

# Getting Involved

**What is advocacy? ■ Why advocate for children?  
 ■ Which type of advocate are you? ■ What can you do?  
 ■ Action Agenda: Getting to know your elected officials ■ Action Agenda: Plan ahead**

## What is advocacy?

Advocacy can be as simple as speaking on behalf of a friend in need or as complex as leading a march on Capitol Hill. We advocate for our children when we ask teachers or administrators about the state of the school system. We advocate for ourselves when we negotiate with an employer for time off to be with our families. We advocate on a community level when we attend a city or county hearing and ask about the future of a neighborhood center.

As child advocates, we work to ensure that the children in our communities have a voice and that their needs are met. We can do this by voting, talking to legislators about our concerns, speaking up at community meetings or writing letters. Our advocacy may take many forms, but anyone who cares about an issue and is willing to make a difference can be an advocate. Promoting what works and challenging what doesn't are the hallmarks of effective advocacy.

Most important, advocacy is a frame of mind - not just a job title, occupation, or role in life. Advocates see opportunities where others see

obstacles. The only qualifications for being an effective advocate are concern, compassion, commitment and action.

## Why advocate for children?

Advocates provide a voice for those who are either unable to speak for themselves or who have difficulty being heard. Children and families who are struggling in one way or another are among those most in need of our advocacy and support.

Most of us simply care about the children in our neighborhoods. We want them to be safe, healthy and happy. And we want our local, state, and federal policy-makers to act in ways that support children and families. To do this effectively, it is important to have a sustained and vocal presence at all levels of decision-making. We can all be part of that presence and part of the effort to protect our nation's children and families.

## Which type of advocate are you?

Advocates play many roles based on their skills, personality, interests and experiences. Which of these roles

come naturally for you? By using our strengths, we become more effective advocates.

**Defender**—fights for the rights of others

**Protector**—works to keep others from physical or psychological harm

**Promoter**—works to cause something to happen

**Enabler**—provides others with the resources they need to achieve their goals

**Investigator**—searches for facts and information

**Mediator**—listens to and understands all points of view and remain objective

**Supporter**—listens and gives acknowledgment to feelings, and needs without passing judgment or giving advice

**Monitor**—checks periodically to see if things are going according to the plan

**Teacher**—assists in trying to decide the best possible approach to the situation; provides guidance and instruction as needed

serve you and they depend on you (the constituent) to identify concerns in the community. Develop a relationship with key policymakers BEFORE you need something from them.

## Advocacy roles:

Defender

Protector

Promoter

Enabler

Investigator

Supporter

Monitor

Teacher

## ACTION AGENDA:

### Getting to know your elected officials

- Meet one-on-one with your elected officials. Let them know which issues are important to you.
- Invite legislators to visit and learn more about your program or organization.
- Write letters. Explain your position briefly and persuasively.
- Call your elected officials and tell them your opinion on issues important to you. Don't hesitate to talk to an aide or leave a message. Every call counts!

## What can you do?

Everyone can work to promote child welfare and each part of the community, whether medical, civic, educational, legal, religious or social service, has an important role to play. Here are some ways you can be an advocate in your community.

- **Register to vote and VOTE.** This is your most basic right as a citizen and an advocate! Hold a voter registration drive at your organization or work site.
- **Get to know your elected officials.** These are the people elected to

- **Create or join a children's coalition.** Network! Network! Network! The more people know you and your group, the more effective you will be. Work to continuously expand your network. The goal is to be "spider-webbed" throughout the community, so you are not simply "preaching to the choir."
- **Hold an event.** Town meetings, rallies or marches are effective ways to bring people together and get the word out about an issue. Invite elected officials and the

press. Coordinate with other groups (remember your network!) and share the work.

- **Host a “reality tour”.** Invite public officials and the press on a “reality tour.” Ask them to visit your program and see “how it really is” or “shadow” a child care worker. Let them interact with staff, children and parents wherever possible. Host an open house and invite the public, the press and community leaders.
- **Attend Candidate Forums and Legislative Workshops in your community.** Ask candidates how they stand on your issue and state your position. Always be clear about whether you are speaking individually or on behalf of a larger group.
- **Create a newsletter or web site.** Spread the word about your issue or provide articles to existing newsletters in your area.
- **Create a letter writing, phone or email campaign.** Develop a phone tree to activate when needed. Make sure your callers know who to call and what to say. Be creative. Sending an E-mail or writing a letter is something that many people who do not have a lot of time can do to help. Consider stopping meetings five minutes early so everyone can write a letter.
- **Write a letter to the editor or an opinion-editorial piece for the local newspaper about your program.** This is a great way to increase awareness of your issue and get others involved.
- **Establish volunteer networks in your community to assist advocacy efforts.** Don’t overlook faith-based and business organizations.

- **Say Thanks!** Remember it is just as important (if not more so) to thank elected officials and community leaders when they support your efforts as it is to request something or complain.

## ACTION AGENDA:

### Plan ahead

Planning is key to any successful advocacy effort. Here are some tips for developing your own action plan:

- **Be prepared.** Research your issue thoroughly and frame the issue carefully. Keep in mind that not everyone has the same background or understanding. Keep the message simple, direct and positive. Know who your target audience is and how they operate, whether it is a state legislature or city council.
- **Get organized.** Develop a strategy using an array of advocacy tools. Understand both your supporters and opponents. Sometimes, the best advocate is a convert. Know your target audience and focus your efforts there.
- **Get into action. Monitor your progress.** Keep track of how you are doing in terms of communicating effectively and making a difference. Adjust the strategy as necessary.
- **Follow-up.** Evaluate how effective you were. Identify weaknesses and work to improve. Thank everyone who got involved and helped in your efforts.

### Success basics:

- Be prepared.
- Get organized.
- Get into action.
- Monitor your progress.
- Follow-up.

# Speaking Out

**Practice makes perfect ■ Suggestions for getting started ■ Informal presentations and impromptu speaking ■ Action Agenda: Learn to speak out ■ The 30-second rule ■ Action Agenda: The impromptu speech ■ Handling the tough questions**

## Practice makes perfect

Speaking in front of a group of people is not something most people are used to doing. But public speaking can be an important and effective tool for advocates. And, like anything else, it gets easier with practice. If you have not done much public speaking, start out with small groups of people you already know – colleagues at work, a class at school or your place of worship. Reach out to service groups or ask to speak at a Chamber of Commerce meeting. Try not to overlook any possibility. And always be prepared with printed materials about your issue or organization for people to take with them. Leave your business card so people can follow up with you later. You may discover you find allies in the most unexpected places.

## Suggestions for getting started

**Tell a story**—The best public speakers start with great stories. They answer the audience’s basic question, “Why should I care about the subject?” and turn numbing data into exciting anecdotes. Stories stimulate the audience’s imagination. Like the screenwriter Robert McKee says,

“Stories are a creative conversion of life itself into a more powerful, clearer, more meaningful experience. They are the currency of human contact.”

**Make a connection**—Connect with your audience emotionally as well as intellectually. Look at the people you’re talking to, not at your notes. Keep the information on your slides to a minimum. Your audience is there to listen to you, not to read.

**Relate to their interests**—Relate your stories to the needs and interests of your audience. For example, if you’re talking to salespeople, tell stories about how satisfied clients used your product or service. Remember, everyone resists a sales presentation, but few can resist a good story well told.

## Informal presentations and impromptu speaking

Throughout the day, many of us participate in planned and unplanned meetings. Take advantage of every opportunity to advocate for children. Here are some tips for getting through these “power briefings” with busy lawmakers or other officials.

- Know in advance the “core” of your message so you can

## Focus: The 30-second message

Having a 30-second message is a critical tool for advocacy. It can enable you to:

- Focus your thinking
- Focus your writing
- Focus your speaking
- Keep conversations on track
- Prepare communications rapidly
- Be more logical and concise
- Be more effective and shorten interviews and meetings
- Facilitate listening
- Reinforce presentations
- Use questions and answers to make your point
- Heighten your confidence
- Get better results

take advantage of unexpected opportunities.

- Assume you'll have less than five minutes to make your case and answer any questions.
- Start your conversation by identifying yourself and your organization. Mention any connections you may have, such as having worked on a campaign or knowing the top aide (this shows you have done your homework on the lawmaker.) Have a business card and any written information ready to hand out.
- Show courtesy and respect for their time by asking if you can walk with them to their next meeting.
- Immediately state the core of your message and support it with two or three salient facts. Explain how your message affects them and make any request you have, i.e., "Please vote in favor of proposed community initiative (fill-in-the-blank)."
- Be prepared to answer questions and be aware of any late-breaking news or current events that may have a bearing on your issue.
- Leave a handout that recaps your message.
- Practice doing these "power briefings" with a clock. Politicians genuinely appreciate people who behave professionally, understand the legislative process and do not waste their time.

### The 30-second rule

In 1986, Milo Frank wrote *How to Get Your Message Across in 30 Seconds or Less*, a publication of Pocket Books. Frank's basic principle of the thirty-second message includes having a clear-cut objective, knowing

## ACTION AGENDA:

### Learn to speak out

- Prepare yourself
- Practice your speech but try not to sound too rehearsed
- Personalize your story wherever possible.
- Show that you care about what you are saying.
- Establish your credibility - briefly refer to your credentials or a personal anecdote.
- Speak clearly and not too quickly.
- Stick to your message. Try to avoid going off on tangents.
- Always thank your host.
- Make sure visuals are large enough to be seen by everyone.
- Keep in mind the six-by-six rule: No more than six words per line and no more than six lines per page.
- Try to avoid computer projectors that require lights to be turned low—especially after a meal.
- If you are going to use pictures of children in your presentation make sure you have appropriate releases on file.

your listener and what your listener wants, and having the right approach.

**Have an objective**—Having a clear-cut objective involves having a specific idea of what you want to achieve. Ask yourself some questions to help clarify your objective. What do I want to get out of this conversation and why? What is the best possible approach to use?

**Know your listener**—Knowing your listener and knowing what your lis-

tener wants from you can help guide you in reaching your goal. Learn as much as you can about your listener and try to identify with them and their position.

**Use the right approach** –Using the right approach involves thinking through what you are trying to say, what your strategy is, your core ideas, supporting information and how the information you are presenting relates to your listener.

**Grab their attention** –Start your message with an opening statement that grabs the attention of the listener. The opening statement should focus on something unique about your subject –

perhaps the most unusual, interesting or humorous part of what you have to say.

**Keep them interested** –Make sure that your opening statement also relates to your objective. Be sure it relates to your listener as well and gives them a reason to keep listening. Opening statements sometimes involve visual aids. Sometimes they consist of anecdotes or personal experiences.

**Ask for what you want** –A message without a specific request is a wasted opportunity. A request for a specific action within a specific time frame is more likely to get results.

**Paint a picture**–The words you use should paint a picture that your lis-

**Be aware**

Non-verbal messages can overpower your verbal message. Watch for the following:

- Facial expressions
- Eye contact
- Posture
- Gestures
- Movement
- Tone of voice
- Physical appearance
- Clothing

**ACTION AGENDA:**

**Making an impromptu speech**

You may be called upon suddenly and unexpectedly to speak. Keep in mind these strategies for an effective presentation:

- Try to be prepared for speaking opportunities that may arise. Think about your message, the beginning and ending statements. The middle will fill itself in.
- Decide quickly what your message will be and keep it simple. Try to tailor your remarks to the group or organization that invited you.
- Trust your instincts. Try not to fall back on memorized speeches; respond instead to the moment.
- Start off strong and have some sort of plan in mind. If you only have a moment to prepare, jot down the main points and lead in to your speech by saying, “I’d like to make three points...”
- Make simple transitions; for example, “My second point is...” Don’t try to get too fancy on your feet.
- Maintain eye contact. The people who have asked you to speak want to hear what you have to say.
- Be conversational if it helps get your point across. Humor helps people remember you and what you’ve said.
- Close with something like, “My last point is...,” and then return the floor to the person who asked you to speak, i.e., “That’s all, Mr. Smith,” or “I hope that’s what you were looking for, Ms. Jones.”

teners will remember. Be clear and direct. Personalize the message whenever possible. An emotional appeal can leave a lasting impression.

After consistent use, the 30-second message becomes second nature. It creates a whole new mind set and transforms the way you think and deal with others. You will soon find yourself instinctively prepared and using it all the time.

### **Handling the tough questions**

Not everyone will agree with your position. Here are some transitional phrases you can use to get back on track after a tough question:

- I am not familiar with that, but I can tell you about...
- You're absolutely right, and one other point is...
- I'm sure that's true, and another thing I'm sure of is....
- Yes, that can wait until tomorrow, but something that cannot wait is...
- I agree with you, and I'm sure you'll agree that...

# Working with the Media

Planning your media strategy ■ Action Agenda: Getting effective coverage ■ Tools of the trade ■ News releases  
■ Action Agenda: Writing the news release ■ Reduce your news release hassles ■ Action Agenda: Promoting an event

## Planning your media strategy

The media can be a critical partner in advocating for children and families. Media attention not only raises awareness and educates the community, it can also help influence decision makers, funders and potential supporters.

The trick to getting good media coverage is to think like a reporter and get to the REAL story behind an event or issue. Public forums, rallies or other special events are an opportunity to rally supporters and bring media attention to your efforts. While only a small number will actually attend an event, thousands more may read a news article or see a television story about it.

Here are some general guidelines for planning your media strategy:

**Define your audience**—Decide who you want to reach, whether state or local leaders or the general public. This will help you determine which media format will work best.

**Set goals and objectives for your media efforts**—Your goals may be as general as educating the public about

child abuse and neglect but objectives should be more specific. Objectives include a specific time frame for completion and measurement for success.

**Select the best approach**—There are a number of vehicles available for conveying your message through the media. These include:

- News/press releases
- Press conferences
- Letters to the editor
- Guest editorials
- Meetings with editorial boards
- Public forums or events
- Speaking directly with reporters who cover children's issues

Consider your organization's needs and goals and choose the best approach for you.

**Develop personal contacts**—Reaching people in the media can be difficult. Keep in mind that reporters and editors have frequent deadlines and may have odd office hours. Be patient and persistent. Try alternative ways of connecting, either through email or fax.

## ACTION AGENDA

### Why work with the media?

- To achieve maximum exposure and publicity for your group's message or event.
- To effectively communicate to target audiences why they should care about your issue and how they can get involved.
- Positive media relations can amount to invaluable, free advertising for your agency or cause!

### Getting effective coverage

- Look for opportunities to link child welfare to issues in your community. Be creative! Economic downturns link to quality child care; welfare reform can be linked to the need for quality child care.
- Know your contacts. Watch local newspapers and television shows to identify key reporters who cover children's issues. Go beyond the feature writers and lifestyle reporters. Include the business reporter, editorial reporter, and hard news reporters in your media efforts.
- Become a resource. Establish yourself as a good source of reliable information.
- Write a letter to the editor. They are among the most highly read features in a newspaper. Tie your letter to a current community issue or link your letter to a recent story in the news. Keep it short and to the point. If your letter comments on a news article, submit it as quickly as possible after the story appears.
- Submit an op-ed column. This is a guest editorial, usually longer than a letter to the editor, written from an expert perspective rather than a general reader.
- Meet with your newspaper's editorial board. Editorials can be very influential and editorial boards determine what the editorials will say. Make a point of getting to know the editorial board members and supplying them with information about you and your organization.
- Take to the airwaves. Volunteer to be an expert on a local call-in show or to respond to calls from parents.
- Take advantage of seasonal opportunities. Tie your issue to a certain time of year or holiday and you are more likely to get coverage. For example, holidays are great for discussing safe toys for children.
- Give a local perspective to national news. As national stories break, provide local reporters with information on how the story affects children or programs locally.
- Keep talking! The more you brainstorm for opportunities to keep your issues in the news and the more reporters see you and your organization as a reliable source for information, the more coverage you will get.

Target the people at your local paper or television station who work in community affairs, write human interest stories or cover special events. When you get a reporter or editor on the phone, be brief and professional. Tell them who you are and who you represent. Ask them how you can make their jobs easier and offer to send them information about your group or its key issues.

Keep the lines of communication open. Make sure that your business card or contact information is included in any information you send. Provide an after-hours telephone number and when a reporter calls, try to be responsive. Return calls promptly, get the requested information out as soon as you can and include background information whenever possible.

**Make their jobs easier**—Once you have identified a journalist or reporter who may be interested in your information, ask them how they prefer to receive news, via email, fax or phone. Ask about their deadlines. Find out which days are best for submitting information for a story.

## Tools of the trade

Advocates have a number of tools at their disposal for engaging the media to promote an issue or cause. Here are some that you can apply to your own advocacy efforts.

**Media Advisories**—One-page information sheets that provide the who, what, when, where and why of an event, along with any photo or visual opportunities. Fax media advisories no more than a week prior to the event. Address the cover sheet to the appropriate editor by name.

**Phone Calls**—Follow-up calls are critical. Always call to see if the right

editor received your fax or release and offer to provide additional information.

**Media Kits**—These contain background information on an event, organization or issue, as well as printable materials such as photos and logos. They can be distributed at an event or news conference or simply mailed out to interested journalists.

**News Releases**—News releases are one to two page documents with headlines that are used to announce news or events in story form, with relevant background and quotes. Some smaller media organizations will actually run press releases in their entirety without changes.

**Backgrounders**—Backgrounders provide relevant background, historical perspective or supporting information about the organization, issue or event.

**Public Service Announcements**—Also called PSAs, these are 15-, 30-, or 60-second radio or television spots that communicate a message, describe an event or announce some news. They can be produced as full TV or radio spots but are more typically submitted in written form to be read by announcers.

**Interviews**—There are many opportunities to get your message out through one-on-one interviews with the media. Offer to provide advance interviews with key organizers prior to an event. Or set up a live television interview during an event, if you coincide with the noon or 6pm broadcasts. Set up morning show interviews or arrange a call-in interview with your local radio station during drive time.

## News releases

News releases, sometimes referred to as press releases, are the cornerstone of any publicity program. Keep in mind

## The six “C’s” of news writing

- 1 **CLEAR**  
Keep it simple. Write to express, not to impress. Avoid jargon. Spell out acronyms on first usage and briefly explain what they mean.
- 2 **CONCISE**  
Use short words, short sentences and short paragraphs.
- 3 **COMPLETE**  
Answer the questions: Who, What, When, Where, Why and How.
- 4 **COORDINATED**  
Organize the story, organize your facts. The first paragraph (your “lead”) should summarize key elements and grab readers’ attention.
- 5 **CONSISTENT**  
If you choose to spell out the word “percent” instead of using a “%” sign, do it every time.
- 6 **CREDIBILITY**  
Get your facts straight. Spell names correctly. Inform and educate.

## Need to see a sample?

Sample news releases are available by following the advocacy toolkit [Samples link on the website.](#)

## ACTION AGENDA

### Writing the news release

- Write releases so they read like a news story.
- Write a headline that commands attention.
- Answer the standard questions— who, what, when, where, why, and how.
- Quote a spokesperson from your organization. Reporters may place these quotes directly into their stories.
- Always provide a contact name and phone number.
- If possible, send the release to a specific individual, either an editor or reporter.
- Put the most important points first.
- Edit your release for spelling and grammar. Have someone review your work for accuracy and clarity.
- Fax your release to papers in your area as well as local television and radio stations.
- Follow up on your release in two to four days. Ask the reporter if they need additional information.
- Track the coverage for your files.

that you are competing with hundreds of other releases for an editor's attention. Using the proper format is as important as content. Writing a news release takes practice. The first priority is to know why you are writing the release. Is the information important? Does the story have a local angle? Do you have all of the facts needed to present a clear picture of the story?

If you can time your release to coincide with a national event that has generated a lot of media coverage, there is a better chance of getting local coverage. These national events may be good or bad and include national news broadcasts and shows such as 60 Minutes, Primetime, Dateline, etc. Remember, you can use the opportunity of negative press to make lemonade out of lemons. News releases can also relate to proactive events such as Stand for Children Day or Child Abuse Prevention Month.

News releases should be sent to broadcast and print media and should always be followed with a phone call. It is good to send a copy to both reporters and editors.

Most news releases consist of the following:

- A headline
- The organization name and a contact person's name and telephone number
- An introductory paragraph that summarizes the news and...
- A quote from the organization president or executive director

The news release should be as brief as possible. If it extends to a second page, insert the word -more- (between hyphens) at the end of the first page to indicate continuation, and xxx to indicate the end.

Reporters may use information from your press release to supplement stories they are already writing or may be inspired to write stories based on the content of the releases. Remember, they can't write anything if they don't get your release!

### Reduce your news release hassles

- Update phone, fax and email lists at least once a year. News organizations turn over personnel quite frequently.
- Limit the number of pages. Your release is more likely to get read and you save on paper and postage.
- For releases that go over a page, try using 8½ x 14 (legal size) paper instead of 8½ x 11 (letter size).
- Don't equate fancy letterhead with successful news releases. Editors are more interested in what is on the paper than what the paper looks like.
- Enclose more than one release in an envelope to save on postage and preparation costs.
- Print on both sides of the paper if possible.

## ACTION AGENDA

### Promoting an event

- Fax media advisories at least three days before an event. Call to ensure the advisory is in the right hands.
- Pitch the story to an editor or reporter. Find out the deadlines for the day of the event. Have ready a list of people who can conduct interviews. Call again the day before the event.
- Use a media kit. Include a news release, the organization's background, logo, biographies and photos/contact numbers of key people.
- Follow up after the event. Provide additional information, if requested. Take the media kit to reporters who couldn't come to the event. Pitch the story as a feature, if appropriate.

### What is the point?

Questions to ask before you promote an event or story to the media:

- What makes the event story interesting or unique?
- Is your news or event relevant to a large number of people or a smaller target audience?
- Is the message breaking news, a feature story or a calendar item?
- Is the event or story better for print media or television?

# Print Media

Letters to the editor ■ Op-ed articles ■ Distributing your op-ed article ■ Getting supportive editorials ■ Action Agenda: Making your editorial board meeting a success ■ Other print opportunities ■ Organizational newsletters and community magazines

## Letters to the editor

More people read letters to the editor than almost any other section in the newspaper, especially in smaller communities. So they are a great way to spread the word about important issues. Remember—elected officials and other policy makers typically keep an eye on letters to the editor as a way of gauging public opinion.

Letters to the editor should be short and to the point (usually 250 to 500 words). Make your first sentence catchy and you will hook more readers. Include your telephone number or email address if you want to recruit others to your cause.

When writing your letter to the editor, remember these tips:

- **Be brief.** Newspapers will often specify a maximum length. If not, check out the other letters in your paper to get an idea. If a letter is too long, it will be edited and you could lose some of your most important facts and ideas.
- **Reference your letter to current events.** If possible, refer to a recent news story or an article that has appeared in the newspaper. Tie your subject into what is happening

in your state or community.

- **Skip the form letters.** Mass mailings of form letters are obvious and usually less likely to get published.
- **Include solutions.** For example, connect readers to an innovative new approach to the problem you are addressing. Always stress the possibilities, not just the problems.
- **Give your address and phone number.** Most newspapers will verify your identity before they will print a letter. Most will not publish anonymous letters.

## Op-ed articles

Op-ed pieces or guest editorials are printed on the editorial page and represent the views of an individual or organization, usually someone who is considered an “expert” on the topic or issue they are addressing. Typically, guest editorials range from 500 to 800 words. If well thought-out and well-written, they can have a major impact on policy makers, journalists and the general public.

Writing an editorial may be easier than you think. Ask yourself why the public should support your issue. Consider using the information and statistics you have at your disposal, both

### Remember:

A letter to the editor is from a personal perspective, representing the opinion of the person who wrote it or the agency they represent. Make sure an organization wants you to represent them in print before you write a letter on their behalf!

locally and from state and national reports. Your goal is to educate and persuade. Be clear, concise and to the point. Avoid overly emotional or sentimental appeals.

Here are some tips for writing your guest editorial:

- Keep your words, sentences and paragraphs short.
- Avoid acronyms, technical phrases and jargon that may confuse the reader. Avoid rhetoric and back up assertions with facts.
- Ask someone who knows nothing about your issue to proof your article before you submit it. If it makes sense to them, it will probably make sense to the average newspaper reader.

### Distributing your op-ed article

Most newspapers have an op-ed page editor who decides which editorials get published. You may not get published on your first try. Be persistent. It is also a good idea to send your article to the reporter who covers children's issues as well. It may prompt them to write a related article. If your editorial piece is printed, make copies and distribute them to policy makers. Share your work with colleagues in other areas; it will help encourage them to submit their own guest columns or letters.

### Getting supportive editorials

Readers of newspaper editorial pages are often decision-makers and opinion leaders so this is a great way to reach and influence a powerful audience. Most newspapers take editorial positions on important local, state and

national issues, although small newspapers frequently focus on local issues or how larger issues affect the local community. It can be a great boon to your organization or cause to have a positive editorial position taken by your local newspaper. Getting such coverage and endorsements is not as impossible as people think. Here are some helpful suggestions:

***Schedule a meeting with the editorial board.*** Editorial boards typically consist of the publisher, editor-in-chief, managing editor, editorial page editor and editorial writers. Editorial boards provide you the chance to meet the paper's staff and more importantly, to discuss your organization and its key issues.

***Be prepared.*** Editorial board members are busy people so it is important to be organized and to the point in your presentation. Prepare no more than three to five points that outline why the paper should support your issue and provide background information and data, if available. (Newspaper staff love data and statistics.) Prepare a brief handout (one to two pages) that also gives the name and telephone number of your spokesperson for follow-up questions. You will be much more effective if you have read the paper's editorials and are familiar with its previous positions, particularly on children's issues. Refer to those that will help your case.

***Maximize the use of supportive editorials.*** Frame them and hang them on your wall (if restaurants can do it, so can child advocates.) Make copies and send them to your elected officials. Editorial endorsements of candidates often determine the outcome of an election so elected officials are keenly interested in what their newspaper's

### Insider Tip:

To get to know an editor and his views on children's issues, invite him/her to speak at a function. The editor will have to get up to speed on your program and organization in order to address the group. Plus, you can ask about his/her experiences with child care or education. You will learn a lot about his/her opinions.

## ACTION AGENDA

### Making your editorial board meeting a success

- **Be prepared.** Your ability to clearly state the background and significance of your issue or program is critical. If you don't know the details and background on the issue, bring a staff person who does.
- **Be enthusiastic.** Personal demeanor and non-verbal clues can reveal much about an advocate's commitment and sincerity. If you are excited about a program or passionate about an issue, they should see that in your body language and tone of voice.
- **Be honest.** If you are unsure of the answer to a question, say so, but offer to provide the needed information immediately after the meeting. If there are problems or unresolved issues with a program, admit it. Don't dodge the issue. They will forgive you for almost anything but dishonesty.
- **Focus on your goal.** Editorial writers are paid to be skeptical and to see behind public relations gimmicks. Sometimes they are friendly. Sometimes they are not. Your goal is to get a favorable editorial written about your issue or to diffuse a potentially negative perspective they may have already had. If the meeting becomes a battle of wits and the board seems stacked against your issue, do not get angry or accusatory. Stay focused on your agenda.
- **Stick to the issue.** Don't get sidetracked with unrelated issues. Most editorials deal with one issue. Provide plenty of background but don't get too far off the subject.
- **Ask for their support.** Like any good sales presentation, it's important to close the deal. Summarize what you've told them and ask for their support.
- **Say thanks!** After the meeting, promptly send a thank you note to the board members—even if they never write about your issue. It's simply good public relations.

**Insider Tip:** Most publications will cover events within a 100-mile radius so you can seek publicity in several publications. Don't forget city/county magazines or small county weekly newspapers.

editorial board thinks. It is also helpful to send copies of editorials to state or national advocacy organizations for use in their efforts. If an editorial board is not interested in taking a position on your issue, thank the group for its time and ask if they will print a guest editorial for you instead.

### Other print opportunities

Most newspapers, television and radio stations have numerous opportunities for organizations to post advance notice on events at no charge. Check with each organization for the proper forms and procedures. The forms typically outline submission deadlines and when the information will appear.

**Insider Tip:** Have general articles on child welfare ready to go for publications that need to 'fill in the gaps.' Be familiar with the publication to get a feel for what—and how—they want to present issues to their readers.

Here is a sampling of the types of forums available in many newspapers (*these sections appear specifically in the Tallahassee Democrat, although variations of these appear in papers throughout the country*):

**Event Calendars** covering recreation and entertainment events, art shows, museum exhibits, organization and government meetings, classes, seminars, self-help and support groups, and professional development opportunities.

**Applause** or **Good for You** forums announce personal and/or organizational accomplishments and can be accompanied by a photograph. Sometimes appear in the Business section or Local news.

**Good Deeds** forums recognize local service projects and benevolent gifts. Often accompanied by a photograph.

**Caring Connection** forum announces fundraising events for charitable causes.

## Organizational newsletters and community magazines

Don't overlook newsletters of organizations and magazines within your community. Many local groups produce regular newsletters—most are monthly or quarterly. Approach organizations with related missions to see if they are interested in an article from you or your organization for their newsletter. As with newspaper submissions, find out the deadlines, appropriate person to submit items to and any length requirements.

Remember, most newsletters and magazines will not publish something that has already appeared in another publication. Vary the article each time and try to target the interest and focus of the newsletter's organization. For

example, if the organization is a child abuse prevention group and you represent child care, you might explain how these issues are connected.

Although it is good to link your submissions to current events, also consider topics that are not "time sensitive." Many small publications have limited staff and resources and are eager for material to fill space during slow times. It's good to have a general piece on child welfare to fill the gaps.

# Radio and Television

**A broad audience ■ Talk radio ■ Live television ■ Action Agenda: You're on the air! ■ Airing public service announcements ■ Radio PSAs ■ Television PSAs ■ Action Agenda: Distributing radio or TV PSAs**

## A broad audience

Local radio and television stations often have talk shows or other community-based programming that generates lots of interest among listeners and viewers. These public affairs shows are always looking for ideas and they are a good way to reach a broad audience.

As with other forms of media, getting a spot on radio or television is not as tough as you might think. Here are some general guidelines:

- Contact the producer of a radio or television show that you think will be interested in your message. Suggest that a spokesperson from your organization appear on the program.
- Send a follow-up letter and a packet of information on your group or issue.
- Follow up with a phone call. Be helpful. Explain why this program or issue would be of interest to readers/viewers.

## Talk radio

Talk radio is becoming increasingly popular and can provide a good way to get your message across to the community.

Consider these statistics from the Radio Advertising Bureau:

- Americans average about three hours of radio listening per day.
- Two out of three Americans listen to radio during prime time.
- Radio is the first morning news source for most people.
- Seventy-seven percent of all adults can be reached through car radio.

Talk radio is just that—talk. It's not a lecture and it's not news. Audiences tune in, researchers have found, because they value the intimacy, immediacy and anonymity of talk radio; they are looking for personal information and often respond to advice and on-air counseling. Both listeners and callers tend to personalize their relationship with the host, as if they were a friend or co-worker.

Talk radio can be an effective tool for sharing information about child welfare. Consider the issue of child care. Working women in your community may have concerns about availability of services, costs and other issues. They might welcome the opportunity to talk to an objective expert who could respond to their questions.

To secure a spot on your local talk radio show, follow these guidelines:

**Contacting talk radio**—Listen to the talk radio shows in your area and determine which ones would be receptive to you and your organization and which have the desired target audience. Remember that talk show hosts and their listeners have children and grandchildren. They may be very interested in the expertise you could bring to a show. Write or call the host or news director and present a brief description of your issue or program, along with biographical information on yourself and any others who would appear on the show. (It is a good idea to have two people on to field questions; one can be thinking while the other is talking.)

**Remember, you're on the air**—Be prepared with a brief statement of the issue or program you are discussing. Personalize your talk with anecdotes or an example of a child your program has helped. This will hook listeners and humanize your issue.

**When to use talk radio**—Talk radio can be especially useful in responding to a current local or national crisis. For example, when a national network airs a segment on abuses in child care, local agencies can use that as an opportunity to speak publicly about what is working in their communities. Radio is also a good format for promoting upcoming events. Invite your community partners to share the spotlight and emphasize local collaboration. Or invite a guest speaker conducting a training for your staff to share his/her expertise on local talk radio. Small community stations are often strapped for cash and might welcome the chance to feature an expert at no cost to them.

**Radio coverage of events**—Radio stations can also do remote broadcast

from events that you sponsor. Talk to the community affairs or promotions person at your local radio station in advance to explore the possibilities.

## Live television

In many communities, the top-rated television program is the locally produced talk show. In most cases, the talk show hosts book their own guests and are eager for new stories to interest their viewers. Your organization could have the angle they want.

Here are some guidelines for taking advantage of television opportunities:

**Schedule**—Like many in the media, television people are often overworked and underpaid. When approaching them, get to the point. Call the host or news director and explain why and when you want to be on the show. You should expect to schedule these appearances four to six weeks in advance.

**Appearance**—Many of the rules that apply to talk radio also apply to television, with one major exception: Image is everything! When appearing on television, give careful attention to your appearance.

**Support materials**—Because television is a visual medium, consider having pictures, video clips of children, children's artwork or something about your program or issue that will catch the eye. Consider putting relevant statistics in graphic form. Discuss options with the host or producer prior to taping.

**Capture their interest**—Local news programs are always looking for positive "puff" pieces to surround the typical hard news of the day. Always invite television news to cover your event. Call several stations and reporters until you find someone who is interested.

### Insider tip:

Radio producers love guests who are able to handle phone calls from interested, but sometimes contentious, listeners. Consider people in your organization who can present information clearly and concisely without getting rattled. If you have someone who is a great storyteller, even better.

## ACTION AGENDA

### You're on the air!

- Speak directly to the reporter—it is less intimidating than looking at the camera.
- Sit up straight and lean slightly toward the interviewer; don't cross your legs.
- Have your hair neatly combed.
- Avoid distracting earrings or busy ties.
- If wearing a coat, sit on your coattail (this will hold your shoulders back).
- Wear a bit of face powder (You will be under bright, hot lights and there is a perception that someone who is perspiring is not telling the truth.)
- Keep your hands casual and motionless on your lap; don't fidget or clench your fists.
- Wear a solid color but not black, white or light pastels. Avoid glossy and reflective colors. Pink, green, tan or gray all photograph well on television.
- Avoid busy patterns such as herringbone, checks or stripes.
- Never say "No comment." It looks like you are hiding something.
- Always give viewers a contact name and telephone number for more information.
- Request a video copy of your interview for review and critique purposes. You will get better each time!

### Don't Forget!

Everything in an interview is on the record. If you don't want something taped or printed, don't say it!

## Airing public service announcements

In the United States, radio and television stations allot a certain amount of airtime to run public service announcements or PSAs as a community service. Television stations are required by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to air PSAs. Radio stations are not. PSAs are primarily used by non-profit organizations to announce events or messages in the public interest.

Due to increasing competition and limited space, it can be difficult to place a public service announcement. It is important to get the information to the right person at each station and to explain why your cause is important to the community. In some cases, stations may partner with an organization and produce a spot at no charge.

## Radio PSAs

Radio PSAs are usually read from

scripts provided by a non-profit organization. Local radio stations appreciate having public service messages available for broadcast. They seem to especially like announcer-ready copy that on-air talent can read. Sometimes, local professionals or celebrities will tape the announcements in advance at the radio station. In either case, radio PSAs should be brief and to the point. Most are intended to fill no more than 30 seconds.

## Television PSAs

A television PSA is anywhere from 10 to 15, or even 30, seconds long and is broadcast at no cost to the organization involved. According to a 1997 survey of public affairs directors, 47% of television PSAs were affiliated with non-profit organizations. In addition, public affairs directors were more likely to consider children's issues than any other cause.

**ACTION AGENDA****Distributing TV or radio PSAs**

- Call each station and find out who is responsible for reviewing public service announcements (usually the public affairs or promotions director).
- Find out the preferred format for PSAs. Most TV stations do not accept standard VHS tapes for broadcast; they need a broadcast-quality version. Video production studios can assist you with obtaining the correct format.
- Call each station, introduce yourself and describe the PSA briefly. Request a meeting or ask if you may send the PSA for their review. Make sure to inquire about the station's priority issues and include this as part of your pitch packet.
- Although a meeting is ideal, it is often difficult to obtain one. If you are able to get a meeting, bring plenty of background information about your issue/organization.
- If you are unable to schedule a meeting, send a letter that describes your issue or organization.
- Distribute PSAs as early as possible prior to the time you would like them to air.
- Call a week later to follow up regarding the station's interest. If they agree to run the PSA, ask if they would be able to provide a log of the dates that it is aired.
- Always include a kill date—the date in which the PSA should be pulled from rotation.

# Special Events

**Details ■ Press conferences ■ Action  
Agenda: Organizing a press conference ■ Where to hold  
your press conference ■ The day of the event ■ Press kits**

## Details

Special events can be a great way for you and your organization to grab the attention of elected leaders, the media and the public. Public forums and rallies also present an opportunity to identify new supporters and focus attention on your issue. The most critical component is proper planning and organization. You want to make sure your organization is portrayed in the best possible light. And always remember to invite the press because it will broaden your audience. Only a few people may come to your forum, but thousands more may read the news article or see the story on television.

Details are everything when planning an event. Below are questions for planning any kind of event. Not each item listed will apply to every event, but one overlooked detail can mean the difference between a good event and a great event... or a little headache and a migraine! (*Courtesy of Herrle Communications Group*)

**Audience** –Who will be there and why are they attending? Will there be special dignitaries who need special attention and if so, what kind? Will there be people who need special consideration like handicapped facilities?

Will people in the audience know each other? Will they need to? Who will take care of introductions?

**Big wigs**—Are any celebrities coming to your event? Are they politicians or stars? Do they bring an entourage? How many? Will they be asked to sign things? Stay for photo ops? Are they participating in your event or just attending? Do they need a special area to rest ahead of time? Do they require security? Do they know what their role is in your event? Do you know how to properly introduce them and what their titles are?

**Catering**—What did you choose for the menu? Did you plan enough food for 10 percent more than received RSVPs? Are the prices and quantities in line? Have you considered vegetarians? What about alcohol? What time will the caterer be there to set up? Are they dropping off or serving? If dropping off, what time will they pick up? Is gratuity included in the bill? Are they providing tables and chairs?

How about linens and table skirts? Do you have their pager number in case they're late? Who is taking care of leftovers? Will they go back to the office? Leave with the caterer? Be taken to a food bank? If you're keeping them, did

**Recommendation:**  
Buy a book on  
etiquette, and keep  
it in your office.

## Display tactics:

A display is a static presentation, like a large billboard advertisement. It should attract attention so that viewers will approach and review your information up close. Let your materials tell the story and let the display serve as a visual backdrop.

you bring storage bags or foil? Is the event over when the food is gone?

If you're having a speaker at a food function, will they start speaking after people have eaten? While they're eating? Will the places be cleared while your speaker is talking? Will the speaker be served first?

**Display**—Do you need a display at this event? If so, what kind? Do you need an extra table for it? Have the caterers taken care of that? Does the display table need a skirt? Will there be any materials to go along with the display?

Does the display need to be manned? Do you need chairs? Electricity? How far in advance will you set it up? Take it down? Do you need help bringing it in? Who is helping you? If you're setting it up outdoors, will wind be a factor? Does your display need any security?

**Evaluation**—When your event is over, how are you going to evaluate its success? Attendance? Media exposure? Financial contributions? Donor cards signed? Commitments made? No damage done? What about the bigger picture? Did you influence public opinion? Get people to change their behavior? Was that an objective?

Are the measurement tools in place? Who is counting attendance or collecting data for you?

**Freaks of nature**—Have you put any contingency plans in place? Will the weather affect this event? If it's an outdoor event, what will you do in case of rain? Snow? Sun? Do you have a tent? Need a tent? Is it an evening event that requires lighting? Darkness? Moonlight? Will really hot weather affect your event? What about the wind? Do you have provisions to tether things? How much time do you have if

you need to move?

**Greeting your guests**—Who will be the first person to greet the guests? Have you given yourself enough time in setting up so that you can greet and mingle with your guests? Do your guests know each other? Do your guests know how to mingle or are you expecting people to hug the walls?

Will you be ready for the guests that arrive 30 minutes ahead of time... the 'traffic beaters'?

**Hang time**—Will there be any down time between different elements of your event? Time between a presentation and dinner? Reception and presentation? A meeting and a reception? Will your guests know where to go? Is a change of attire required? Do your guests know this?

Is transportation required? Do they need a map? Are you at risk of losing guests in between events? How will you ensure they all get from event number one to event number two?

If you have return transportation, will your guests know where to be and at what time in order to catch the last bus? What are the options if they miss the bus?

**Invitations**—Did you send out invitations for this event? If so, how far in advance? Did you ask for RSVPs or Regrets Only? Is the invitation required to attend the event? Was it necessary to include a map with the invitation?

Do the guests need special parking passes? Did you specify a dress code? Is there a cost associated with the event?

How many people responded and are expected at the event? Did you remember to increase the food order by 10 percent more? How important is an accurate head count?

**Jerks**—What about the people who

show up just to complain? How will you handle complaints?

Is there someone assigned to answer questions and point people in the right direction?

What about the high maintenance people at a food function? Will you have a choice of food and beverage?

Are people clear about what's included in the event and what they might have to pay extra for?

Who is going to be in charge of escorting unruly people out of the event? What will you do if they want their money back?

**Kids**—Are children allowed at this event? If so, what ages? Will crying babies affect your event? Is there a room where noisy, crying or in-need-of-a-diaper-change children can be taken?

If kids are welcome at this event, are there things for them to do? Games or entertainment? Room to run around?

Is the menu suited for children? Do you have any trinkets or toys suitable for children? Is that necessary?

Do you need to arrange for sitters?

**Location**—Where is your event going to be held? Why have you chosen that location? What kind of parking arrangements must you make? Is it indoors? Is the room large enough? Where are the bathrooms?

Is it outdoors? What if the grass is wet? Is the area clean?

How close can you get your vehicle to the event site for loading and unloading?

**Media**—Is media attending this event? If so, how do you know? Did they get a news release? Invitation? Media packet? Follow up call? How many of those were necessary? How many were done? Who is greeting them? Escorting them? Is a press park-

ing pass necessary?

Who will be giving interviews?

What kind of coverage do you want to get? Will you need to arrange special interviews?

What if they come uninvited?

**No shows**—Will no shows affect your event? Are the people who are key to the success of your event going to be there for sure? When do you substitute or eliminate? How many no shows can you have without jeopardizing the success of the event?

**Out of towners**—Are any people coming from out of town? Do they have directions? Are you sure? Do they need hotel reservations? Are you expected to entertain them or pick up their tab?

Do they need to be picked up at the airport? Who will do that?

If they are coming from another part of the country, have you told them what kind of weather to expect?

**Public address system**—Do you need a PA system for the event? When will it be delivered? How much time will you have to do a sound check?

Do you have the name and pager number for the person to call if the microphone doesn't work? Will someone be available to come fix it if there is a problem? How are the acoustics in the room? Will sound from other activities affect the event?

**Quantity**—Do you have sufficient quantities of everything for this event?

Food and beverage? Paper products? Trinkets and trash? Nametags and pens? Extra pens in case some walk away? Programs and news releases? Staff and volunteers? Tables and chairs?

Do you have extra supplies in your toolbox? Do you HAVE a toolbox?

Are there places to get additional

## Need help?

Notice the detail questions listed are categorized alphabetically. Use this organizational strategy to gather your answers. Start a notebook to better plan your event.

copies and office supplies at the last minute?

**Reservations**—Are there any special reservations needed for this event? Hotel rooms for out of town people? Who makes those? What about dinner reservations? What about equipment reservations? Autos? Cargo vans? Confirmation numbers? Get these in writing.

Will there be any entertaining associated with this event?

**Speech**—Are you giving a speech at this event? Is your boss? Is your staff? Are you prepared? Extra copies of notes? If you're using notes do you need a light at the lectern? If you're using visual aides have you checked them to make sure they're in order?

Have you checked that the equipment works? Do you need the room lights up or down? Who will be in charge of this?

**Timeline**—How far in advance did you start planning your event? How many things were left to the last minute? Did you give yourself enough time to get set up and still be sane when the event starts?

**Unforeseen events**—What will you do if your speakers don't arrive? Or your guest of honor? What if the food isn't there on time? The facility isn't ready? Do you have all of the necessary pager or cell phone numbers? Is your cell phone charged up? Do important people have your pager number?

**Volunteers**—Do you need any for your event? Who will train them? Why was this group chosen? Are they presentable and capable of doing the assigned tasks? Do they need constant supervision or are they the kind that can run with the ball?

**Wine and beer**—Is alcohol being served at this event? Is it allowed?

Appropriate? Is it an open bar or cash bar? Do the guests know it? Do they get free drink coupons? Where is the bar situated in relation to the rest of the room? Will a line at the bar create a bottleneck anywhere? Is the bar going to be open during your event? Is the bartender getting paid or working for tips? Will you allow a tip jar? Does the bartender know how to cut someone off if they're drunk? Do you?

**X marks the spot**—Is everything for your event in the right place? How are the tables and chairs to be set up? Where should the lectern be placed? Programs on the chairs or passed out? Will you be there sufficiently early to make sure everything is in its correct place? Have you allowed enough room for walkways and crowds?

**Yesterday**—How many of the last minute details could you have done yesterday? How many of the details could have been done a long time ago? How many things could have been delegated before today?

**Zzzz's**—Did you get enough sleep last night? Will you get any tonight? Did you give yourself some down time before your next event so that you don't go crazy?

## Press conferences

A press conference gives you the opportunity to announce your efforts as an organization. If a press conference has no purpose, it can result in a loss of credibility to the organization. Press conferences are held so that reporters and editors can obtain news they would not receive otherwise and have their questions answered. Here are some tips for organizing your press conference:

- Try not to schedule a press conference before 10 a.m. or after 2 p.m. Most media people work late hours and are not early risers. If possible, schedule a press conference for a slow news day; don't try to compete with a hurricane or political scandal.
- If you can schedule the press conference at a program site near the newspaper office or TV station, you will provide a great visual background for your story as well as a convenient location for reporters.
- Think kids. Most reporters like small children and they provide great "photo ops" (photo opportunities).
- Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays are generally good days for press conferences. Limit the number of speakers and the total time to 30-45 minutes.
- Prepare a list of families or other contacts for reporters who may

want to personalize the story. Have a sign up sheet for the press so you can follow up as needed.

### Where to hold your press conference

Sometimes the subject demands an on-the-scene location; other times, it's not necessary. Either way, find a good setting for your press conference. Determine where most major media offices are—you'll receive better coverage if the conference is in that part of town. Hotel conference rooms are often used for press conferences, as well as private clubs and other centrally located meeting rooms. Don't hold a press conference in a building with restricted access. If you must use such a facility, know which reporters are coming in advance. Give the list to the security guard and have a person on duty to make sure reporters are admitted immediately.

If you expect extensive radio and

**Press conferences are held so that reporters and editors can obtain news they would not receive otherwise and ask questions. You'll receive better coverage if the conference is located near major media offices in your city.**

## ACTION AGENDA

### Organizing a press conference

- Be sure your press conference is newsworthy.
- Provide a visual backdrop that reinforces the message.
- Choose a time and place that is convenient for the press.
- Keep your comments brief—a few minutes for each speaker. Try not to have more than three or four presenters; you can always simply introduce other key players and ask them to have written statements available.
- Speakers should have written statements accompanied by a brief biographical statement. Be sure to send written statements to members of the press who were invited but could not attend.
- Allow plenty of time for questions.
- Notify members of the press several days before the press conference and be sure to make follow-up telephone calls.
- Contact the Associated Press (AP) and/or United Press International (UPI) to place your event or press conference in their "daybook," a daily listing of news events.

television coverage, consider sound and lighting. Ask in advance whether the meeting rooms have sound systems. If you cannot find a meeting room with a sound system, rent the sound equipment you need.

Check to see if the room has suitable lighting for television cameras. Decide how to light the scene so your speaker and props look best. Check each potential site to see if it is accessible to television crews. Make sure the passageways, doorways, and elevators are large enough to accommodate bulky equipment. If the crews bring their own lights, verify whether there are enough heavy-duty circuits for them.

Consider holding the press conference on location instead of in a conference room if it's about a highly visual topic that television reporters and newspaper photographers will want to shoot. If your press conference will be outdoors, plan for bad weather, adequate lighting, crowd control and noise control.

**News releases**—They should always be typed with wide margins and limited to one page. Use a format that covers who, when, where, why, how and what. Mention any photographic possibilities. If the conference or event is not in a well-known location, include travel directions. Whether you're contacting newspapers or broadcasters, send your release to the reporter who actually writes about your subject. If your event or press conference will offer photo possibilities, send a duplicate release to the photo assignment person. Let the reporter know who else the release has gone to.

**Reminder calls**—On the day of your event, preferably between 8 and 9 a.m.,

call each reporter, editor or assignment director to remind them. Be brief.

Introduce yourself, inform the reporter or editor that you're having a press conference or special event, describe it in 15 words or less, and ask if he/she received the announcement. Briefly convince him/her that your conference or event is newsworthy. If the person asks for background material, offer to fax or e-mail it. If you have already sent the person a release, ask if he/she is planning to cover the conference. Ask the reporter if you can provide any additional background material.

**Preparations**—If possible, prepare visual aids. Your message will be more effective. Charts and graphs allow reporters to better understand facts, figures and comparisons more quickly. Pictures, props, slides and videotape make for a more interesting presentation. If TV reporters can use your visuals, it makes their stories more interesting to viewers.

The speakers should be brief and to the point. A 20-minute presentation is long for a press conference. Some publicists limit their speakers to five-minute opening statements. Don't cover every detail; if issues aren't clear, reporters will ask questions.

Your speaker should be able to make a central point in 10 or 20 seconds. They will have a better chance of getting a statement on the air uncut and unedited.

Radio and TV people might ask for brief interviews after the conference presentation. Be prepared to schedule them on the spot and have an area set aside to conduct them.

If you expect a demonstration or harassment from your opposition, take steps in advance to quickly and quietly contain it. Make a list of things that

### A good press kit includes:

- A basic one-page release
- A longer three-or four-page version
- A copy of the speaker's statement
- Background information on your organization or cause
- A brief biography of the speaker
- Copies of any relevant documentation
- Promotional items such as buttons, T-shirts, or imprinted balloons

could possibly go wrong and figure out how you'll cope if they do.

### **The day of the event**

The people from your organization who attend the press conference should have a job to do—greeting journalists, answering questions, etc. Hand out press kits as reporters and editors arrive.

Always take a few moments to brief photographers about the issues. Offer them copies of the press release or a background sheet.

Start your press conference on time. Don't hold everyone up for latecomers. Record your press conference on audiotape and videotape, using broadcast quality equipment. The tape will help you write a news release for reporters who didn't attend and it can be edited into a video release or radio wraparound. Have someone at the telephone number listed on your news release so that media who cannot attend can call for information and receive an immediate response.

After the press conference is over, send a press kit or news release to any journalist who did not attend. Remember to track any coverage that your press conference receives. This will help you evaluate your success.

### **Press kits**

It is crucial to have a press kit for your organization ready so you will be able to take advantage of breaking news opportunities. A press kit contains a brief description of your organization and its top people, a print-ready copy of your logo, some quotes from your director, a page of statistics that support your cause, a relevant photograph and/or graphic and anything else that will make it easy for someone to

report accurately about your initiative. Remember, the easier you make it for someone to write a good story, the better your chances are that you will get good coverage. Reporters are as busy as you are! Don't send press kits out blindly—only as requested.

# Legislative Advocacy

Communicating with lawmakers ■ Get to know your legislator  
 ■ Understand your legislator's viewpoint ■ Understanding the political process ■ Action Agenda: Influencing the legislative process ■ How an idea becomes law ■ Communicating with your legislator ■ Advocacy over the phone ■ Action Agenda: Calling your legislator ■ Telephone tips ■ Tips on visiting ■ Action Agenda: Meeting with your legislator

## Communicating with lawmakers

Seeking the advice and support of policymakers and elected officials is an important part of advocating for children. The best way to do this is establishing relationships, a cornerstone for effective advocacy.

Here are some guidelines for communicating effectively with legislators:

- Your word is your bond. Do not ever promise something you cannot deliver. Credibility is what you bring to a relationship with any public official.
- Talk in terms they understand. Avoid acronyms, abbreviations, or “buzz words” that are not easily understood by someone unfamiliar with your issue.
- Organize your presentation. Prepare an outline of your talking points in advance. Focus directly on the issues you want to cover. Be brief and to the point. Legislators are busy and appreciate concise, well-organized discussions.
- Position papers should be short and concise. If at all possible, cover your issue in one page. Short bullets or paragraphs are effective. Also, using a different color paper helps identify you or your organization with your issue. Always have your name, address and telephone number on any position paper so they can follow up.
- Be informed. Never promote a position without first studying the facts and the arguments on both sides.
- Do not underestimate elected officials and policymakers. With rare exceptions, they are honest, intelligent, hard working, and want to do the right thing. Your job is to inform them about your issue and position.
- Treat them as you would like to be treated. Put yourself in their shoes. Try to understand their outlook and goals. This will help you better communicate your point.
- Be helpful. Do not let your first contact be when you want something. Invite lawmakers to be guests at meetings. Keep in touch with them throughout the year.

## Never Too Early

Don't wait to get involved with your legislators.

## During the campaign season:

- Meet candidates and ask questions about your issues.
- Assist candidates in developing a campaign platform
- Volunteer to stuff envelopes, make telephone calls and give rides to polls.

## Once they are elected:

- Schedule a meeting to review the legislator's goals for the next session.
- Develop a relationship with his/her legislative assistant.
- Become a source for accurate information about your issue

## Get to know your legislator

As a citizen, you are free to get to know and communicate with your legislators. Although Florida law requires that you must be a registered lobbyist in order to attempt to influence legislation, there are no prohibitions against providing information.

Here are some guidelines for getting to know your legislator:

- Call their offices and speak to their legislative assistants. What were their major issues and legislation this past session? On which committees do they serve? Even if they do not serve on committees affecting your issue, they respond to constituent requests on a variety of issues. Ask about town meetings, legislative caucus meetings or other forums during which the legislators will develop their platforms. Offer your assistance and input.
- Invite your local legislator to any open house, groundbreaking ceremony, celebration, or public meeting. Ask them to address your organization or group. If the legislator cannot attend, invite his/her legislative assistant.
- Include your local legislator on your mailing list. Send legislators your newsletter or other material about your issue.
- Clip newspaper and magazine articles that address your issue. Legislators and legislative assistants are always looking for new information to use in speeches and other appearances.
- Send them a fact sheet on your program or issue. Offer your assistance on any requests for information or complaints they have received about your issue.

- If legislators are unable to visit your program, schedule an appointment to meet with them at their district offices. Prepare a brochure or short fact sheet to leave behind. Invite them to visit your program or facility. Always send a thank you note.
- Legislative delegations schedule delegation meetings throughout the year. Find out when these will be and try to get on the agenda. Do not use this forum only as a means of complaining. Use it as an opportunity to educate them about your issue and the benefits your program or organization brings to the community. Establish an ongoing relationship with legislative assistants. Provide them with information about your services, programs or facilities. Become a resource.

## Understand your legislator's viewpoint

*"All politics is local."* This quote by former Speaker of the U. S. House of Representatives Tip O'Neil means that legislators pay first allegiance to their districts and to their reelection. Effective grassroots contact is critical.

*Your legislator wants to do the right thing.* Each of us wants to do a good job, even elected officials.

Your legislator wants to get reelected. Most legislators are constantly concerned with what they have to do to keep their position or move ahead.

*Your legislator wants to be responsive.* Legislators are in the business of pleasing people and want to accommodate you - but not at any cost. Other considerations may prevent him/her from doing so.

***Your legislator may know nothing about your issue.*** Unless your legislator is a member of a committee having jurisdiction over your issue, he/she may know little or nothing about it. Educating your legislator is imperative.

***Your legislator is beset by conflicting pressures.*** Reduce taxes, but don't cut spending. Cut spending, but not our program. Tax the other guy, but not me and so on. You can provide key information on why your issue or program is necessary and cost effective.

***Your legislator wants to know how legislation affects the local district.*** How does a bill impact local constituencies, good or bad?

***Your legislator finds it hard to vote against a friend but easy to vote against someone he/she doesn't know.*** Votes in the legislature are often about taking money from one program or service and giving it to another. Unless your legislator knows the impact that your issue has on his/her district, it is easy to accept the argument that a cut can be made.

## Understanding the political process

An understanding of the structure is critically important for working with legislators. There are three major branches of government: the legislative branch, the executive branch and the judicial branch. Each plays a particular role in the political process and in ensuring the health, safety and welfare of Florida's citizens.

***Legislative Branch***—The Legislative Branch establishes laws and determines general policies of the state. It consists of the House of Representatives and the Senate. Regular legislative sessions have a maximum life of 60 consecutive days.

This may be extended, however, by a three-fifths vote of each house.

A break-down of the Florida legislative branch includes:

- The House of Representatives  
Members: 120  
Term of Office: Two years  
Term Limit: Eight years  
Presiding Officer: Speaker of the House

- The Senate  
Members: 40  
Term of Office: Four years  
Term Limit: Eight years  
Presiding Officer: President of the Senate

***Executive Branch***—The Executive Branch administers the laws and makes policy recommendations to the Legislature. In 2001, it consists of seven state agencies with the heads of the agencies serving as the Florida Cabinet. In 2002, the Department of Education will no longer serve as a Cabinet Agency. A breakdown of the Florida Cabinet and term restrictions include:

- Governor, limited to two consecutive four-year terms
- Secretary of State, unlimited four-year terms
- Attorney General, unlimited four-year terms
- Comptroller, unlimited four-year terms
- Treasurer, unlimited four-year terms
- Commissioner of Agriculture, unlimited four-year terms
- Commissioner of Education, unlimited four-year terms

There are three major branches of government: the legislative branch, the executive branch and the judicial branch.

### Information

Information relating to the legislature is public information and much of it is available free of charge.

### Online Sunshine

House and Senate calendars, Florida Statutes, bill history, bill text, and information about your legislators, lobbyists and the legislature are accessible on the internet at [www.leg.state.fl.us](http://www.leg.state.fl.us).

### Telephone numbers

- Legislative Information (850) 488-4371
- Lobbyist Registration (850) 922-4990
- House Documents (850) 488-7475
- Senate Bill Room (850) 487-5312

**Judicial Branch**—The Judicial Branch interprets the laws and applies the Constitution. It consists of the Supreme Court, the five district Courts of Appeals, 20 circuit courts and 67 county courts.

- Supreme Court, seven justices, highest court in the state
- District Court of Appeals, five districts, hears appeals from Circuit Court
- Circuit Court, 20 circuits, hears civil and criminal cases requiring a jury
- County Court, 67 courts, generally handles non-jury trials

### How an idea becomes law

- Either house may originate any type of legislation. The processes differ slightly between houses.
- A legislator sponsors a bill, which is referred to one or more committees related to the bill's subject.
- The committee studies the bill and decides if it should be amended, passed, or failed.
- If passed, the bill moves to other committees of reference or to the full house.
- The full house votes on the bill. If it passes in one house, it is sent to the other house for review.
- A bill goes through the same process in the second house as it did in the first.
- A bill can go back and forth between houses until a consensus is reached. Of course, the measure could fail at any point in the process.

### Communicating with your legislator

Your legislators need and want to hear from you, in order to better

## ACTION AGENDA

### Influencing the legislative process

- The legislative process has its own language and way of doing things. If you have just a rudimentary understanding of the process, your effectiveness will increase greatly.
- Obtain the latest calendar indicating legislative dates for interim committee meetings, bill filing deadlines, and regular sessions. These are available on-line at the Online Sunshine website, [www.leg.state.fl.us](http://www.leg.state.fl.us).
- Learn how to read a House or Senate bill. Understand the difference between a committee Substitute and a Proposed Committee Bill.
- Get on a committee mailing list and develop a relationship with legislative committee staff members. Become a resource to them.
- Begin to understand the state appropriations process. This is an exceedingly complex process primarily because it is a yearlong process, but final decisions are made rapidly. It is very difficult to have an impact on this process, but in a time of limited resources, effective impact is critical.
- Know how to obtain accurate and up-to-date information on issues of importance to you. This will help you be effective, and your legislator will appreciate your efforts to remain informed.
- Your local legislator will be able to provide you with information if you cannot access the internet and the Online Sunshine website.

represent you, their constituents. You do not have to be an expert to write or send an email; your interest and concern is what counts. Keep in mind that if you do not write, your legislator will only hear from individuals opposed to your position. They do not hesitate to write.

Here are some tips for effective communication:

**Identify yourself**—Indicate if you are writing on your own behalf or as a member of an organization. Make it clear that the letter is from a constituent. Remind the legislator about any previous visits or communication, if related to the issue about which you are writing. Include your name and address on the letter/email and type or write legibly so they can quickly read your letter.

**Identify your subject**—State the name of the issue, program or legislation about which you are writing/emailing in the first paragraph. Include the bill number and accurate status, if known. Be friendly and give as much praise as possible. If the legislator provides you with helpful information or services, or if she or he votes as you asked her/him to, give them thanks and a “keep up the good work.” This also reminds them you are watching what they do. Be as specific as possible, referring to a bill by name or number if possible. Show your familiarity with the subject and its current status.

**State your position**—Explain how a specific decision would affect you, your family, your program/facility, your employment, your local community, the legislator’s district, or the state. Write the letter/email without copying verbatim from a form letter. Explain your position by focusing on

two or three key points.

**Be reasonable**—Ask for the legislator’s support or opposition. Do not ask for the impossible. Do not use threats. Do be firm, confident, and positive.

**Keep it short**—Make it a page or less and quickly get to what you want. Include or attach newspaper articles or other material to support your points.

**Cover only one subject in each letter**—Different staff members in the legislator’s office cover different issues, so the message may not get to everyone you need. Write several letters if you want to cover more points.

**Ask for a reply**—Indicate to your legislator that you would appreciate a reply containing his/her position on the issue. As a constituent, you have a right to know your legislator’s views.

**Follow-up**—If your legislator’s position or vote on a bill pleases you, express your thanks. Everybody appreciates a complimentary letter. Also, you may want to express your dissatisfaction with votes that do not support your position. However, thank your legislator for his/her attention to your issue, regardless of the outcome of the vote.

**Stationery**—Write on personal stationery or on plain paper if your employment letterhead is not appropriate. Remember to put your return address on the letter, not just the envelope. Envelopes are often thrown away before a letter is answered.

**Copies**—Send a copy of your letter to your organization’s governmental affairs director or lobbyist if this is appropriate. If writing to a committee chairperson that is not your legislator, send a copy of the letter to him/her.

**Do not use form letters**—Make it as personal as possible and state how the issues relate to you.

### A special power

Petitions, letter writing, demonstrations, and other kinds of advocacy are all important. The special power of the telephone and the Internet is in responding quickly to national initiatives before votes are taken.

### *Suggested salutations—*

*The Honorable Jane Smith*

*Address*

*City, State, Zip*

*Dear Senator Smith:*

or

*Dear Representative Smith:*

E-mail is an effective way of communicating with legislators. The writing tips presented here apply to e-mails also.

### Advocacy over the phone

*The information on Advocacy over the phone was developed by Helen Blank of the Children's Defense Fund. While it specifically references contacts to federal officials, the same information is useful when communicating with your state or local officials.*

Having an administration that supports children's issues means positive change is sure to come, right? Only if it hears from you!

**A Possible Scenario**—The President of the United States has just announced a bold initiative for children: access to high-quality care for every child, and additional resources to bolster elementary schools. The next morning the White House phones begin to ring. Is it the ground swell of support the President expected? On the contrary, most callers argue that money for childcare and early education is not a top priority. The President is surprised. Weren't these important issues to families? When the final tally is taken, calls against the proposals far outnumber those that support it. He begins to reconsider whether America really wants increased investment in children.

**Could this happen?** Indeed it could.

Many people who care about children assume that policy-makers support investing in children, or that if they don't, their minds cannot be changed. Either way, child-care providers, teachers, and parents do not usually call the White House to express their opinions about proposed initiatives, or to ask their Congressional representatives to support a particular bill. Yet a simple phone call can make a big difference.

**A success story**—In 1990, Congress enacted comprehensive childcare legislation. This victory for children did not come easily. For three years, child-care providers and other concerned citizens kept pressure on legislators in many ways: by writing letters to the editors of newspapers, by raising the issue at town meetings, and by distributing postcards to senators and representatives. At several critical points, they tied up the telephone lines of the Speaker of the House and the Senate Majority Leader. Through their actions, citizens made it clear to Congress and the White House that it would not be acceptable to adjourn in 1990 without first enacting this child care legislation into law. The Child Care and Development Block Grant is the result. Important as it is, it is only a beginning.

**Success may be a phone call away.** If our nation is to ensure strong policies for all children, we must make sure our elected officials know that this is important to us. The telephone is a fast, easy, and efficient way to help shape national policy for children. Here are some points to remember:

#### **When calling the White House**

- Telephone number—(202) 456-1111
- Best time to call— after the President makes a speech proposing a significant new childcare initiative.

## ACTION AGENDA

### Calling your legislator

- Identify yourself by name and state that you are a constituent.
- Explain why you are calling: “I am calling to support/oppose \_\_\_\_\_.”
- Provide supporting information by focusing on two or three talking points explaining your position. Do not argue; just express your views.
- Ask the legislator’s position.
- If the legislator’s position is the same as yours, express your agreement and thanks.
- If your position differs from the legislator’s, politely express disappointment and offer some factual information supporting your views.
- Request a written response. Restate your name and provide your mailing address.
- Thank the legislator or person taking the call for his/her time and consideration.
- If appropriate, follow-up with a letter.
- Remember these three rules when calling your legislator’s office:
  - 1) Give your full name and address.
  - 2) Be polite.
  - 3) Keep your call concise.

- To register your support—refer to the issue you’ve heard the President propose. For example, mention “the child care initiative,” or “full funding for Head Start.”

*Helen Blank is a senior child-care associate at the Children’s Defense Fund. She works for improved early childhood policies at the federal, state, and local levels.*

### When calling Congress

- Telephone number—(202) 224-3121 This is a general number for Congress. Ask for the number of your Senator or Member of the House, and then ask for the person responsible for childcare.
- Best time to call—when child-care legislation is being brought to floor for a vote.
- To register your support—refer to the initiative proposed by the President. If legislation has already been introduced, reference the particular House or Senate bill. Mention that you work for children, and explain in a few short sentences why you think the measure is good for children.

### More telephone tips

While the Florida Legislature is in session, you may want to or you may be asked to telephone your legislator to advocate a position on major legislation. Here are some tips for calling your legislator:

- When the Legislature is in session, it is most effective to call the Capitol or Tallahassee office of your legislator. When they are not in session, legislators are available through the district office.
- Ask to speak to the legislator. On many occasions, time does not permit legislators to receive or return telephone calls. Do not be offended. Be prepared to speak to

his/her legislative assistant who is very knowledgeable. Assistants are usually courteous and interested in what you have to say.

### Remember to follow up!

After a visit, send a brief letter of thanks, referring to the most significant points covered in the conversation. Be sure to include any materials or information you said you would send after the visit. If you believe that your legislator could be more supportive if he/she heard from more constituents, channel your energy into mobilizing them.

### Tips on visiting

One of the best ways to communicate with your legislators is to visit them, either in their district office or in Tallahassee. This lets legislators know you are serious and watching what they are doing.

**Get an Appointment**—Call the district office to see when the legislator will be in town and able to meet with you. Sometimes seeing the staff person is more profitable than meeting with the legislator.

If you feel you are being put off, have several people call for an appointment. Hopefully someone will be successful and you can form a delegation. If you cannot see the legislator, ask to see his or her aide. Legislative

aides have the ears of their bosses and can be very helpful.

**Put Together a Delegation**—The purpose of a delegation is to convey to the legislator that there is a broad base of community support for your issue in their constituency.

Two to four person delegations are fine. If you identify 12 people who are prepared to visit your legislator, arrange three separate visits of four people each, rather than one large visit.

It is helpful to plan your delegation. Have a person who knows the statistics, etc. and someone who has a personal story of how the legislation affects them.

**Have a Plan**—Plan your visit, who is going to say what and when. Be prepared to meet with an aide, in case the legislator had a last minute change. Again, know your opposition's argument, in case you are asked, and have a response for those arguments.

## ACTION AGENDA

### Meeting with your legislator

- Introduce yourself, even at a second or third meeting. Thank him or her for taking the time to meet with you and for any previous support.
- Get down to business quickly. Begin on a positive note and explain the issue that concerns you.
- Present the facts and background information you have gathered, along with the bill number, title, and author, if known.
- State your position, relating it to real people. Use personal stories or anecdotes.
- State what you want the legislator or staff person to do. Your job is to persuade the legislator and a personal story will leave an image they will remember.
- If asked something you are unable to answer, promise to get back with them (and make sure you do!)
- Ask what you can do, whether it is to provide additional information, arrange a tour of a program, or contact others.
- Have a short fact sheet summarizing your major points to leave with the legislator
- Above all, be punctual, courteous, friendly, and listen carefully.

# Resource Guide

## National organizations ■ Florida organizations

Advocates for children have plenty of resources available to help them in their efforts. Organizations interested in child welfare are active at the state, national and local level. Some focus on general child welfare issues, but many more specialize in one area or another, such as child abuse or early education. These groups are a wonderful source of background information and statistics, much of it available online or at no charge. Once they know you are working toward a common goal, most are more than happy to help you and your organization in any way they can.

Following is a list of some reliable resources for child advocates. It is by no means exhaustive. Continue to build your own list of resources and connections in your own community or related to your own particular issue.

### National Organizations

- Annie E. Casey Foundation  
[www.acef.org](http://www.acef.org)
- Building Blocks For Youth  
[www.buildingblocksforyouth.org](http://www.buildingblocksforyouth.org)
- Center for the Future of Children  
[www.futureofchildren.org](http://www.futureofchildren.org)
- Child Welfare League of America  
[www.cwla.org](http://www.cwla.org)
- Children Now  
[www.childrennow.org](http://www.childrennow.org)
- Children's Defense Fund  
[www.childrensdefensefund.org](http://www.childrensdefensefund.org)
- Connect for Kids  
[www.connectforkids.org](http://www.connectforkids.org)
- National Association of Child Advocates  
[www.childadvocacy.org](http://www.childadvocacy.org)
- National Center for Children in Poverty  
<http://cpmcnet.columbia.edu/dept/nccp/>
- National Child Care Information Center  
[www.nccic.org](http://www.nccic.org)
- National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect  
[www.calib.com/nccanch](http://www.calib.com/nccanch)
- Prevent Child Abuse America  
[www.preventchildabuse.org](http://www.preventchildabuse.org)
- Public Education Network  
[www.publiceducation.org](http://www.publiceducation.org)

### Florida Organizations

- Center for Florida's Children  
[www.floridakids.com](http://www.floridakids.com)
- The Family Care Council  
[www.fccsuncoast.org](http://www.fccsuncoast.org)
- Family Source of Florida  
[www.familysource.org](http://www.familysource.org)
- Florida Children's Campaign  
[www.iamforkids.org](http://www.iamforkids.org)
- Florida Children's Forum  
[www.flchild.com](http://www.flchild.com)
- Success By 6  
[www.successby6-fl.org](http://www.successby6-fl.org)

# Samples

- Letter to the editor
- Editorial
- Op-ed article
- Newsletter articles
- Letter to TV or radio news director
- Sample radio scripts for public service announcements
- News/Press release

Newspaper Name  
Address  
City, ST 12345

Attention: Editorial Page Editor

Dear Editor:

Florida's children are our state's most valuable resource; we must do everything we can to ensure a bright, healthy and successful future for them. Unfortunately, our children are at risk of losing essential programs that protect their health and help them succeed in school and beyond.

It is vitally important that the Florida Legislature continue to fund important prevention initiatives like Healthy Start, the Florida Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program, child care and early education programs, as well as programs that prevent child abuse and neglect.

We know these programs save money because the results are healthier children, better students, more productive workers and responsible citizens.

Each of us work hard every day in our communities on behalf of children, but during the week of March 18, 2001, I will join thousands of advocates at the State Capitol to speak with one voice in support of our children.

In this past year's election, many people told us they support children's issues. Now is the time for them to stand up for our kids. We know state budget shortfalls may cut deeply into these important programs.

Please call or write your elected officials and ask them to support Florida's children. Ask them to ensure that the future of our children remains bright.

Sincerely,  
(Sign name)  
Print Name

**Letter to the editor**

## Editorial

*Published in the  
Tallahassee  
Democrat Online,  
Wednesday,  
November 7, 2001,  
updated at 9:26 PM*

### Foster Care Needs More State Support

On the whole, Florida's thousands of foster parents are no doubt extraordinary souls who desire to help children. They're certainly not in it for the money. Child advocate Jack Levine said Florida's foster parents are reimbursed about 50 cents an hour for a daunting task: providing a warm, if temporary, haven for children who have been abandoned or abused by their parents.

But the state has relied too much on that spirit of altruism to protect the 20,000 children who are in foster homes. According to an investigative report by the Florida Times-Union, Florida's rate of abuse - about one out of every 11 children - is 15 times higher than the national standard. Worse, the number of children abused in foster care has risen annually since 1998. That statistic was tragically illustrated by the recent death of 17-month-old Latiana Nakia Hamilton, who was beaten and drowned in her Jacksonville foster home.

Department of Children & Families officials have called the figures misleading and point out that most foster care parents do a good job.

There's no way to fully erase the element of harm from any child care, but more thorough background checks might have saved Latiana. Her foster parents had been investigated for complaints of child mistreatment in Michigan. The complaints were substantiated, yet those records were neither required nor sought by the DCF when the couple was licensed for foster care in Florida. When the supervision of such vulnerable charges is at stake, this kind of information must be available. Florida Foster and Adoptive Parent Association President Suzanne Stevens said it's imperative that the state recruit more foster parents; 4,200 homes for 20,000 children aren't enough.

The state also must do more to prepare and support foster parents in their jobs. They must be fully informed of emotional or physical concerns about a foster child, and they should have access to support services ranging from mental health care to dentistry.

These improvements will take political will - and money. Overworked staffs may not have time to do essential background searches. But if the state can't find better ways to keep children like Latiana from falling through the cracks, Floridians should be more than appalled—we should be ashamed.

## Invest in Children

**The issue: Protecting our children**

**We suggest: Realign Washington priorities**

Here's a tiny digest of information that you probably do not want to absorb just before bedtime. It will—or it should—keep you awake. Every one of these situations occurs daily in the United States.

- 15 children are killed by firearms violence.
- 2,660 children are born into poverty.
- 2,822 young people drop out of school.
- 8493 children are reported as victims of abuse and/or neglect

Those are the old flinty facts. They should be an embarrassment to this nation and its inhabitants. We believe we are the beacon of freedom throughout the world. We are—in many respects. We also have some dirty laundry that cries out for a thorough cleansing.

On Saturday, nearly a quarter million people gathered in Washington, D.C., to give America's children a figurative hug. The massive rally, "Stand For Children," featured celebrities who mouthed dreary statistics and uplifting rhetoric. If oratory were cash and commitment there would be no hungry, unloved, abandoned, drug-ravaged youngsters in America. Sadly the agenda for America's youngest citizens is set not by the altruistic, good-hearted folks who gathered around the Lincoln Memorial to celebrate and to protest, but by a Congress that demonstrates clearly skewed priorities.

Ideology, not foresight, will determine how many more children will be victims of a system that overlooks and minimizes their long-term needs, and that sacrifices the strategic investment in education and social programs for the tactical goal of improving next quarter's profits.

In the 13th century, in what has become a historical footnote, thousands of youngsters, most under the age of 12, joined together to march on the Holy Land. Their ill-fated adventure became known as the Children's Crusade. Most died en route or were sold in slavery.

There seems to be an unofficial crusade against children in Washington. Education funds are being cut by the Republican-dominated Congress while tax breaks for corporate executives are being fast-tracked. Children, who represent 100 percent of our future, are being short-changed for the benefit of the two percent of Americans at the top of the economic heap.

We must insist on more—and more efficient—funds and programs to help those deprived children survive and thrive. This is not about "big government," as fiscal conservatives like to crow. In the words of Marian Wright Edelman, founder of the Children's Defense Fund, this crucial argument is about "just government."

### **You have the power**

*Jack Levine, Executive Director of Florida Center for Children & Youth, is an activist for our youngest citizens. His efforts deserve support. Write/call Jack Levine, Florida Center for Children & Youth, P.O. Box 6846, Tallahassee, FL 32314, (850) 222-7140, (850) 224-6490 Fax*

## Op-Ed Article

*Published in the Opinion Page of Our Views section of The News, Boca Raton, FL*

## Newsletter Article

*Child Abuse Prevention Month presents opportunities to promote child abuse prevention in a newsletter or newspaper article. This sample article may be modified for the intended audience.*

### Observing Child Abuse Prevention Month

Since 1983, when April was designated Child Abuse Prevention Month, communities across the country have used this month-long observance to increase awareness of child abuse and its prevention. It is a time when individuals, schools, businesses, hospitals, religious organizations, and social service agencies join forces in the battle against child abuse.

Child maltreatment is one of society's oldest, most insidious problems. More than one million children are confirmed as victims of maltreatment every year, with three children dying each day as a result of abuse and neglect. Recognizing that everyone can participate in efforts to eliminate this serious threat to children, communities across the country are stepping forward to promote the message that child abuse can and must be prevented.

The National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse offers the following suggestions about ways to help prevent child maltreatment in your community.

#### *Help parents in your community*

- Establish a parent support group. Plan a regular time when parents can get together to talk about and find solutions to parenting challenges.
- If you know a parent under stress, offer him or her a break. Take care of the children for a while so the parent can relax.
- Organize a regular playgroup so children and parents can all benefit.

#### *Respond when you see abuse in public*

- Strike up a conversation with the adult to direct the parent's attention away from the child. Say something comforting like "It looks like it's been a long day for both of you."

- Praise the child and parent at the first opportunity.
- Divert the child's attention (if misbehaving) by talking to the child.

#### *Examine your own parenting practices*

- Recognize that you are the most important person in your children's lives. What you say to them and how you treat them determines how they feel about themselves. Offer them honest praise at every opportunity.
- When you're feeling troubled or lonely, and when pressures build up, don't lash out at your child. Stop and take a deep breath. Remember you are the adult. Close your eyes and pretend you're hearing what your child is about to hear.
- If you think you need help, you're not alone. Being a parent isn't easy for anyone, and sometimes it's very hard. Take the first step. Reach out for help. Check your community's resources for a child abuse or crisis hotline, parenting group, or family service agency.

#### *Report suspected abuse or neglect*

- Protecting children requires everyone to report suspected abuse or neglect.
- To report suspected maltreatment, call your local department of children and family services, usually listed in the yellow pages of your telephone book under Health and Human Services Department, or call the police department.

*Prevent Child Abuse America is a volunteer-based, not-for-profit organization, established in 1972. Visit [www.preventchildabuse.org](http://www.preventchildabuse.org) for more information about child abuse. ■*

(Date)

Dear (news director's name):

The Florida Children's Forum is preparing to launch a major, statewide campaign championing the importance of quality child care for Florida's infants and toddlers and we'd like for you, as a community educator, to help us out. We know that the quality of child care that children receive from birth to three serves as a major impact on the rest of their lives. And we think the average parent probably knows this as well. What concerns us is the lack of credible information out there on how to select quality child care.

In Florida, in particular, parents have been so bombarded with stories about licensed vs. non-licensed facilities, homes vs. center, and nannies vs. day care, it is no wonder that many of them are just too confused and overwhelmed to make an intelligent decision. Because of this, the Florida Children's Forum (FCF) has designed a new web site [[www.flchild.com](http://www.flchild.com)] and hotline [1-888-FL-CHILD] that will introduce parents to an entire clearinghouse of information on quality child care.

Today, more than ever before, it is critically important that all of us in [INSERT AREA] community, work together to ensure that our children are getting the quality child care that they need and deserve. One way that we can do that is by providing parents with thoughtful, useful informational resources that they can reference. We would like to suggest a feature story on quality child care and the efforts that FCF is taking to create and maintain positive awareness towards child care through the campaign. We think this would be an article of interest to your readers.

If you would like additional information on the FCF quality child care campaign, or FCF, please contact me at (PHONE NUMBER). You can also find information on the FCF web site at [www.flchild.com](http://www.flchild.com).

Sincerely,

Name  
(AGENCY AREA)

**Letter  
to TV or  
radio news  
director**

**Sample  
radio scripts  
for public  
service  
announcements  
(PSAs)**

1. Hello, this is Wilbur Smythe, Chief of Police here in Carson City. I am shocked to learn that three children die every day in our country because of child abuse. And most of these kids are under the age of five. People who know tell me that child abuse is one problem that can be prevented. Call 888-8888 to find out more about preventing child abuse here where we live. What will you do today that's more important?
2. This is (Reverend, Father, Rabbi) John Elliott of (Church, Temple). My congregation will be observing Child Abuse Prevention Month by offering special services during April. The theme is "Communities Rising to the Challenge," and we invite you to join us as we explore ways to build healthy families. Preventing child abuse is important to us, and we think it's vital to our community. Call 888-8888 for more information.
3. This is Greg Caldwell. Yes, I'm the one who plays right field on the Red Sox team. Is my job tough? It sure is. But the biggest challenge I face isn't on the diamond; it's at home being a dad to my four kids. As a parent, I'll do anything to make our community a better place for parents and kids. That's why I'm a volunteer. I invite you to call 888-8888 to find out how you can be part of a program that I believe makes a difference right here in Madison. Call today.
4. Think about it. What you say to your children can make a big difference in the way they feel about themselves. It's called self-esteem and kids who have it generally become more successful than kids who don't. Hearing words like "You're worthless" and "You're stupid" will not make kids feel good about themselves. But you can make kids feel really good by saying, "You're special" and "Thanks for trying." Think about it.
5. Hi, if you're a parent like me, I don't have to tell you how tough a job we have. Sometimes it's so tempting to lash out and say things you don't mean. When the stress of being a parent feels overwhelming, it's time to do something - like joining a parenting class or a support group. Yes it can make a difference in the way you feel about your kids - and the way they feel about themselves.

*Provided by Prevent Child Abuse America, 200 S. Michigan Ave.,  
17th Floor, Chicago, IL 60604 [www.preventchildabuse.org](http://www.preventchildabuse.org)*

Contact Person/Phone Number:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

APRIL IS NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, and in Florida, it is time to focus on creating a brighter tomorrow by preventing child abuse today. Child Abuse Prevention Month has been observed each April since its first presidential proclamation in 1983. Since that time, individuals and organizations have joined together during April to raise the public's awareness of child abuse prevention and to educate everyone within our communities about what can be done to prevent the tragedy of child abuse.

"It is time for the voices of our most vulnerable population, our children, to be heard," said Stephanie Meincke, former President/CEO of The Family Source of Florida. "It is time that we stand together on behalf of Florida's children and commit to working together to end the nightmare of abuse and neglect in their lives."

While other crime statistics continue to decline nationally, unfortunately, the incidence of child abuse and neglect cases continues to increase. Nationwide, the number of children who are reported abused and neglected each year has risen to nearly three million. In Florida, 85,644 children were verified as having been abused or neglected, in cases closed during 1999/2000.

A report issued last year by Prevent Child Abuse America found 50% of Americans do nothing when they witness child abuse or neglect. "A child is abused or neglected nearly every four minutes in our state," Ms. Meincke said. "It is time to raise the public's awareness of the devastation of child abuse, and encourage each and every Floridian to become involved in preventing it."

In communities throughout the nation, thousands of people are becoming involved in child abuse prevention efforts during April. The Family Source is asking other concerned individuals and organizations across the state to demonstrate their commitment to ending child abuse and neglect by wearing a blue ribbon during Child Abuse Prevention Month in April.

- MORE -

**News/Press  
release**  
*(sample one)*

## News/Press release

(sample one, second page)

“The Blue Ribbon Campaign is one way that everyone in our community can play a role in child abuse and neglect prevention,” Ms. Meincke said. “Wearing a ribbon is a reminder that child abuse is everyone’s business and we must work together to continue to find solutions.”

The blue ribbon was first used by two grandmothers - one in Virginia and one in Florida to commemorate the deaths of children they loved who were killed by abusive parents. “The ribbons are blue because blue is the color of hope,” Ms. Meincke said. “We hope everyone in Florida wears a blue ribbon during the month of April - to show their commitment to helping ensure our children grow up safe and loved in communities that work together, making Florida the best place to be a child.”

(Insert information on local community efforts here)

For information on how to get your blue ribbon and to learn more about Child Abuse Prevention Month activities, contact: (insert appropriate information here).

In addition to the work we do within Florida’s communities, The Family Source of Florida is dedicated to preventing the increasing incidences of child abuse in Florida by providing services to families, communities and advocacy groups who are taking action to prevent child abuse.

To learn more about the Family Source of Florida, or for free parenting assistance and information, call 1-800-FLA-LOVE, or visit The Family Source website at [www.familysource.org](http://www.familysource.org).

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**(LOCAL AREA) CHILDREN SPEAK WITH “ONE VOICE FOR CHILDREN”**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: CONTACT: (Date) (Name and phone)

(City), FL—Children from (organization) are working to give all children a hand as they prepare for Children’s Week in Tallahassee. Handprints of all colors, shapes and sizes created by (local participants) are making their way to Tallahassee to kickoff “Children’s Week 2002: Speaking with One Voice for Children.”

(Local rally and hand collecting information here.)

The annual “Hanging of the Hands” in Tallahassee will begin Sunday afternoon, January 27, combining (local area) children’s hands with thousands from around the state. The hands will hang in the Capitol rotunda for a week as a reminder to the Legislature to consider Florida’s children when casting their votes.

Child advocates will gather in Tallahassee on Tuesday, January 29, to speak with one strong voice for children and for the prevention programs that help them. The press conference will feature children and advocates speaking out for the future of Florida’s children. Lawmakers are expected to attend. Their handprints will be included with those of the children from their district.

Advocates are challenging the Legislature to make 2002 a good year for children and their families, by addressing these issues:

- Healthy Children
- Children Safe in their Families and Communities
- Children Ready to Learn and Succeed in School
- Stable and Nurturing Families
- Economically Self-Sufficient Families
- Supportive Communities

A copy of Speaking with One Voice for Children—The Florida Agenda is attached. For more information about the Speaking with One Voice for Children—The Florida Agenda, visit the Children’s Week web site at [www.childrens-week.org/](http://www.childrens-week.org/).

- MORE -

**News/Press  
release**  
*(sample two)*

**News/Press  
release**

*(sample two,  
second page)*

State budget shortfalls are threatening many children's programs and child advocates are asking the public to speak out on behalf of these important issues.

Children's Week is a statewide initiative designed to highlight the issues facing Florida's children and families during the 2002 legislative session and to encourage lawmakers to fund these critical programs. The Children's Week activities are an annual event sponsored by more than 20 of Florida's child advocacy and interest groups throughout Florida.

###



#### SPONSORING PARTNERS

Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions  
 Florida Children's Forum  
 Florida Developmental Disabilities Council  
 Florida Partnership for School Readiness  
 The Lawton Chiles Foundation  
 United Way of Florida/  
 Success By 6 Partnership

#### CONTRIBUTING PARTNERS

Center for Florida's Children  
 Children's Home Society  
 Commission on Responsible Fatherhood  
 Communities in Schools of Florida  
 Early Childhood Association of Florida  
 Florida ARF  
 Florida Children's Campaign  
 Florida Head Start Association  
 Florida Interagency Council for Infants & Toddlers  
 Florida Pediatric Society  
 Florida PTA  
 Florida School-Age Child Care Coalition, Inc.  
 Florida State Foster Adoptive Parent Association  
 Friends of Children, Inc.  
 Healthy Families Florida  
 Ounce of Prevention Fund of Florida  
 Pinellas County Head Start/Early Head Start  
 Southeast Evaluation Association  
 The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation  
 The Family Source of Florida  
 The Lawton and Rhea Chiles Center for Healthy Mothers and Babies  
 The Mary Brogan Museum of Arts & Sciences  
 The Policy Group for Florida's Families and Children  
 VSA Arts of Florida

#### CORPORATE SUPPORTER

Kaplan Companies, Inc.

Children's Week 2002  
 c/o United Way of Florida  
 307-B E. 7th Avenue  
 Tallahassee, FL 32303  
 Phone 850-488-8276  
 Fax 850-681-9137  
[www.childrensweek.org](http://www.childrensweek.org)

## Speaking with One Voice for Children— The Florida Agenda

The well-being of children and families is the highest priority in Florida and public policies will be established to be consistent in their support of this priority. The key indicators of well-being are:

- All of Florida's children are healthy, safe and ready to learn at every age.
- All of Florida's families are stable, nurturing and economically self-sufficient.
- All of Florida's communities are supportive of families raising children.

**Healthy Children.** The benefits of beginning and living a healthy life are enormous and long lasting. The consequences of beginning life unhealthy can be lifelong and costly. To safeguard our health, we need accessible and affordable health care. Particularly important is a healthy start prenatally and from birth. Children should have the supports and services necessary to live full, healthy and productive lives.

**Children Safe in their Families and Communities.** The quality of life in our communities depends upon feeling and being safe in our communities. Children are among our most vulnerable citizens. They require protection and nurturing to help them grow up to become responsible, law-abiding and nurturing adults.

**Children Ready to Learn and Succeed in School.** Quality early education and care beginning in the infancy period should be affordable and accessible for all children. It is the first and crucial step in creating a well-educated work force and citizenry to help build better lives for Florida's families and a prosperous economy for Florida as a whole. Our best investment is to capitalize on the capacity for young children to learn in the early years and to teach our children how to live and work in our rapidly growing and complex world. At the outset, all children should enter school ready to succeed and continue to succeed as they grow.

**Stable and Nurturing Families.** Florida reflects a society comprised of four generations - children, parents, grandparents and super-elder great-grandparents. For all Floridians to participate fully in society, families need to thrive - children need to be able to grow to full potential and elders need to feel secure and believe they are needed.

**Economically Self-Sufficient Families.** Low-income and/or single parent families, some with inadequate or unsafe housing, face extraordinary challenges in providing the basic necessities of life. Such families are vulnerable to an array of social and economic challenges: unemployment, crime, teenage pregnancy, lack of an adequate education and the need for public assistance. Eliminating poverty is an initiative likely to strengthen our communities in many ways, not just economically.

**Supportive Communities.** For Florida's communities to thrive and for children to grow up to become contributing adults who take their personal and community responsibilities seriously, a stable neighborhood environment that nurtures and supports the four generations represented in our communities is essential.

The key evidence-based policies and practices that are required to achieve well-being are:

- All children and families in Florida have access to health care.
- All children and families in Florida have access to home-visiting services.
- All children and families in Florida have access to affordable, quality early education and care services.
- All children and families in Florida have access to integrated health, economic and family support services.
- All communities in Florida, in partnership with the state are supportive and provide for a comprehensive, integrated continuum of natural, primary and specialized supports and services that are available to all children and families.
- All public and private employers in Florida promote family-friendly employment practices and a livable wage for all people who work.



The Florida Agenda was developed by The Policy Group for Florida's Families and Children. *The vision of The Policy Group for Florida's Families & Children is that, together, we will ensure that a generation of young people grow up to be responsible adults—ready, willing and able to contribute to self, to family and to their community.* For more information about the agenda and the work of The Policy Group, consult their website at [www.policygroup.org](http://www.policygroup.org).

## Attachment to News Release *Speaking with One Voice for Children— The Florida Agenda*

# Internet Advocacy

**It's all about access ■ Not a magic pill  
■ Ask yourself why ■ What's in it for you? ■ Where  
can I go for help? Resources for Internet advocacy**

## It's all about access

With millions of people surfing the World Wide Web each day and the numbers of online users growing steadily each year, the Internet has become a powerful tool for sharing information and getting things done. More and more people are turning to the Internet as a key source for news, shopping, entertainment, travel and communication.

Businesses and non-profit organizations alike are discovering the advantages of doing business online. Particularly after the Sept. 11 tragedy, online giving to charitable organizations has exceeded most expectations. And, in the wake of the attacks, many Americans turned more frequently to the Web for the latest news and information than any other medium.

No primer on advocacy would be complete without a discussion of the Internet and its uses. The Internet can be a valuable tool for advocates to spread the word, mobilize support, network with other advocates and even raise money. Unfortunately, there is often as much misinformation and misunderstanding about the Internet as anything else. This section will offer some basic information on Internet advocacy, along with some valuable

resources for you to find more detailed information.

## Not a magic pill

One of the most important things any organization should remember about the Internet is that it is simply another tool for getting things done and sharing information - a marvelously powerful tool but a tool nonetheless. It is not a panacea for what ails an organization, such as lack of focus or vision. And it is not a replacement for the basic ingredients of good advocacy - good relationships, good information and positive action.

Too often, organizations go online expecting users to beat a path to their website, with thousands of new volunteers, donors and converts coming over to their cause. When that doesn't happen, they are understandably upset and disillusioned. But any online venture is only as effective and successful as the planning and thought that goes into it - long before the first visitor signs the online guest book.

## Ask yourself why

Before you register your domain name and pay big money to develop a website with all the bells and whistles, consider first your goals for going

## Online boom

**By some estimates, nearly 100 million people have access to the Internet and are using it a combined 65 million hours each day. By 2003, the number of users is expected to grow to 350 million. By 2005, the number may reach 1 billion!**

Source:  
[ephilanthropyfoundation.org](http://ephilanthropyfoundation.org)

## Online advocacy: the rules still apply

When it comes to using the Internet as a tool for advocacy, remember the old rules of networking and communication still apply. It's all about relationships, not technology or fancy graphics.

online. The questions you and your organization should ask are similar to those you would ask before any major new venture. What specifically are you hoping to achieve? Who needs to be involved? What audience are you hoping to reach? How much will it cost? How will we measure our success? Who is responsible for ongoing maintenance and upkeep?

Other questions are more specific to the Internet, its capabilities and limitations. For example, do you simply want to provide information for people to learn more about your organization or issue? Or do you want a more interactive presence, where people can sign up to volunteer or make a donation? How quickly will information related to your issue become outdated or obsolete? How frequently would you be able to update your site? How would you inform people about your presence on the Web and get them to visit your site? Would email be a simpler way to keep your supporters informed? The answers to these questions will help you plan an effective online strategy.

## What's in it for you?

Once you have an idea of what you or your organization hope to achieve by going online, there are numerous ways to put your Internet presence to use. Here are some of the most basic ways advocates can use email and the Internet to achieve their goals:

**Spreading the word**—With a website, information about you and your organization is available to the public 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Supporters can keep up with the latest happenings (if you update the site regularly) and people who are just curious can get information without you ever

having to lick a stamp or pick up the phone. A good website should include all the basic information about your organization, its mission, goals and activities, along with how a visitor to your site can get involved or contact you offline. Online newsletters are another great way for small advocacy groups to save on printing and postage costs. Information about web development is available through many online sites (see [Resources for Internet advocacy](#)) or your local Internet Service Provider.

**Mobilizing the forces**—Many advocates have taken to putting out email newsletters and e-bulletins as a way to mobilize their supporters to take action in a more timely and effective way. This can be a great way to remind busy people of upcoming events or to get supporters to write letters before a key vote is taken or decision made. But be sure to use email bulletins wisely. Only send to users who have requested your information. You do not want your organization to become known for sending junk or unwanted email messages. It is acceptable, however, to invite your supporters to pass your e-bulletin on to friends and family who might also be interested in your issue.

**Signing up new recruits**—The Internet can be a great way to allow prospective supporters to check you out on their own time and with no obligation. Whenever you are at an event or speaking to a group, give out your website address as a source of additional information. Integrate the website into everything you do, whether through print media, radio or television. Once a potential supporter or volunteer sees what you are all about through your website, they may want to sign up via email for specific

projects that fit their interests or request additional information or a personal contact with someone from your group.

**Managing event registrations**—Using the web as a means for people to sign up for events is a great way to manage your time and your events more effectively. People can browse your organization’s website to find out about your events, then send an email to ask a question or register online for those events that interest them. Website registration gives people a convenient alternative for signing up and getting involved. It can also reduce hassles for you as an organizer. You will have access to a quick and easy headcount, along with any other information you need to collect about who

will be attending your event.

**Raising money**—Fundraising online is a subject about which many books have been written recently. The Internet presents many new opportunities but also many challenges for non-profit and advocacy groups. Do your homework (**See Resources for Internet advocacy**) and get expert help if you need it. Remember that a website can do nothing for you or your organization on its own. Only by driving people to your site in everything else that you do, then giving them a secure and convenient way to make donations, will your online fundraising efforts be successful.

**Networking with like-minded groups and individuals**—More than anything else, the Internet presents a

**For important information about Federal laws governing non-profit organization involvement in public policy advocacy, visit Independent Sector’s web site at [www.IndependentSector.org/clpi/](http://www.IndependentSector.org/clpi/)**

## Where do I go for help? Resources for Internet advocacy

Here are some valuable resources for getting your organization or issue online. Again, this list is not comprehensive but will help get you started.

### General advocacy

- E-Philanthropy Foundation  
[www.ephilanthropyfoundation.org](http://www.ephilanthropyfoundation.org)
- Network for Good  
[www.networkforgood.com](http://www.networkforgood.com)
- NetAction [www.netaction.org](http://www.netaction.org)
- Organizers’ Collaborative  
[www.organizenow.net](http://www.organizenow.net)

### Email campaign services

- [www.getactivesoftware.com](http://www.getactivesoftware.com)
- [www.localvoice.com](http://www.localvoice.com)
- [www.4charity.com](http://www.4charity.com)

### Online donations

- [www.helping.org](http://www.helping.org)

- [www.charitywave.com](http://www.charitywave.com)
- [www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org)
- [www.workingforchange.com](http://www.workingforchange.com)

### Legislative advocacy

- Capitol Advantage  
[www.capitoladvantage.com](http://www.capitoladvantage.com)
- Capitol Connect  
[www.capitolconnect.com](http://www.capitolconnect.com)

### Networking

- Charity Channel  
[www.charitychannel.com](http://www.charitychannel.com)
- Handsnet [www.handsnet.org](http://www.handsnet.org)

### Web discussions and forums

- [www.ezboard.com](http://www.ezboard.com)
- [www.yourbbs.com](http://www.yourbbs.com)
- <http://cafe.utne.com/>

wonderful opportunity for like-minded groups and individuals to learn about each other, share information and get the help they need by networking. Again, relationships are everything in the online advocacy world too. By linking your organization's site to other similar organizations and encouraging them to link to your site, you will increase traffic to your site and build relationships that can help promote your cause.

***Taking action***—Many advocacy organizations are tapping into their supporters' desire to take action immediately by encouraging them to send an email letter to a legislator directly from the group's website. There are a number of larger advocacy groups that will allow you to hook into their site for this purpose at little or no cost.

(See [Resources for Internet advocacy](#)).

***A place to chat***—More and more organizations are discovering that online forums and discussions can be just as effective as town hall meetings and a lot less cumbersome or costly to organize. A number of online groups specialize in developing these sessions for non-profits and advocacy groups.

(See [Resources for Internet advocacy](#)).