



Tool Kit for Easy Advocacy

Prepared for
Chartered Prevention Councils
of
Prevent Child Abuse Indiana



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ADVOCATE: -n One who supports or defends a cause, or one who pleads on another's behalf.

There are lots of ways to help children, but one of the most effective ways to make our society better for children in the long term is legislative advocacy on their behalf. Quite simply, this means supporting laws and policies that are good for children and opposing those that aren't.

As a Division of The Villages, **Prevent Child Abuse** Indiana serves as a catalyst for preventing child abuse in all its forms and thereby enhancing the quality of life for children and families in Indiana.

The vision of **Prevent Child Abuse** Indiana is to live in a state where children flourish, free from abuse and neglect. Therefore, child abuse and neglect should be prevented before the pain has been inflicted.

Prevent Child Abuse Indiana works with community, state and national groups to expand and disseminate information about child abuse prevention. Further, Prevent Child Abuse Indiana translates that information into action through the development of sound child- and family-oriented policies, community-based prevention activities, public awareness and educational initiatives.

We often ask for help from members of Chartered Prevention Councils who want to be informed about the legislative issues that affect children. With our support, our Council members write letters to their legislators and newspapers, make phone calls, and even visit legislators personally to tell them about issues they care about.

Here are a couple of interesting statistics. State legislators say it only takes about 12 letters or phone calls to get their attention on an issue. And, on average, you only need five to 12 legislators backing your issue to pass a bill out of committee or kill it. ***That means your single phone call or letter really can make a difference!***

Being an Effective Advocate

Advocacy can be both fun and easy. Though the topics and issues we deal with are usually very serious and often complicated, we do our best to make your job as advocates as simple and effective as possible.

Some of the actions an advocate can take are:

- ✓ Writing a letter to your legislator
- ✓ Making a phone call to your legislator
- ✓ Attending a rally with fellow advocates to demonstrate support to legislators
- ✓ Attending a Children...Our Best Investment event and visiting legislators at the Statehouse
- ✓ Telling other advocates about an issue to increase awareness and support

When an issue comes up for which your voice is needed, we'll notify you by fax, e-mail or mail. We'll give you clear, brief background information and tell you how you can help — either by writing a letter to your legislator or newspaper, making a quick phone call or sharing information or stories with us. We will contact you periodically to keep you abreast of the legislative issues we are working on. We look forward to working with you and involving you in our efforts.

Easy Advocacy Tactic #1: Write a letter

Letters are an important, even critical, way to influence legislation. Legislative staff members have estimated that for every letter they receive on an issue, there are 200 other constituents who feel the same way, but don't write. You can mail, fax, or e-mail your letter (see page 5 for a special note on e-mail).



Letters to your own senator or representative are especially important. You have three federal legislators (two senators and one representative) and two state legislators (one senator and one representative). To find your legislators, try the following:

- ☑ Call your county clerk to find out who your state legislators are.
- ☑ Visit <http://www.votesmart.org/index.htm> and type in your zip code to find your legislators and their contact information.

When we ask you to write a letter, we will often provide sample text for you to use. Always use your own stationery or letterhead for your letter, and try to add your own words or thoughts. *A personal story about how legislation affects you or your family can be incredibly effective.*

Here are a few guidelines:

- Introduce yourself as a constituent (if you are one).
- If you are part of a group or coalition, say so, along with how many people your group represents.
- Keep it to one page if possible — short letters have the greatest impact.
- Make your position clear, and say exactly what you want your legislator to do.
- Tell how the legislation will affect you and others like you.
- Don't worry if you're not an expert. Your personal experience is the best evidence.
- Don't threaten, browbeat, or get nasty.
- Refer to bills or policies by name or number.
- Ask for the legislator's view on the issue.
- When a legislator does what you asked (such as vote for a bill), send a thank you note.

A great letter includes:

- Who you are
- What you want done
- A little bit about the issue or bill
- Who supports it, if you know
- What you want done, again, in slightly different words
- Your name, address and telephone number

Addressing your letter

During the legislative session, you can send letters directly to the Statehouse, addressed like this:

The Honorable (Full Name)
Indiana State Senate
Indianapolis, IN 46204

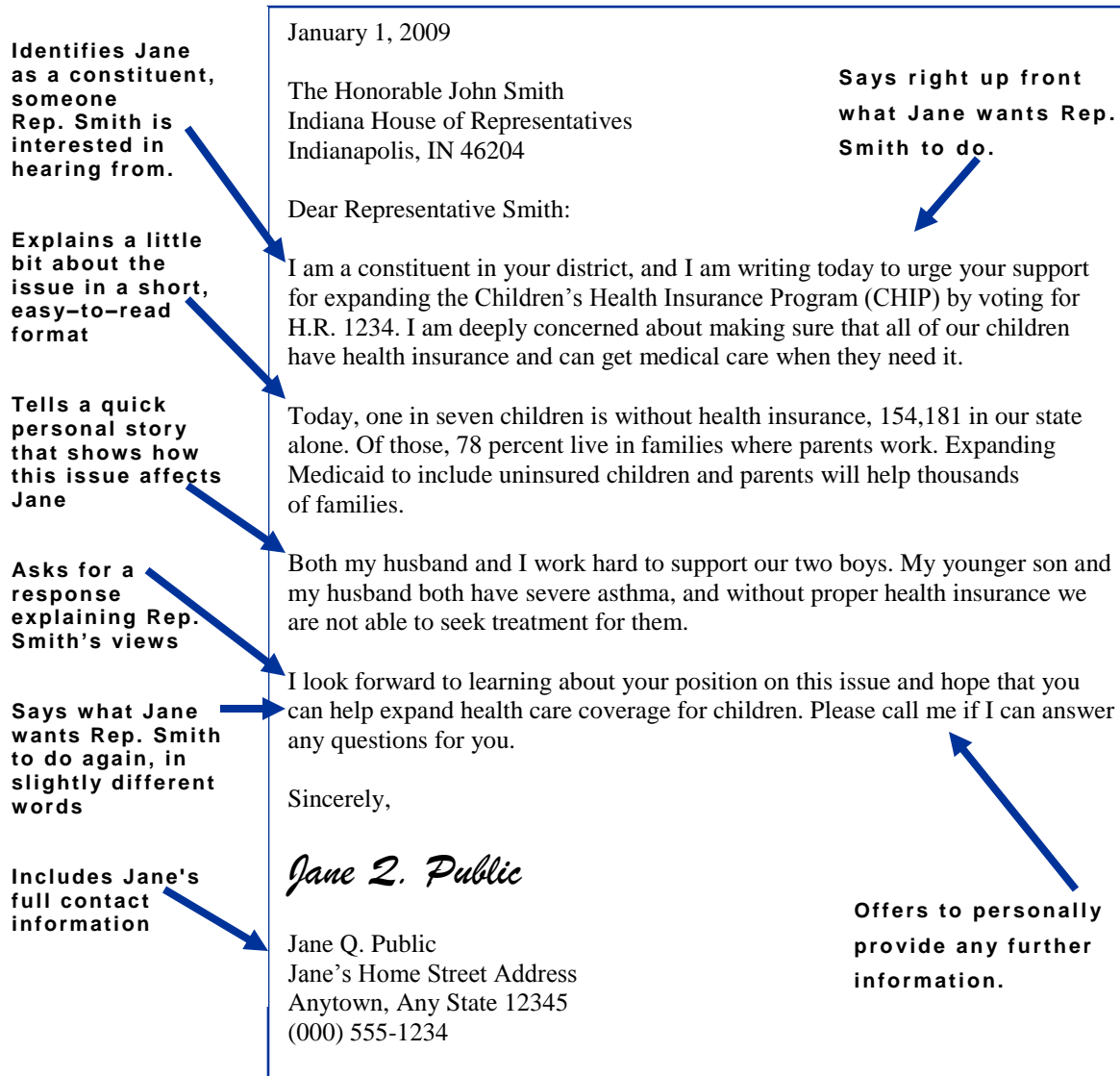
or

The Honorable (Full Name)
Indiana House of Representatives
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Senator/Representative Smith:

WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT THIS LETTER?

First of all, it's just one page!



A Word About e-mail

E-mail is received differently by individual legislators. Some prefer e-mail above all other communication; some don't read e-mail for days or not at all. It's a good idea to call your legislator's office first and simply ask, "Does Senator Smith read e-mail? Would that be a good way to send information to him?"

If you do send an e-mail, always include your FULL name and your HOME address at the end. This helps the legislator know that you are a real, live, voting person in his or her district.



Easy Advocacy Tactic #2: Make a Phone Call

When the General Assembly is in session, you can call legislators or their staff at their offices at the Statehouse. Lists of members' names, office addresses and telephone numbers are available on the Internet at www.state.in.us/legislative

When we ask you to make a phone call, we will provide background information on the issue and usually a sample script you can use.

Remember, you can always call PCA Indiana at 317-542-7002 if you have any questions.

Here are a few tips for calling your legislator:

- Identify yourself by name and address.
- Identify the bill or issue you wish to talk about by name and number (if possible).
- Briefly state your position and how you'd like your legislator to vote.
- Ask for your legislator's stance on the bill/issue and for a commitment to vote for your position.
- Don't argue if the legislator has an opposing view or hasn't yet decided.
- Don't guess at answers to questions. If you don't know, say so, and then get back to them with correct information.
- If your legislator or their staff needs more information, supply it as quickly as possible.
- Never be abusive or use threats.
- Follow up your call with a note restating your position and thanking them for their time.

Warning: Legislators are often away from the office, in committee meetings, or on the floor of the chamber, so you may end up talking with a staff person instead. That's great. Use the same basic rules. Staff are very reliable and will pass along your message.

Tips for using voice mail

- State your name and address.
- Identify the specific bill you're calling about; use the bill number if you know it.
- Briefly state your position — either support, opposition, or some combination.
- Keep the message simple.



For example: “Hello, this is Jane Smith at 123 Main Street in Anytown. I’m calling to let you know that I fully support H.R. 1234, which would expand health care for children in my state. I urge you to vote yes. Thank you.”

Easy Advocacy Tactic #3: Go visit your legislator

Personal visits are a highly effective way to help legislators understand your position on an issue. Legislators welcome visits from constituents. They want you to be involved. However, they are busy people, so time is extremely valuable. Plan ahead and use the time well.

If you make an appointment when Congress or the General Assembly is in session, remember that there is no guarantee that the legislator will be able to keep it. Legislative schedules change at a moment's notice. Don't take this personally — it's just how it is.



BEFORE THE MEETING

- ☑ Make an appointment in advance, and expect to get about 15 minutes. You can call the Statehouse or Capitol to get your legislator's number, or it may be in your local phone book.
- ☑ Make it easy for your legislator to meet with you. Offer several possibilities and do your best to accommodate them.
- ☑ Prepare a good fact sheet about your issue. (See page 10 for more information about fact sheets.)
- ☑ Try to learn in advance where your legislator stands on your issue.
- ☑ Be prepared to explain how the bill or issue will affect you and other voters in the legislator's district.
- ☑ Dress appropriately for an appointment in the legislature — normal business attire is appropriate.

DURING THE MEETING

- ☑ Be on time; be prepared; be polite; and be brief.
- ☑ Start with your 90-second speech (see box, on next page).
- ☑ Give the legislator the fact sheet on your issue.
- ☑ Be firm, but friendly. A commitment on how your legislator will vote should never be forced; however, once your legislator is aware of the issue and your position, it isn't too soon to start asking for a commitment.
- ☑ Attack the issue, not the person. Remember, you may be asking for this person's support on a completely different issue sometime in the future.
- ☑ Don't disparage government or politics.
- ☑ Don't use jargon, technical terms, or acronyms (unless you're certain you'll be understood). Be prepared to go over the basics of your issue if necessary.
- ☑ Don't underestimate public officials. With very rare exceptions, they are honest, intelligent, and want to do the right thing. Your job is to inform them about what you think is right and why.

- ☑ If you don't know the answer to a question, say you will find the answer and get back to them — and then DO.
- ☑ Be realistic. Remember that controversial legislation and regulations usually result in a compromise. It has always been so and it will always be so in a democracy.
- ☑ Before leaving, ask how you can be of help to them (get more information? Talk with others?).
- ☑ Thank them for their time and/or for anything they've done recently with which you agree.

AFTER THE MEETING

- ☑ Follow up with a thank you note and any information that was requested.

The crucial 90-second speech...

Memorize a little speech before your meeting. It's not only handy for talking to legislators, but it will serve you well when explaining your issue to anyone.

Your speech should include:

- ☑ **Who you are** and any group or coalition you belong to
- ☑ The **topic** you came to talk about
- ☑ What you want them to **do**
- ☑ Reference to the **fact sheet** you've brought along (see pg. 10). Your fact sheet is critical —if your meeting gets interrupted, you'll still have gotten your point across, and the legislator will know how to find you or your group if s/he has any questions. If not, you can elaborate on the points in your fact sheet.



Here's an example:

“Hi, I'm Janice Jones. I'm a volunteer at Prevent Child Abuse Indiana, a division of The Villages of Indiana, which serves over _____ children every year. I'd like to talk to you about health care coverage for children. I'm hoping you'll vote yes on H.R. 1234 that expands the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to cover families making up to 200% of the federal poverty level. This will help insure many additional needy children in our state. Here's a sheet with some more information — my phone number is there if you have any questions.”



Easy Advocacy Tactic #4: Prepare a Good Fact Sheet

What's a fact sheet?

Fact sheets introduce an issue in a format useful to busy people. If we ask you to take action on an issue, we will provide a fact sheet or quick background information for you.

Good fact sheets recognize that busy people (like legislators) need something short and punchy to grab their attention. A good fact sheet says, “Read me! I’m a painless way to get acquainted with an issue.” Anything long and complicated may not simply be ignored; it can actually be counter-productive. Keep it **short, accurate** and **interesting**.

Fact sheets can...

- Identify a group with a particular issue.
- Set out the facts — key statistics, figures, or comparisons.
- Provide answers to common questions about the issue. Fact sheets are often in a Q&A format.
- Show information using graphs, charts or pictures.
- Inform, persuade or educate.
- Make an argument for a particular course of action.

Good fact sheets:

- Are only one or two pages long.
- Don't use long sentences or wordy paragraphs.
- Are easy to read, with sub-heads, bullet points and often graphics.
- Include only the most compelling, useful statistics.
- Arrange information to make an argument targeted to a particular audience.
- Use stories, examples or other simple ways to convey complicated points.
- Reflect careful thought about the audience and facts important to them.
- Draw a conclusion or suggest something the reader can do.
- Include the name, address, telephone number, Web site address and/or e-mail address of the organizing group.
- Are honest and factual, and do not exaggerate.

Resources for Advocates:

Prevent Child Abuse America: www.preventchildabuse.org

Since 1972, **Prevent Child Abuse America** (PCA America) has led the way in building awareness, providing education and inspiring hope to everyone involved in the effort to prevent the abuse and neglect of our nation's children. Working with state chapters, they provide leadership to promote and implement prevention efforts at both the national and local levels.

Prevent Child Abuse Indiana: www.pcain.org

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USA.Gov: www.usa.gov

A search engine that focuses on online federal government services and resources with direct links and directories provided.

U.S. House of Representatives: www.house.gov

Direct links to every federal member of Congress and their Web sites, congressional committees and the daily and weekly schedule of the U.S. House of Representatives.

U. S. Senate: www.senate.gov

Direct links to the Web sites of United States senators, the senatorial schedule and Senate committee listings.

Write Rep: www.house.gov/writerep

Interactive database that enables constituents to write e-mails to their representative and to determine who their correct legislator is in the U. S. House of Representatives.

Thomas: <http://thomas.loc.gov>

Searchable database of legislative information that permits users to search federal legislation by bill number, title or topic area. Contains the text of committee reports and the daily Congressional Record, the transcript of Senate and House proceedings.

Roll Call: www.rollcall.com

This subscription only bi-weekly newspaper of Capitol Hill, covering the elected officials, news and information of Congress.

Indiana Legislature: www.in.gov/legislative

Web site of the Indiana Legislature, which allows users to access bill information, committee calendars and hearings, and contact information for the Indiana House of Representatives and the Indiana Senate.

Project Vote Smart: www.vote-smart.org

Find out who your elected officials are at the state and federal levels, and during election years, find out where candidates stand on specific issues.

The Children's Coalition of Indiana: 1800 N. Meridian St. Suite 402, Indianapolis IN 46202

Contact: Mary Boggs at marybboggs@yahoo.com

Over the last fifteen years the Children's Coalition of Indiana has been a principal advocate for children across the state at all levels of government. With membership spanning the spectrum of children's services and advocates around the state, Children's Coalition has and will continue to speak out for the welfare, education, and well-being of our children in the following issue areas:

- Abuse, Neglect and Family Violence
- Adoption and Foster Care
- Early Childhood Care and Development
- Economic Self-Sufficiency
- Education
- Financing Appropriate Child Welfare Services
- Physical and Mental Health
- Juvenile Justice &
- Youth Development

Government Glossary

- **Amendment** -- A change to one of the bills the House or Senate is considering. **Author** -- The representative or senator who introduces a bill.
- **Bill** -- The actual proposal legislators introduce.
- **Chamber** -- One of the two legislative bodies in our state; either the Senate or the House
- **Committee** -- A group of lawmakers chosen to study bills about a specific subject. For example, the House Education Committee looks at all bills addressing Indiana schools.
- **Districts** -- The area a lawmaker represents. Indiana has 100 House districts and 50 Senate districts.
- **Governor** -- The chief executive of Indiana.
- **House of Representatives** -- Also known as the House. One of the two bodies of the General Assembly. The House has 100 members.
- **Interim** -- The time between sessions of the General Assembly.
- **Laws** -- The rules we live by.
- **Legislature** -- Also referred to as the General Assembly. This is made up of the House and the Senate.
- **Lieutenant Governor** -- The second-in-command to the governor. Also the first-in command of the Indiana Senate.
- **President Pro Tempore** -- The second-in-line of the Senate. (The first-in-line is the Lieutenant Governor.) This person presides over the Senate.
- **Quorum** -- The minimum number of members required to be present for the House or Senate to conduct business.
- **Recess** -- A break in the daily legislative business.
- **Representative** -- One of the 100 members elected to a two-year term in the House of Representatives.
- **Senate** -- Refers to one of the two bodies making up the state legislature. There are 50 members of the Senate.
- **Senator** -- One of the 50 members elected to a four-year term in the Senate.
- **Session** -- The two-year term for each General Assembly. In odd-numbered years, session (known as a long session) must end by April 29. In even-numbered years, the short session must end by March 14.
- **Speaker** -- He or she presides over the House. The Speaker is always from the party in control of the House.
- **Sponsor** -- This is the person in the House who signs on to Senate bills and the senator who signs on to House bills to make sure they get through the other chamber.
- **Veto** -- When the governor refuses to allow a bill to become a law.
- **Vote** -- How bills are approved.

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