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Advanced Advocacy Toolkit

Your voice matters!

Keep speaking up for Colorado kids!

As Sen. Linda Newell said at the inaugural Speak Up for Kids', "There's nothing more important and powerful than a constituent's voice." Your passion for children's issues combined with your personal experience speaking up on the issues that are important to you make you a powerful advocate. We hope this Advanced Advocacy Toolkit will bolster your efforts to make your voice heard along with other Coloradans.

All children deserve a healthy start in life and access to experiences that let them discover, learn and grow. Your advocacy can help ensure kids are healthy and ready to learn when they enter school.

Included inside:

1. One framework for effective advocacy
2. Ways to speak up
3. Creating a great fact sheet
4. Resources



Children's Hospital Colorado



You are an expert!

With your advocacy training at Speak Up for Kids, your personal experience as someone who cares about kids, and the resources below, you're ready to make your voice heard when it's needed most.

4. Resources

Colorado Children's Campaign KidsFlash

As the leading voice for Colorado's 1.2 million children, the Colorado Children's Campaign publishes a weekly newsletter about issues affecting kids in Colorado. http://www.coloradokids.org/act_now/email_updates.html

Children's Hospital Colorado Child Health Champions Network

More than four thousand people currently participate in Children's Hospital Colorado's Child Health Champions Network, which joins the voices of physicians, healthcare professionals, patients and families with business leaders and community members to speak up clearly and powerfully for kids when public policy decisions are made. Advocates write letters, make phone calls, and share information when needed to influence public policies. Join the Network at <http://cqrcengage.com/childrenscolorado/childhealthchampions!>

Clayton Early Learning

A major proving ground for all things early childhood, Clayton Early Learning is Colorado's leading catalyst in providing early care and education, and collaborating with others to improve these important services. <http://www.claytonearlylearning.org/>

Alliance for Early Success

The Alliance's goal is to shift the odds for our youngest, most vulnerable children so they can grow up eager to learn and ready for success in life. <http://earlysuccess.org/>

Colorado General Assembly

Look up all legislators and legislation, past and present, get daily calendars for the House and Senate, watch live proceedings or listen to live audio, and more. <http://leg.colorado.gov>

Project VoteSmart

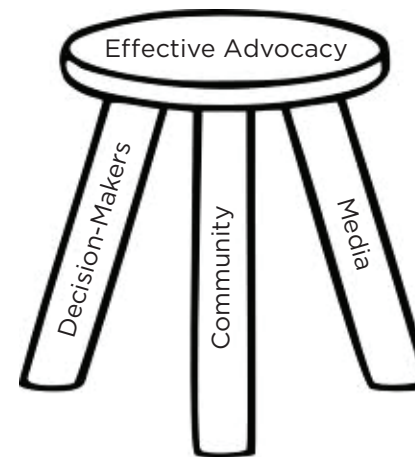
A great way to look up your elected officials, as well as an unbiased source for information on many issues. <http://votesmart.org/>

All Kids Covered Colorado

A nonpartisan coalition that strives to reduce the number of uninsured children in Colorado by advocating for sound policy and building public will. <http://allkidscoveredcolorado.org>

Individual Legislator Websites and Newsletters

Google your legislators. Most have their own website and newsletter lists.



1. One Framework for Effective Advocacy

Good advocacy rests on a three-legged stool; to be effective, all three must be in place. Many advocacy strategies support more than one "leg". For the purpose of this toolkit, we've divided the strategies as shown to the right.

Decision-Maker Leg

This leg of the stool encompasses everything that goes on where the laws are made: city or county council, state legislature, U.S. Congress. This is where you engage full or part-time lobbyists; where you hold "lobby days," or go to testify; where regular action alerts on specific issues originate; where citizens go to meet with their elected officials or the people who provide staff support to them.

Community or Grassroots Leg

This leg of the stool encompasses everything that goes on in the community. This is where you organize telephone trees and email lists for responding to the "alerts" coming out of the Capitol; it is where you set up "Take 5" tables to generate petition signatures, cards and letters, or sign people up for your networks; it is where grassroots campaigns take root; it is where you conduct community education, sponsor community forums and arrange site visits with your elected officials.

Decision-Maker Leg

- Telephone
- Action alerts
- Letters & email
- Town hall meetings
- Petitions
- Testifying
- Lobby Days

Community Leg

- Speaking up with friends and family
- House party/ special events

Media Leg

- Letter to the editor
- Op-ed
- Posting on Facebook & Twitter
- Creating a Facebook page or blog

The strategies you use depend on how much time and energy you have to dedicate:

Less Intensive

Telephone calls

Action alerts

Facebook & Twitter

Letters & email

Town hall meetings

Letters to the editors

Op-Eds

House Parties/
special events

Speaking up with friends and family (ongoing)

Keeping up to date on issues (ongoing)

Creating campaign or organization

More Intensive

Media Leg

This leg of the stool refers to everything we do to spread the word to more people, whether through traditional media - local radio, TV, or newspapers - or through non-traditional outlets like blogs, online forums or social media such as Facebook, Twitter or YouTube. We need this leg of the stool for three reasons: First, because elected officials pay attention to both traditional and non-traditional media; Second, because we need to reach more people than those already informed and persuaded; Third, because we have to deliberately counter the misinformation that shows up all too often via these channels.

Keep two helpful points in mind

(1) Two of the three legs are firmly planted where you live. The work you do in your hometown or county is just as important as the work being done in the Capitol.

(2) You needn't cover all three legs of the stool alone; you can work with other groups to see that all three are getting attention. For example, on an issue like child care it is easy to think of ways to share the workload. It affects people of all incomes, children of all ages, children with disabilities and children whose parents work the night shift, the children of people in the armed forces and children being raised by grandparents.

- To cover the **Decision-Maker Leg**, think of groups already lobbying elected officials—child care professionals, statewide child advocacy groups, women's organizations, faith communities, etc. And of course Colorado Children's Campaign, Children's Hospital Colorado, and Clayton Early Learning. Explore how you can support the efforts.
- To handle the **Media Leg**, think of approaching a local community college or university communications program, or a local Junior League group to take advantage of their expertise.
- You could take the lead for the **Community Leg**, together with pediatricians, educators, women's groups, It's About Kids leaders, a supportive business or provider group.

Posting on Facebook & Twitter

Facebook and Twitter are great ways to reach everyone in your network. As a leader and advocate, consider yourself a source of inspiration, providing resources and calls to action that support your cause. For example, instead of just venting about what frustrates you with regard to the issue you care about, consider providing a tangible resource such as: "Hey moms of kids with special needs! Want to learn more about available resources and how to be a voice for your child? Check out this event: (Link here)."

Creating a Facebook Page or Blog

In addition to posting on your own Facebook profile, you can create a page that is specific to your issue, which can be a strategy for growing your network of supporters and building a coalition. To set up a page for a cause you care about, go to <http://www.facebook.com/pages/create.php>, and click on "Cause or Community" to get started.

If you have a lot to say and can commit to regular updates, you might consider starting a blog. Blogging is another strategy for growing your network of supporters. Once your blog is established, you have a higher chance of getting picked up by other bloggers and even traditional media like newspapers.

Some free blog sites are:

- Word Press: <http://wordpress.com/>
- Blogger: <http://www.blogger.com>
- Typepad: <http://www.typepad.com/>

3. Creating a Great Fact Sheet

A great fact sheet can support advocacy efforts across all three "legs," in meetings with a legislator or as a handout to community groups. A fact sheet should be no more than one page, and should include all of your key points along with specific statistics and data points. People will be able to refer back to this sheet when they are reviewing the issue more closely. Elected officials can pass the sheet along to their staff and others they wish to educate and persuade.

Some tips for creating a great fact sheet:

- Be sure to cover the "who, what, when, where, why and how" about the issue.
- Include your contact information, including name, phone number, email address and any affiliations.
- Keep the most important information in the first paragraph.
- Make it readable - use at least a 12 point font.
- Keep the text brief - use bullet points to boost readability.
- Leave lots of white space.
- Make it clear what you want the reader to do - use bold face type, text boxes, and graphics to add emphasis.
- Give the reader all the tools they need to take action - do not simply say "call your legislator," instead provide the contact information; for legislators and the specific bill number and title that you're concerned about.
- Include references for more information and to support the facts you provide.
- Make sure the fact sheet can stand on its own. Don't assume readers bring any background knowledge to the issue.



Sample Op-Ed:

AUTHOR NAME
HOME ADDRESS
CITY, STATE ZIP
EMAIL ADDRESS
PHONE NUMBER

DATE

Word Count: 374 (check your local paper, generally 600- 750 words)

Colorado Joins States Making Continuous Care for Kids a Priority

For too long children have cycled on and off of Medicaid as small changes in family income have affected eligibility. Often referred to as “churn,” this disrupts the child’s relationship with their health care provider and creates costly administrative work for health care providers and the state. Colorado has had one of the highest churn rates in the country.

With 12 months of continuous eligibility in place, families will have consistent, reliable coverage they can count on for preventive care. Guaranteed coverage keeps kids healthy and gives families peace of mind that they’ll have access to affordable services when their kids are sick or injured. It will also reduce administrative burden for health care providers and the state, increasing efficiency for Medicaid overall.

“In order to maximize the benefit of health insurance, it needs to be consistent and reliable. Children who have continuous coverage are more likely to receive high-quality health care in medical homes instead of emergency rooms,” said Dr. Steve Federico, Past President of the Colorado Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and Colorado Children’s Campaign Board Member. “Implementing 12 months continuous eligibility will allow pediatricians to focus on establishing a relationship with the child and family. It provides the opportunity for families to get the care and services they need to stay healthy.”

The Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF) estimates that more than 530,000 Colorado children will benefit from this change.

“Guaranteeing coverage for 12 months will give families the peace of mind of knowing they have reliable access to care when their kids need it,” said Consuelo Quezada, Together Colorado leader and mother of two children who have Medicaid. “It will also bring peace of mind knowing that a little more income from a seasonal job or small raise at work won’t cost them their kids’ health coverage. This will make a big difference in the lives of working families.”

Families currently on Medicaid will not need to do anything; the 12 months of continuous coverage took effect March 1, 2014. The announcement by HCPF was applauded by health advocates, including the Colorado Children’s Campaign, and providers see it as a big win for Colorado kids.

2. Ways to Speak Up

Capitol or Decision-Maker leg

Telephone Calls

Telephone Advocacy Tips

- Introduce yourself by name and address.
- Identify the issue you wish to talk about.
- Briefly state your position and what action you would like your legislator to take.
- If you feel comfortable, ask your legislator about his or her position on the issue. Does he or she support it? Will he or she vote for it? If it doesn’t feel appropriate, it’s not a problem, but sometimes it can be helpful to know where they stand on the issue.
- Recognize that legislators are often away from their office, at committee hearings or in the chamber, so you may talk instead with an aide or an answering machine. If so, use these same basic rules. If you prefer to leave a message, it is best to call on the weekends or after 5:00 p.m. during the week.

Example Call Script using HB14-1317 Increase Affordability of Child Care

Hi, my name is _____, and I am one of your constituents. My address is _____, in _____ neighborhood/town/county. I am calling to urge you to vote YES on House Bill 1317 to make child care more affordable for working Colorado families.

This bill makes many good changes to our Colorado Child Care Assistance Program to increase the affordability of child care, ease burdens for working parents and cut red tape for small businesses providing child care across the state.

I’m excited that this legislation would help keep our economy moving by getting parents to work and ensuring all Colorado kids have access to stimulating experiences that let them discover, explore and grow.

I hope I can count on you to support HB14-1317. A return call is not necessary, but if you would like to speak with me, my phone number is (###) ###-####.

Thank you for your service to our state.

**Remember, your phone call will be even more effective if you use your own words and briefly explain why the issue is important to you, both professionally and personally.*

Action Alerts

Sign up for lists that provide action alerts (such as the Colorado Children’s Campaign’s KidsFlash, Children’s Hospital Colorado’s Child Health Champions or others).

These alerts will inform you when a particular bill is up for a vote and when your voice is needed most, allowing you to send a letter to your legislator with just a couple of clicks of the mouse.

These action alerts will typically provide a form email for you to send, they are a quick and easy way to contact your elected officials. While these forms of communications influence decision-makers, **they are even more effective if you take a few moments to personalize the letter, explaining why you care in your own words.**



Writing a Letter or Email

Tips for writing a letter or email to your elected representative.

1. Be succinct; one-page letters are best.
2. Identify yourself. Include your full name, address, phone number and email address so the elected official can respond should they decide to.
3. When sending email, include in the subject line the name or number of the bill, how you'd like them to vote and the fact that you are a constituent: "Constituent Asks You to Vote YES on HB1117."
4. Be courteous, respectful and professional. Avoid name-calling or demeaning comments, and be sure to use the lawmaker's full name and title (e.g. Dear Senator Carroll, not "Hey Morgan").
5. Explain why you care about the issue and how it relates to you. Identify any professional credentials or personal experience you bring to the issue.
6. Provide specific information/data/anecdotes about how the topic affects you or your community rather than generalizing. This includes using specific examples and evidence to support the position you state in the letter.
7. Clearly state your position and your request to them.
8. Thank the representative for their service to the community and for taking the time to read your letter. A little gratitude goes a long way!
9. Never demand a response.
10. Try to keep your letters to a single issue. It is more effective to send a few letters related to different topics than to send one long laundry list of issues.

Sample Letter to the Editor

February 28, 2013

Re: February 24, 2013 editorial "Quality preschool? Sure, but what about the cost?"

From: Jacy Montoya Price, Community Groups Coordinator, Colorado Children's Campaign (Home address: XXXX Umatilla St., Denver, 80211, Daytime phone:303-620-4547, Evening phone: 303-xxx-xxxx)

Word Count: 125

I am happy to see that The Denver Post editorial board recognizes the impact of quality preschool programs: "The Denver Preschool Program, approved in 2006, strikes us as the kind of approach that would mesh with the president's plan. It focuses on quality curriculum and instructors and supports families on a sliding scale based on their income."

All kids should have access to high-quality and affordable early childhood care and education, so they can start school ready to learn. Investments between birth and age 5 achieve some of the best financial and social returns. These investments result in healthier, happier children, a more educated population, a more productive workforce today, a more competitive workforce tomorrow and a stronger and more stable economy for our state.

Op-Eds

1. Op-eds are usually 650 to 800 words in length. Check a paper's editorial page for submission guidelines.
2. An op-ed typically comes from an expert in the subject. (If you are an expert on the topic at hand, write an op-ed).
3. Op-eds, typically located in the opinion section of a paper, usually carry quite a bit of credibility. Try contacting a person on the editorial board of the newspaper who might be particularly attuned in your topic to see what might be of interest. You can also email the editorial page editor. Ask whether a particular piece might be of interest and, if so, what exactly they might be looking for.
4. Include your opinion about the issue and why it's important to you, including your own experiences and data if you have it.
5. Include your contact information.
6. If your op-ed is a response to a previously published piece, submit it as soon as possible.

MEDIA LEG

Letters to the Editor and Opinion-Editorials (Op-Eds)

Op-Eds and letters to the editor are short articles in a newspaper's editorial section and can be very useful tools for getting your message out. Below, we'll explain the difference between a letter to the editor and an op-ed, and we'll provide some tips so you know how to approach writing either.

Letters to the Editor (LTE)

1. A letter to the editor is a letter specifically addressed to the editor of a newspaper, usually in response to a news story, editorial, column or another letter to the editor.
2. Letters are usually restricted to about 150 to 250 words. Before you write a letter, call the paper and ask for their specific guidelines, or check their website.
3. Letters to the editor can be particularly effective if they come from voices in the community who might be "unusual suspects." A letter to the editor might also come from a professional, such as a school counselor, who can speak to the issue based on professional experience. You don't have to be an expert on the subject matter; you just need to convey the importance of the issue in your opinion.
4. Pick a publication that deals with topics that are of interest and may be similar to the one you are writing about. Remember that with a smaller publication you have a better chance of getting your letter published.
5. Include your contact information at the top of the letter (name, address, email, and phone number). This way, editors can verify you are who you say you are. If you do not want any of this information to be shared, state you would like the information to be kept private.
6. If this letter is in response to another letter or an article, state this in the first sentence of the body of your letter. Send your letter within a few days of the original article.
7. Be specific and brief. Address your topic concisely but expressively. Avoid being excessively emotional and avoid insulting language.

Benefits of LTEs & Op-Eds

- Most policymakers read the editorial section religiously; it is an important way for elected officials to track issues important to their constituents.
- It is a free way to influence public opinion.
- They are your words, your message. No misquoting, no chance that the reporter will miss your point (or come to his own). And your opponents have to write their own article to get a response in.
- It is an excellent way to explain a complex issue.
- You can make connections to policy that may be more difficult to make in hallway conversations.
- If your issue is not getting press, or is now "old news," a letter or op-ed can revive the issue.
- While it is difficult to get published in *The Denver Post*, smaller, local papers are often more accessible.

Example Letter/Email to a State Senator Using House Bill 13-1288

Date

Senator's Name
Senator's Address

Dear Senator XX,

I live in your district and I'm writing today to urge you to vote YES on House Bill 1288, which would strengthen the state's personal belief exemption for childhood immunizations. It strikes the right balance between preserving parent choice and protecting public health.

HB 1288 preserves the personal belief exemption option, but requires that parents electing a personal belief exemption demonstrate they understand the benefits and risk of vaccination both for their student and the community, by submitting to the school the signature of a health care provider licensed to administer vaccines or the certificate of completion of an online education module along with the personal belief exemption form. It also ensures parents can access the information they need about vaccination rates in child care centers and schools to make the best choice for the health of their child.

These two changes are common-sense ways to help address a growing problem. There were three times as many unvaccinated American children in 2010 than in 2001. Colorado has the 6th highest rate of immunization exemption in the U.S., with 4.3 percent of children exempted from vaccines in the 2012-13 school year. That's nearly 3,000 kindergartners entering school without protection from one or more vaccine-preventable diseases.

I'm among the majority of Coloradans who view vaccinations as a safe and healthy choice for our kids and communities. With your help, we can spread knowledge in our communities and ensure our children aren't getting sick from preventable diseases.

Please vote YES on House Bill 1288. Thank you for your service to Colorado.

Thank you!

Sincerely,
[Your Name]
[Your Address]

Town Hall Meetings

Many legislators regularly host town hall meetings. These are public meetings typically held in venues like coffee shops or libraries. Even if you just go and listen, it's a great way to familiarize yourself with the person who represents you, and sometimes you can plant seeds just by asking questions. Attending town hall meetings can also be a way to network, connect with other folks who care about your issue and start to build a coalition. Most elected officials have their own websites and publicize their town hall schedules there. Many legislators also have newsletters that you can subscribe to and Facebook pages you can "like" to keep up to date on when the next town hall will be held.

Petitions

Sharing your personal passion with decision-makers is a great step to take and can be very effective. Demonstrating that a lot of people care about an issue can multiply your voice for an even bigger impact. One way to do this is to circulate a petition to collect signatures from friends, family, neighbors, coworkers, and even strangers who support your position, then deliver the list of names and addresses to your elected officials. It's important to include addresses. They give validity to your petition by allowing the elected official to determine which signers are his or her constituents. You can create your own hard copy version of a petition or use an online site, for example, Care2.com or Change.Org, to collect signatures.

Testifying

In Colorado, we are fortunate to have the GAVEL (Give A Vote to Every Legislator) amendment, which requires that every bill introduced is subject to a hearing that includes public testimony. If you want to share your reasons for supporting or opposing a bill in a legislative committee, check the daily calendar on the Colorado General Assembly website (leg.colorado.gov), show up at the designated time and place, and sign up. It's that easy.

Expect to speak for no more than 3 minutes, and be sure to prepare and practice your comments beforehand. When you are called forward to testify, introduce yourself, then clearly and concisely state your position on the bill and why you support or oppose it. Committee members may ask you questions, so be ready. If you don't know the answer to any question, it is okay to say so—just offer to get the necessary information for them and follow up.

Legislative staff produce an audio recording of these proceedings, so it's important to speak only after the committee chairperson has called on you by name.

If you want to share your views with a committee but cannot testify in person, you have the option of submitting your comments in writing. To do this, look up the names of the committee chair on the Colorado General Assembly website (see resources). Send your comments to him or her with a request that your comments be included in the record.



COMMUNITY OR GRASSROOTS LEG

Speaking Up with Friends, Family and Neighbors

Sometimes being a successful advocate can feel much like being a town crier, walking around shouting your message in all corners of your neighborhood. While you might want to skip the colonial garb and bells, speaking up in every arena possible is actually a very effective technique to get the word out to as many people as possible. Whatever your issue is, bring it up at family dinners, talk about it in the grocery store line, discuss it at your book club or church group, chat about it by the proverbial water-cooler—use your voice everywhere you can imagine. You never know when it might inspire somebody to jump on board.

Host a House Party or Event

Who doesn't like a party? We all belong to a community of some sort already, whether it's our group of friends, our neighborhood, a book club, etc. Our existing social networks are a wonderful place to start speaking up and rallying others to share our passions. Invite a group of friends over and discuss your cause over wine and cheese. Or order some pizza and write postcards to legislators while you catch up on each others' lives. Many organizations would be thrilled to share relevant background information and data at your house party to further bolster your efforts, so reach out to them to support your event.