



Raising our Voices for Children

Children's Alliance
of New Hampshire

Advocacy Tool Box

What is an advocate? Literally, the word "advocate" means "to speak for." Children, who have no voice in the political process, need all the powerful friends they can get. If there are child and family issues that you feel strongly about, you can "speak for" children, and Raise Your Voice with the Children's Alliance of New Hampshire. Here's how:

- **Learn all you can about the issue.** The easiest and fastest way to learn about anything these days, including children's issues, is on the internet. Our Current Issues and Advocacy Resources pages are good places to start. Be sure you're getting solid information by sticking to the sites of reputable organizations and/or media outlets. We also suggest joining the Child Advocacy Update email list, which features state and national news, policy analysis, the latest research, and opportunities for action.
- **Know the arguments on both sides of the issue** well enough to be able to anticipate what the opposition will say to refute your position.
- **Identify your audience and a strategy for reaching it.** Who can give you what you want? Who are they influenced by? Whose minds have to be changed? How can you get your message to them? How can you avoid "preaching to the choir"?
- **Be able to articulate your position clearly and authoritatively.** Support your argument with verifiable facts, and know how to use data effectively- for more on this, visit the FrameWorks Institute.
- **There's power in numbers.** Find out if other people in your community or region are aware of this issue. Does a group or coalition already exist? Your efforts may be more effective if you work with an existing group. If no group currently exists, think about who would/could/should be in such a group if it did exist? Who are the local experts and opinion leaders on this issue? Talk to like-minded people about getting organized.
- **What is your goal?**

If you want to educate people about an issue and/or express your opinion, write a letter or brief essay and send it to your local newspaper. Depending on the issue, you might want to send your letter to other newspapers as well. Link to our Get Active home page, scroll down to the News Media Guide, and click on "View" for a list of contact information for all the newspapers in the state. Be succinct and to the point in stating your case. If you're not used to

writing for the public, you might want to consider showing your letter to a friend or two before sending it.

If your goal is to find out about legislation related to your issue, go to the Quick Bill Status Search page on the General Court Web site. You can enter a keyword and find most of the relevant bills and LSRs to that issue. (An LSR is a Legislative Service Request, a kind of "pre-bill" created when a legislator has requested that a bill be drafted). An LSR usually turns into a bill (HB for House Bill or SB for Senate Bill) but will have a different number. Learning about legislation at the LSR stage will give you more time to learn about the bill, talk to other people, and plan a strategy). Once you arrive at a bill's Status page, you can click on Bill Text to read it in its entirety, or the Docket link to see the bill's schedule.

If you want to express your opinion to any of your elected officials, you can use our Legislative Action Center. You don't need to know their names or contact information -- just enter your Zip Code, and you'll have the information you need. You have the option of telephone, "snail mail" or email. Choose the method you're most comfortable with. Be sure you state clearly what you would like them to do, and ask for a response.

If your goal is to influence pending state legislation, go to the Quick Bill Status Search page on the state Web site. Enter the bill number on the appropriate line (with no spaces: SB44). The Bill Status page will tell if, when and where a hearing is scheduled, and clicking on the bill number will tell you what action has taken on the bill. Anyone can attend a bill's public hearing. You can testify or sign a sheet to register your support or opposition, or simply listen and learn. If you're going to testify, be prepared. Plan to make a few key points rather than discussing many aspects of the bill. While you don't need to hide your emotions, your testimony should be based on facts, not feelings. You can also present your testimony in writing so that it becomes part of the official record. Bring 25 copies if it is a House hearing, six if in the Senate. If you feel like you need more information before you're ready to make a visit to the Statehouse, call us. We're here to help you be the best advocate you can be.

If you want to listen to live or past voting sessions of the New Hampshire House and Senate, go to the New Hampshire General Court Web page, click on Listen In, and choose either the House or Senate Streaming Audio. You can listen to past sessions and/or look at the votes and roll-call votes that were taken that day.

Remember: the most important part is getting out there and making a difference for children in our state! Thank you for all you do to Raise Your Voice for Children.

For more, visit the Children's Alliance of New Hampshire online at www.childrennh.org.