that emails you with the latest releases. The home page of U2FP's website, www.u2fp.org, features a Google newsfeed that is continuously updated with the latest stories about paralysis and research.

Organization Newsletters: Register for the newsletters of organizations devoted to curing paralysis to ensure that you will be kept current on recent developments and upcoming advocacy events. Such newsletters can be easily forwarded to your database of interested parties.

By subscribing to the Unite 2 Fight Paralysis newsletter, you can easily stay informed on the latest advances in research, pending legislation, and upcoming community events.

Advocate Histories: Some groups have been incredibly successful with their advocacy efforts. It is helpful to read their histories and suggestions, to see how they can be applied to your own attempts. A few groups with useful histories and advocate tips are ACTUP, Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, and Parkinson's Action Network.

Mass Communication: A well-written alert about an event or upcoming legislation, strategically placed around the Internet, can reach thousands. If there is a forum that allows participation or comments, post your alert there.

Other Media Activities

Write “Letters to the Editor” to newspapers about key issues.

Your local community and legislators read the paper to get a pulse on what people are thinking.

How to Write a Letter to the Editor:

Follow the guidelines for the publication’s Letters to the Editor. Do not go over the maximum word count or ignore the rules given.

Read the publication’s “Letters” section to get a feel for what type of writing is usually printed.

Assume your readers are unfamiliar with the issue.

Be as objective and rational as possible. Feel free to speak from personal experience, once you have established the major points in your letter.

Don’t slur the opposition. Politely disagree, and clearly state why.

Use strong but simple language.

Check for grammar and spelling.

Have someone proofread for clarity and grammar.

Submit your letter per the publication’s requirements. Remember your name, address, phone number, and email address.

Don't stop writing, even if your last try was rejected. Keep writing!

Feel free to send a copy of your letters to appropriate legislators. Let them know what you're thinking!

See Sample Letter to the Editor on next page.

(Sample Letter to the Editor)

One of the founders of U2FP had this letter published in a very conservative newspaper. Note that it is slanted to appeal to emotions, and push legislation without alienating the extremely conservative local readers.

Continuing Reeve's Mission

"It was with great sorrow that I learned of the death of Dana Reeve. I'm a quadriplegic. Last April I co-organized and emceed a rally on Capitol Hill to re-introduce the Christopher Reeve Paralysis Act. Joining me on stage were Dana Reeve, prominent politicians and even a paralyzed rapper from New Jersey. Because many of the paralyzed guests were unable to hold a microphone, Dana did it for them. She also opened a bottle of water for me, without my asking. She spoke about her love for her late husband Christopher and how he would have appreciated our political initiative. The day prior was their wedding anniversary.

We're planning another rally in Washington in May. Dana won't make it this year. She was the most gracious person I ever met and I will miss her. I'm proud to carry on her mission. The Christopher Reeve Paralysis Act is not about embryonic stem cell research. It's about coordination of paralysis research, about exercise-based recovery, about improvements in lifestyles for people with paralysis. Dana believed that the disabled should be integrated into society, living healthy lives, while the search for cures continues. This bill strongly reflects her values. It needs to be made law this year."

Sincerely,

Write and distribute a press release.

You might want to issue a press release to your local media for significant milestones in your life, such as returning to work or school, or your post-injury graduation. Any of these are opportunities to raise awareness about paralysis.

Other occasions warranting press could be:

- A visit to your legislators
- Your upcoming trip to Working 2 Walk
- Announcement of a fundraiser
- News of a major scientific breakthrough
- Your visit to a research lab
- Screening of a paralysis-related movie

We've seen good advocates generate press for movies ranging from Murderball to Superman!

All press that raises awareness about paralysis is a good thing. Sometimes we have to seize the opportunities presented by horrifying events. For example, you might contact reporters if a local high-school student is paralyzed while playing football.

As you cultivate a long-term relationship with the local media, reporters start reaching out to you when a statement is needed. That's when you'll know you've done a great job at using the media for an advocacy tool.

HOW TO WRITE A PRESS RELEASE

Press releases have a set format. Failure to follow the format may result in rejection of the release. Such a set format may make press releases appear simple to write, but there is a lot of skill required to compress your story while making it grab the eye.

A press release is a short, pseudo-news story. Written in 3rd person, it is meant to persuade the journalism industry that your story or event is worthy of their attention with a more in-depth follow-up.

Headline: Capitalize every word excepting prepositions and words of 3 letters or less. Limit to 8-10 words that will grab the reporter's attention. Do not end the headline with a period. State the most exciting and interesting angle of your story in the headline.

Write directly to the public with short, simple sentences. Try to tell a compelling, personal story about real people and emotions. Your press release should be about real news, not a sales pitch.

Know the media to whom you are pitching your story. Familiarize yourself with the newspaper, TV station, radio station, etc. where you want coverage.

Cite sources: If you are using statistics, you must attribute them to the group that gathered the information. Any good reporter will insist on crediting the original source.

Use quotes: Good press releases often include a quote from either a prominent figure in the cause, a local person affected, or other knowledgeable individual. Such quotes add validity to your story.

Keep the press release to **one page**. Be sure to include the name and contact information of someone who is knowledgeable and available. In conclusion, finish with a sentence or two about you and/or your organization and a link for more information (e.g. website).

See sample press release on next page.

(Sample Press Release)

Contact: Name _____ Date: _____
Organization _____
Phone No./Email _____

For Immediate Release

Wheelchair Activists Pushing to Reach a Cure for Paralysis

Drs. Hans Keirstead, John McDonald, and Oswald Steward lead an elite group of research scientists that will kick off "Working 2 Walk" with a symposium on emerging therapies, exercise science, and establishment of a clinical trial network in the effort to cure paralysis.

Keirstead, recently featured on CBS' "60 Minutes", will discuss his work with embryonic stem cells and plans for human clinical trials in the near future. Dr. McDonald is well known for his work with Christopher Reeve; he is currently Director of the International Center for Spinal Cord Injury at Kennedy Krieger Institute in Baltimore.

Unite 2 Fight Paralysis is helping to get wheelchair activists to Washington, offering an opportunity for the disabled and their families to meet with scientists and politicians to explore and pursue a cure for their condition. In the words of the late Christopher Reeve,

"We live in a time when the words impossible and unsolvable are no longer part of the scientific community's vocabulary. Each day we move closer to trials that will not just minimize the symptoms of disease and injury but eliminate them."

"Working 2 Walk" is a 3-day event jointly organized by the Christopher Reeve Foundation and Unite 2 Fight Paralysis. Following Sunday's meetings on the science of a cure, attendees will focus on Advocacy strategies during Monday's sessions. The event culminates with a Rally in Upper Senate Park at 11am on Tuesday, May 2nd, followed by visits with legislators and their aides to lobby for targeted legislation.

For more information visit (website address)

You don't have to be a writer to be a Media Advocate

The ProfessirX Story



ProfessirX, aka Richard Gaskin, was living the life of a big-city DJ when he took a bullet in the neck. His love for urban music coupled with his innate media savvy and a gift for promotion have made him a powerful advocate. Inspired by the life and loss of super-advocate Christopher Reeve, ProfessirX's first advocacy foray was the Internet appearance of his original rap song, "Forever Superman."

Stunned by the power of the song, the founders of Unite 2 Fight Paralysis invited him and his entourage to perform the song at a rally on the Capitol Hill Lawn. He has since produced numerous music videos and public access TV shows, performed at countless events, and appeared wherever he might bring media attention to our cause.

Richard's latest project is an honest and fearless documentary about the realities of living in a quadriplegic body. The soft-spoken ProfessirX's in-your-face style is not for the meek; once seen, his message is unforgettable. "Instead of giving up, I decided to open up my life and what I go through with paralysis to the world. I decided to use the gifts God gave me to inspire the children and adults."

The Legislative Advocate

Write to your legislators about issues and legislation that will affect your life.

How to Write a Letter to a Legislator

Written communication is a powerful tool for advocates. Legislators file hard copies of letters. Since so few constituents bother to write, each letter is believed to represent several hundred voters.

After the anthrax scares, email and fax are the preferred methods of communication. For maximum impact, address your email to an individual. Call your legislator's office and ask to speak with the Health Legislative Assistant; be sure to get his/her email address and fax no. in the course of the conversation.

Keep your letter brief and respectful. A single page will ensure you don't lose the reader's interest.

Never be rude or threatening.

Address the letter properly, using appropriate titles. Senators are addressed as Senator; Members of the House of Representatives are referred to as Representative or Congressman (when male). Occasionally a legislator prefers another title, such as Doctor. If so, use it!

Make the letter personal. If using a template, alter it to be less obvious. Legislators pay less attention to form letters.

Use tactics to make yourself represent the legislator's constituency. Are you a voter? Registered member of the legislator's political party? Do you work in an industry which is a big player in your region? Mention these things.

Remember: Your legislator works for and answers to YOU!

How to Write a Letter to a Legislator (cont.)

Describe yourself briefly, but thoroughly, emphasizing aspects that make you an important part of your regional population. For instance, this sentence: "I am a 37 year old wife, mother of 2, from SmallTown, State, active in the local Chamber of Commerce, a part-time nurse" identifies you and places you squarely within the voting demographic.

Refer to all legislation using proper, current bill numbers and title.

Explain how this legislation affects you. Are you paralyzed, or do you have a family member who is? Let the reader know exactly why you want paralysis cure research.

Some letters are personal. Some are more informative. Letters citing the direct costs of paralysis, lost productivity, and the national cost benefit of cure research can be a useful counterpoint to the personal appeal.

Stick to one or two points per letter.

Ensure your letter has your name, address, phone number and email address.

Ask your friends and family to write too!

Keep copies of letters sent and responses received.

Follow up your letter with a phone call, to make sure it was received.

If you get a form letter response, call your legislator's Health Assistant to make sure the/she reads your letter. Offer to answer any questions they may have. Thank them for their time.

Phone your legislator when important legislation is pending, or you are seeking bill cosponsors

Congressional offices keep a tally of phone calls received in support or against each piece of legislation. 5 minutes of your time CAN make a difference.

How to Phone a Legislator to Support a Particular Vote

In this age of voicemail, making a phone call to your legislators has become very simple. It is certainly the quickest way to be heard just before an important vote is scheduled.

Ask the person answering the phone if you may speak to the person handling the specific issue. For our needs, that person is usually the Health Legislative Assistant. If you get a human on the line, identify yourself as a constituent and ask them how the legislator plans to vote on your particular issue. Tell them your position, thank them politely, and ask that they thank the legislator as well.

Sample Phone Script

My name is (Insert name). I'm a constituent of (Insert legislator's title and last name), and a registered voter from (Insert town and state). I'm calling to ask that Senator (or Representative) (Insert Senator's last name) support the passage of the (Name of Bill), Senate/H.R. Bill Number (Insert Bill Number). As a paralyzed citizen (or insert your relationship to paralyzed person) I'm sure that my Senator is compassionate and ethical, and fully values my/my loved one's quest for health. Please thank Senator/Representative (Insert last name) for his/her integrity and support.

You can reach me at (Insert phone number) or by email at (Insert email address). Please tell the Senator that I am grateful for his/her support.

Best of all, visit your legislator in person

The fact that few people ever bother to visit their legislators makes such visits potentially very powerful advocacy tools. When you meet with them, you put a face on paralysis, and remind them of the importance of cure research.

Many times your legislators are unaware of significant pending legislation. YOU keep them informed. Cultivating a relationship with elected officials can help you influence them, and the process is often very interesting to reporters as well.

You don't have to travel to Washington for a meeting. Legislators spend a lot of time in their home districts during Work Periods and Holidays. Visit www.house.gov and www.senate.gov to find out when your members of Congress will be in your district.

Before the Meeting

Schedule and confirm all legislative appointments ahead of time. Allow at least 30-45 minutes between appointments for travel between Capitol buildings.

Each Federal legislator has an office scheduler; call them to schedule well in advance of your trip.

Some offices will request an emailed or faxed appointment request. Comply with all the requirements of that particular office.

Research your legislator — know his or her history with this cause.

If possible, bring statistics specific to his/her district.

Dress appropriately; in Washington, conservative is best.

Arrive prepared, and early.

During the Meeting

Do not take up too much time.

Don't be upset if you meet with a legislative assistant instead of your legislator. Assistants keep their bosses informed about issues and help them make decisions on how to vote; they are important allies! If you do meet with an assistant, be sure to get his or her name, areas of responsibility, and business card.

Focus on the key issues. Never bring a list of more than 3 “asks”.

Introduce yourself as a constituent, and explain why paralysis is your issue.

Try to get specific answers to specific questions. Don’t get distracted.

Emphasize that paralysis is NOT a partisan issue.

Listen carefully to the legislator’s position, even if you disagree.

Be respectful at all times.

Don’t comment negatively on other elected officials.

Leave a packet of information for them to keep in your bill’s file.

Packet suggestions:

- Printed full version of the bill (including bill number, current status of the bill, committee actions on the bill, number/names of co-sponsors at the time)
- A short history of the bill
- Statistics about financial and societal costs of paralysis
- Information on paralysis resources in your district, such as rehabilitation hospitals, recovery centers, biotechnology companies, etc.
- Photo of the paralyzed constituent with his/her family
- A brief letter about what a cure for paralysis would mean to you

Leave on pleasant terms. Thank the person you met with for listening.

After the Meeting

Follow up the meeting with a thank-you letter that summarizes your discussion. Remind him or her that you are at their service.

Stay in touch via phone calls and emails. Don’t fall off their radar, and keep them updated of any status changes in your legislation.

Contact them EVERY time your bill is up for another vote!

The Leo Hallan & Todd Phillips Stories



At first glance, Leo Hallan of Yankton SD and Todd Phillips of NYC couldn't be more different. Leo has been a quadriplegic since a motorcycle accident 30 years ago; Todd had never known anyone with paralysis until his admiration for Christopher Reeve led him to attend U2FP's Working 2 Walk. Yet they share many characteristics of a successful legislative advocate. Perseverance, positivity and determination make them effective.

Leo has cultivated relationships with Federal, state and local legislators and aides, to whom he writes letters by the dozens. His contacts within organizations such as the PVA and the NSCIA are always updated on upcoming votes or critical issues. Leo's gift for analyzing partisan positions, historical votes and personal facts about politicians and constituents alike help him isolate common ground and avenues of persuasion. He sees everyone as a future friend and ally, and his networking skills are legendary.

Todd shares Leo's knack for connecting with people. His polite persistence and patience once led him to set what must surely be an advocacy coup; when he decided that every U.S Representative needed to commit to a position on the Christopher and Dana Reeve Paralysis Act, his steady phone calls netted 26 new cosponsors in a single month. What Todd learned from that experience is valuable knowledge indeed. He found that many legislators were unaware of the existence of the CDRPA. Even though he was not a constituent, he found many to be supportive, they were simply uninformed.

We're here to help!

Please contact us with questions, suggestions, additional ideas, or any other concerns.

Sign up to receive our newsletter for Action Alerts and updates on the latest research news.

<http://www.unite2fightparalysis.org/newsletter>



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PARALYSIS AND SPINAL CORD INJURY STATISTICS

How many people are affected?

- Approximately 5.6 million people or 1.9% of the population have difficulty or inability to move one or more upper or lower extremities
- More than 1.2 million people have a spinal cord injury

What ethnic groups are affected?

- For all forms of paralysis, 77.8% are Caucasian, 17.2% African American, and 3.7% Native American
- In spinal cord injury, 77.1% are Caucasian, 15.6% African American, and 7.3% Native American

What are the leading causes of paralysis?

- Stroke – 29%
- Spinal Cord Injury – 23%
- Multiple Sclerosis – 17%
- Cerebral Palsy – 7%
- Post Polio Syndrome – 5%
- Other – 19%

What are the leading causes of spinal cord injury?

- On-the-job Accidents – 28%
- Motor Vehicle Accidents – 24%
- Sporting/Recreation Accidents – 16%
- Falls – 9%
- Other – 23%

How does paralysis affect annual household income?

- 59.2% of the paralyzed population reports household income of less than \$25,000, compared to 27.1% of the US population as a whole
- With spinal cord injury, 62.7% report household income of less than \$25,000

Source: Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation Paralysis Resource Center.
One Degree of Separation: Paralysis and Spinal Cord Injury in the United States.
<http://www.christopherreeve.org>