

NAEYC Advocacy Toolkit



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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. Why It Matters That You Are Involved

NAEYC, its affiliates and chapters, and members are leaders in promoting excellence in early childhood education. This leadership takes many forms, of which one is public policy advocacy and communications.

NAEYC's Governing Board established an organization priority that we would be a more politically effective organization at all levels. The Governing Board adopted a definition of "politically effective" that means that NAEYC members will have

- awareness of;
- knowledge about;
- the ability to competently discuss and debate;
- the capacity to act in ways that influence decisions on;
- public policy at all levels (national, state and local) aligned with Association goals.

Why is this important? Because public policies at the national, state, and local levels have a tremendous impact on the financing and quality of early childhood education, on reimbursement and compensation of professionals and services providers, and on supporting the system infrastructure needed to deliver quality programs for all children.

For example,

- Subsidies under the federal Child Care & Development Block Grant (CCDBG) helps pay the cost of care for eligible low-income working families. If the funding is insufficient, it is difficult for states to raise reimbursement rates or to provide more eligible families with subsidies;
- Compensation also comes from federal sources. Head Start salaries are paid in part with federal Head Start dollars; T.E.A.C.H. scholarships tied to bonuses are funded in part with federal CCDBG funding.
- Up to 80 percent of Head Start programs are funded with federal dollars;
- Resource and referral agencies' operations and Child Care Aware are funded by the CCDBG federal funding stream;
- Financial aid to help teachers earn degrees can be funded by different federal higher education grant and loan programs;
- K-12 education, although primarily local and state dollars, is funded in every state in part by No Child Left Behind for programs such as compensatory education under Title I, Safe & Drug Free Schools, after-school under the 21st Century Community Learning Centers and other school-based programs;
- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act provides funds for services for children with disabilities, and for young children and their families, from birth through age 21;
- States often provide additional funding streams for prekindergarten and preschool programs, initiatives to improve the quality of infant and toddler care, licensing and

monitoring of child care providers, as well as quality initiatives such as professional development.

Why should NAEYC and its affiliates and members be active in public policy at the national, state and local levels? Because early childhood professionals need to be the lead voice on what policies are needed to promote our goal of a well-financed, high quality system of early childhood education for all children. Others will speak for us if we do not use our voices in constructive ways. We can be change agents, or we can be the recipients of changes that we did not influence.

2. Continuous Improvement – It Applies to Public Policy Too

Effective public policy advocacy work requires intentionality, which in turn requires organization. If all of us work independently without a well-defined vision and capacity to act and react to changing political, social and economic contexts, we will not make the progress that is needed. If we work together strategically, we can cause the changes that we seek for children, families and the professionals in the field.

This toolkit helps affiliates and chapters organize themselves into more effective voices. Many of these materials are excerpted from NAEYC resources and those of other national organizations. We have provided you with examples from fellow affiliates to see how others have moved their public policy agendas forward.

CHAPTER TWO

GETTING ORGANIZED AT THE AFFILIATE LEVEL

Effective public policy work depends on vision coupled with strategic and intentional organization. As part of the reaffiliation, NAEYC requires state affiliates and local chapters to include public policy and communications in its activities and planning.

This chapter lays out the different components of an organized state and local effort around public policy activity. This series of checklists can help you as a group to assess your organizational strengths and weaknesses. This tool can be used with the Public Policy and Communications Worksheet that is included in the Appendix.

1. Who, What, Where – and How Much

As part of an affiliates reaffiliation, it must show that it is working on public policy and public communications. Affiliates should have designated resources for their public policy and communications work in order to be intentional, strategic and ready to act or react. The scope of resources – both cash and in-kind – will vary among affiliates. But without planning for basic costs of doing advocacy and communication, it is difficult to be both intentional and strategic.

Things to consider:

- 1) Staff time and salary
- 2) Cost of email and web management
- 3) Meetings: travel, copies of materials, incidentals
- 4) Conference calls
- 5) Printing
- 6) Mailing
- 7) Required registrations, filings and other forms
- 8) Hiring a lobbyist or consultant
- 9) Special events, such as a rally

Engaging in advocacy and lobbying is legal for 501(c)(3) associations. The issue is how much is spent on such efforts, and the recording and filing that is required at the federal level and by states. Each affiliate needs to find out what is required in terms of lobbyist registration, forms and filing requirements. Usually the Secretary of State has this information. NAEYC has filed a 501(h) form with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). It is worth filing this one-page form as an affiliate as well. This protects nonprofit associations in their lobbying. If the association spends more than the allowed amount, it will be assessed a fine but can keep its nonprofit tax status. Otherwise, the IRS uses a discretionary analysis of “substantive” amount spent on lobbying.

Again, always check with an attorney about the rules, regulations and laws governing lobbying (direct advocacy and grassroots) in your state. **THIS TOOLKIT DOES NOT CONSTITUTE LEGAL ADVICE.**

In addition, please pay careful attention to **Appendix B**, which is a do's and don'ts for 501©(3) organizations on activities that would be considered political rather than lobbying activities and obtain a copy of Rules of the Game from the Alliance for Justice (www.allianceforjustice.org). Engaging in prohibited political activities has very serious consequences, such as loss of tax-exempt status.

2. The Public Policy Committee

It is critical that no single person is making all of the decisions and has the entire burden of the affiliate's public policy efforts. On the former, the issue is credibility, and ensuring diversity and inclusivity of opinion, expertise, and experience. On the latter, it is important to make this effort an integral part of the affiliate's work, and not a separate, unaligned part of the mission and work of the organization.

A committee:

- Regularly communicates with its members
- Provides a focus for gathering, analyzing, and sharing information broadly
- Plans and organizes the distribution of information and the activities relating to advocacy.

Elements of an Effective Public Policy Committee

- Chair, or co-chairs – leader (s) who has the time, interest, and skills to support the work of the committee. Term limits may be set. Chair should have access to state capitol and computer with e-mail.
- Committee members – who have time, interest, and skills in public policy
- Formal organization – embedded in affiliate structure, committee responsibilities in writing, proper state and federal filings (501(h), etc.) to allow for lobbying activities
- Connection with Affiliate Governing Board – formal liaison (often Chair) to inform Board of current issues, present recommendations for actions, and adopt position statements and policy agenda
- Public policy agenda and program – the agenda is a written plan for the policy issues to be worked on in a given year based on current legislation, state budget, and other issues needing attention; the Public Policy Program is a written statement of positions on key issues. Affiliates can draft their own policy program, or follow the one developed by NAEYC (included in Appendix).
- Communication system – e-mail or other communication mechanism to inform members about policy issues, and to send out alerts and calls for action
- Designated writer – for state/local/federal policy updates, draft position statements, resolutions, or policy briefs

- ☑ Funds in affiliate budget for policy activities
- ☑ Connection with NAEYC national office – sign up for Children’s Champions, use Capwiz system for federal policy action, keep in contact with State Policy Coordinator, use NAEYC web site for resources on state and federal policy issues, participate in state policy listserv and other opportunities for cross-state networking.

Responsibilities of the Public Policy Committee:

- ☑ Schedule regular meetings and communication, either in person or by phone.
- ☑ Establish and review Public Policy Program – Affiliate’s statement of positions on legislative/policy issues. Affiliates can use the Public Policy Program developed by NAEYC, which is based on our position statements and positions adopted by the national Governing Board.
 - Committee reviews and proposes changes/additions to the Policy Program for their state. Affiliate Governing Board discusses and adopts.
- ☑ Establish and review annual policy agenda – the current legislative and policy issues that the Committee will focus on each year.
- ☑ Create communication systems to keep local affiliates, members, and the public aware of policy issues.
- ☑ Create communications systems to alert members to contact policymakers at appropriate times.
- ☑ Provide training and information at conferences and other venues sponsored by the Affiliate.
- ☑ Work collaboratively with person(s) responsible for public representation in speaking at functions, press, etc on message regarding policy items.

Responsibilities of the Public Policy Committee Chair(s):

- ☑ Delegates tasks and responsibilities to members of the committee, that match their interests, abilities, and skills
- ☑ Coordinates communication systems—often is writer of policy alerts and updates
- ☑ Liaison to Affiliate Governing Board
- ☑ Liaison to Public Policy Committees in local Affiliates
- ☑ Facilitates committee in setting priorities and reviewing current Public Policy Program each year

- ☑ Member of NAEYC State Policy Leaders Listserv; participates in national activities (conference calls, etc.)

3. Public Policy Program– Making Consistent, Credible Decisions

The public policy work of NAEYC and its affiliates is *issue-driven*, not politically driven. It is based on research of what we know promotes excellence in early childhood programs, and what will lead to a well-financed, high quality system of early childhood education in every state and community for all children.

Being able to promote and respond to proposals with credibility is critical. As an issue-driven organization, NAEYC has research-based, peer reviewed position statements that form the framework for public policy positions.

4. Keeping Members Informed, Alerted to Action¹

In an era when a large volume of vocal, united advocates is key, it is important that internally in the organization and externally with the public that positions, messages and information be distributed widely, regularly, and in an accessible way for volunteers.

Internally, it is important that the public policy committee keeps the affiliate Board and staff informed of its meetings and its decisions. Liaison with the Board and staff should be a formalized process, and with local chapters on state policy developments. Likewise, local chapters should keep the state affiliate abreast of key proposals and decisions regarding local public policy proposals.

Internal communications – those with members – should be formalized as well. Someone should have the responsibility of sending out information and alerts to action. The centralization of this information dissemination is key so that mixed messages do not get sent to the members, the key of your grassroots advocacy.

Increasingly, communication is done through email and list servs. NAEYC at the national level uses two forms of communicating updates and alerts for national advocacy: (1) an email distribution that is open to members and nonmembers alike; and (2) a listserv that serves as a private, confidential “chat room” for affiliate public policy chairs and staff. These communications mechanisms can be established at state and local levels too.

¹ For information to help advance your public communications, please go to Chapter 8, Communicating with the Media

Keeping In Touch

There is a simple solution for keeping an up-to-date list of policy email subscribers and to get your message out regularly even if the affiliate does not have someone on staff to handle this: have the affiliate purchase a laptop computer.

The laptop is owned by the affiliate, but “housed” with the public policy chair or person in charge of keeping the email subscriber list current and sending out the emails. When that person changes, the laptop goes on to the next individual with this responsibility.

To make it easy for your members to send emails or call their governor, state legislators or other state policymakers, you can give them the link to your state legislature (which you can find at <http://www.ncsl.org/public/leglinks.cfm>) in the email alert and on your web site.

Affiliate Email Updates and Alerts: Effective Use of Email Communications

Interview with Gerri DiLisi, PennAEYC Email Communicator, August 5, 2003.

1) How often do you send out e-mail updates and alerts?

I send out updates and alerts as needed. On the federal level, alerts from NAEYC and those from the State Policy Listserv that call for action in regard to Pennsylvania legislators are a top priority. We have urged all affiliate chapters to encourage their membership to sign on to the NAEYC Email List, we don't want to be redundant when NAEYC updates/alerts go out.

At the state level, I send out alerts as needed relying on information from other advocacy organizations – such as, QUEST, PACCA (Pennsylvania Child Care Association), PCCY (Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth), Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, etc.

2) Who decides when they will be sent out?

Decisions are usually made by myself and sometimes prompted by the PennAEYC Public Policy VP and the Public Policy Committee Chair.

3) Who decides what the content will be of an update or alert? What do they generally include (federal update, state update, other)?

The content is decided by the Email Communicator on the Public Policy Committee – me. They generally include a federal OR a state update/or alert, seldom both. The committee has had discussion on making the alerts/updates concise and user friendly. I am going to try to divide the message into four parts: time to act, action, message, and key facts.

4) Who sends out the updates and alerts?

The PennAEYC Public Policy Email Communicator – currently that is me.

5) How did you create your list of recipients? * Who are the subscribers? Just members or did you open it up beyond the AEYC?

We created the list from our PennAEYC Public Policy Committee List and PennAEYC list of Presidents and Reps and those that asked to be included as part of the committee or concerned about public policy issues.

The recipients (not subscribers as they never signed up, we just compiled the list and send emails to them) are the PennAEYC Public Policy Committee which includes Affiliate Public Policy Chairs, some Affiliate Presidents (when the affiliate did not have a Chair), concerned PennAEYC members, the PennAEYC President, the PennAEYC Advisor (Lorraine Cooke) and NAEYC Public Policy folks (Adele and Sheri).

We did not open it up beyond the AEYC.

* We are in the process of revising/updating our list to include the Public Policy Chairs, Presidents, concerned affiliate members who wish to be on the Public Policy committee and Reps. We also have a PennAEYC Listserv that we are looking at as a possible communication tool (currently only 41 folks on it). I feel we are in the infancy stage of our

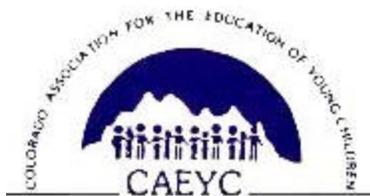
5. Web Sites Connect to Policymakers

Your affiliate's web site contains a wide array of important information for early childhood professionals. Public policy information should also be part of the way in which you inform and connect to members and the public.

For example:

- Have a specific page devoted to public policy on the web site
- Put a link to the governor's office, key state agencies, commissions and boards, and to the state legislature. At the local level, also connect to school boards and local agencies.
- Link to NAEYC's public policy page as a reference for federal updates, the Action Center, and other information that supports your advocacy work.

Here is how Colorado AEYC formats its page:



Legislation

[Home](#)

[Up](#)

This page is used to track legislation that CAEYC is monitoring, when the Colorado Legislature is in session.

If you want to contact your Legislators concerning any of these bills and need to find whom your elected officials are, go to [Vote Smart](#) and fill in your zip code.

To find out contact information for a bill's sponsor, use one of the following links:

[List of Colorado House Members by name with contact info](#)

[List of Colorado Senate Members by name with contact info](#)

[Search Bills in the Colorado General Assembly](#)

6. Affiliate Newsletters

Many affiliates provide updates and commentary on state and national public policy developments in their newsletters. Some have regular columns. Because of printing schedules, this is not the best venue for keeping your members informed on up-to-the-minute developments. For that purpose, you should have an email list. The newsletter does provide a way to give useful data, report on new statutes, regulations or rules, and to advertise upcoming events and activities to enhance your public policy and communications work. Always advertise how members can sign up for email updates and alerts.

7. Should You Hire a Professional Lobbyist?

A few affiliates have decided to individually or as part of a coalition hire a professional lobbyist or advocacy consultant. Here are the shared experiences and processes of the California, Wisconsin and Missouri state affiliates. The notes are from a panel presentation to Affiliate policy chairs at the 2001 NAEYC Annual Conference, Anaheim, CA

General Principles:

- Having a lobbyist is not a substitute for other public policy work by the Board and membership of the Affiliate.
- The choice of the individual to be hired as a lobbyist rests on that person's access to important legislators with whom the Affiliate had not had a relationship.
- The lobbyist needs to bring some "value added" to the Affiliate's existing policy activities.
- The lobbyist needs to attend policy meetings and help guide the strategies of the Affiliate's long-term as well as short-term policy goals, both for itself and in coalition with other organizations.

Criteria for selecting a lobbyist:

- Knowledge and experience working with the legislative process.
- Access to decision-makers to which the Affiliate did not already have access.
- Respect for the knowledge and priorities of the Affiliate.
- Familiarity with child care and early education issues.
- Commitment to the agenda identified by the Affiliate.

Responsibilities of the lobbyist:

- Direct lobbying and maintain relationships with the legislature.
- Assist with message development and strategies.
- Attend committee meetings.
- Research and prepare position/information papers to be used with legislators, the media, and others.
- Testify to the legislature; or provide representatives to testify on behalf of the Affiliate.
- Track and monitor legislation and the state budget.
- Interpret and analyze legislation for the Affiliate.

Funding a contract with a lobbyist:

- A lobbyist can be hired by a coalition of organizations, who all make financial contributions to the cost.
- If an Affiliate hires a lobbyist on its own, the costs can be shared by the State Affiliate and the Locals.
- Ask the lobbyist if she/he is willing to perform any services on a pro bono basis.
- For the three Affiliates on the panel, the costs were between \$6,000-\$12,000 per year.

CHAPTER THREE

ENGAGING THE MEMBERS IN PUBLIC POLICY

Public policy advocacy is about influencing public policies and practices so that they are more responsive to issues affecting a large number of children. That means that public policy advocates challenge school boards and local, state, and federal policymakers and agencies by calling attention to problems and proposing solutions. Advocates demand that the stewards of public funds develop laws, regulations, and program guidelines that support early childhood education in appropriate ways.

1. Different Advocacy Roles

What kind of advocate do you want to be?

- Some advocates will be **leaders**—people who provide vision and keep the advocacy effort on track.
- Some advocates will be **advisors**—people who are willing to share their special expertise with advocates and the policymakers that advocates are trying to influence.
- Some advocates will be **researchers**—people who can collect data and synthesize research reports into issue briefs and background papers.
- Some advocates will be “**contributors**”—those people who are willing to roll up their sleeves and participate in the nuts-and-bolts work of advocacy, from making phone calls to stuffing letters or marching in front of the state capitol.
- Some advocates will be **friends**—people who do not have the time or resources to participate in every aspect of the planning and implementation of advocacy, yet who care and can always be counted on to help when a push is needed.

2. Actions that Volunteer Early Childhood Advocates Can Take

This piece from S. Goffin & J. Lombardi (1988), *Speaking Out: Early Childhood Advocacy*, describes what individual advocates can do to become advocates for children. For specific activities for NAEYC Affiliates, see *Advocacy Goals for State and Local Affiliates* in Chapter Three: Advocacy by NAEYC Affiliate Groups.

You can choose from many courses of action once you make a commitment to become an advocate for children, their communities, and the early childhood profession. Here are a few choices:

- Share research that supports effective and appropriate practice with teachers and parents.
- Join an organization's public policy committee or agree to respond to a legislative telephone or e-mail tree.
- Write to the editor of a newspaper or magazine to respond to an article or letter.
- Talk with an employer about the needs of working parents, and ask for specific family-friendly policies such as telecommuting, job sharing, time off to attend doctor's appointments and special school events for your child, and other policies that help parents balance work and family requirements.
- Volunteer to join your professional group's advocacy committee to help plan and grow how the group will speak out on the health, social, and educational needs of young children.
- Collect data and research and develop with others a position statement on a critical issue.
- Volunteer to speak at a school board meeting about an NAEYC position statement and explain why the school board should adopt a certain policy.
- Conduct a local or state survey of salaries in early childhood programs.

3. Affiliate's Intentional, Strategic Steps to Public Policy Advocacy

(Adapted from *Child Advocacy in 10 Easy Steps*, 1998, Marilyn Pearce, California AEYC, www.caeyc.org)

Advocacy can take many forms, including becoming well informed about legislation and public policy concerning children and families, writing e-mail letters to your representatives, responding to issues or newspaper articles by writing letters to the editor and helping to educate the public through information campaigns. Below are easy steps to begin your journey to public policy advocacy.

1. **Make a personal commitment:** Speak up for children by choosing one of many ways to advocate for children—organizing discussion groups, visiting, e-mailing, writing letters or calling legislators, helping write bills and testifying.
2. **Keep informed:** Sign up for action alerts on the NAEYC and state affiliate web sites; you will also find links to other groups that focus on children's issues. Read the newspaper, NAEYC and state affiliate publications. Talk to others in the field and ask your legislators to keep you informed about current bills and budget items concerning children's issues.
3. **Know the process:** Learn how a bill becomes a law and how the government functions.
4. **Express your views:** As an early childhood professional, you know the needs of children first hand and can learn to effectively express your views and opinions to the public and to government representatives.
5. **Let others know:** Contact your representatives, newspapers, join groups and networks, and become active advocating for children.
6. **Be visible:** Attend meetings, hearings and visit your local representatives and officials.
7. **Show appreciation:** Be sure to send a thank you message when legislators have supported or responded to your requests. Consider ways to honor those who support important issues and legislation.
8. **Watch the implementation:** After a bill you have supported has passed, you must continue to monitor its implementation, evaluating how it works, possible flaws, and if corrective legislation is needed or considered.
9. **Build rapport and trust:** Be a reliable source of information for government representatives and officials. Become familiar with them by researching their voting records, professional background and interests. Keep channels of communication open.
10. **Educate your legislators:** Keep legislators informed on needs of children, send articles, newsletters, and research about programs that are good for children. Invite them to attend or speak at meetings, forums, conferences, workshops, and symposiums. Extend invitations to visit your early childhood programs. Help on their campaigns and be sure you are **REGISTERED TO VOTE AND THAT YOU VOTE ON ELECTION DAY!**

CHAPTER FOUR

ENGAGING IN DIRECT ADVOCACY

1. Establishing Your Priorities and Your Pro-Active Agenda

While certain issues by their nature are priorities (compensation and rates, for example), there are some years when it is easier or more difficult to make even incremental progress. Public policy is developed and advanced in the context of the political climate, the social climate, and the economic climate of the state, community and nation. The venue – governor, legislature, commission, regulatory agency – also needs to be taken in account, as do any financing considerations. For determining priorities and your pro-active agenda, here is a chart that can help you put the different contextual pieces together in forming your decision.

Determining Public Policy Priorities – Short Term and Long Term

Issue	Need (data on scope, scale, importance)	Political Environment/ Political Will (Governor, legislature, agencies, boards, etc)	Economic environment (source of financing)	Social Environment/ Public Will (awareness, ease/difficulty in generating interest/support)	Capacity (partners, resources)

2. Definitions: Concerns, Solutions and Asks

(Adapted from the *Chapter Handbook* by Stand for Children)

These concepts are important to keep in mind when choosing an issue to address, figuring out how to address that issues, and articulating what you want from decision makers. Decision makers are individuals who set policies and/or determine how public funds are spent.

Concerns/Issues: Specific problems facing children in a community (or state or the nation).
Example: Turnover among early childhood educators in Boise is high and the level of care is low because wages are low and there are no benefits.

Solution: A way to address a concern or issue.

Example: A wage supplement program for early childhood educators in Boise tied to their level of education and training.

Ask: A specific statement of something we want done for children within a set time frame and policy makers who can make it happen.

Example: We want the Boise City Council to spend \$200,000 in their current budget to create a wage supplement program for 400 early childhood educators, which will impact 3,000 Boise children.

Use the following questions when figuring out whether a solution to a particular concern or issue is winnable.

Potential Allies and Opponents

- Is there an official with decision making power who will champion your solution? (This can be an elected official or someone in a decision making position, such as the director of the Department of Human Services).
 - Can that official win the support of other key decision makers?
- Is there a key official who is adamantly opposed to your solution?
- Are there strong allies in the community you might enlist (i.e., the police chief, the district attorney, business owners, etc.)?

NOTE: Outside allies are important, but are never a substitute for building capacity within your Affiliate. Decision makers can be influenced by others, but your strength ultimately depends on having lots of committed members.

Political Dynamics

- Can you identify a potentially favorable majority on the decision making body? How many decision makers are you fairly sure would vote in support? In opposition? How many are you unsure about?
- Is it feasible, given the size of your membership and the effectiveness of your allies, to persuade the decision makers you're unsure about to support your solution?
- Are there any of the key decision makers, particularly the ones on the fence, up for re-election soon?
 - Did those key decision makers win by a large or small margin last time?
- Do you have enough members to be considered a factor?
- Is the decision maker an appointed official whose boss is or could be encouraged to be supportive?

Strategic Opportunities

- Is the concern you're trying to address timely?
- Have you found out from an ally about a source of funding that's available?
- Is there strong potential community support that has not been mobilized yet?
- Is there a proposal already on the table that you could help shape?

Models

- Are there examples of similar solutions working elsewhere?
- Has the solution been implemented in comparable or nearby communities?
- Have similar initiatives been tried in your community before? What happened?

You must be able to state what you want in one sentence:

“We want (what) _____ from (whom) _____ by (when) _____.”

3. Influencing Each Step of the Process

(from *Advocates in Action*)

Knowing the process is critical to knowing when and how to influence policy decisions. The next several sections set forth the fundamentals of the legislative process at the federal level and how advocates can take advantage of each step. The federal and state processes and rules are similar, and advocates should be well informed about both in order for their advocacy efforts to be most effective.

Step 1: Finding a champion to introduce the bill

Sometimes the president or governor is your legislative champion, offering a budget or authorizing legislation that you support. Often, advocates need to cultivate relationships with legislators to encourage them to introduce bills that move forward advocates' agendas. Several considerations arise in choosing your champion:

- Is the person a member of the committee that has jurisdiction over the bill?
- Will the legislator be able to work with members of the other political party to move the legislation forward?
- Will the legislator make the bill one of his or her legislative priorities for the year?
- Does the legislator's staff have a keen interest in, and enough experience to work on, the bill throughout the legislative process?

In your initial meetings with a legislator or his or her staff, you should discuss whether the bill will be one of the legislator's priorities for the year, whether the legislator has ideas for other bipartisan sponsors on or off the committee, and whether the legislator has any special concerns or ideas for the beginning of legislative process. Come prepared to discuss all of the reasons why this particular piece of legislation is needed. Provide as much factual information as possible; anecdotes are useful for engaging a legislator's interest, but in the end, the legislator will need to cite facts to convince other legislators that the legislation will help solve a problem that affects many children and families.

Effective advocates come to a meeting ready to present at least an outline of the legislation they are pushing. At a minimum, during the initial meeting you should be able to give your potential champion or his staff the following information about the legislation you want him or her to sponsor:

- What is the purpose of the bill and what problem does it address?
- Who would benefit?

Step 2: Introducing the bill and getting cosponsors

The legislator will send your materials to the legislative counsel of the House or Senate, who will draft the bill with all of the correct technical language. Afterward, meet with the legislative staff of your champion to make sure that both you and the legislator are satisfied with the language of the bill. You may be faced with a period of negotiation, so determine what your baseline needs are in advance of the discussion.

Once the bill is ready to be introduced, the legislator will probably make a brief written or oral statement on its behalf. Often, the legislator will issue a press release. Your organization or coalition also should issue a press release when the bill is introduced.

Upon its introduction, the bill will be given a bill number. At this point, you should begin seeking additional cosponsors for the legislation.

Your champion may decide to introduce the bill alone or together with other legislators. In either case, once the bill is introduced, you should continue to seek additional cosponsors. The more cosponsors you have, the better your prospects for moving the bill forward until it becomes law.

Your goal in seeking out many cosponsors is to have as many legislators as possible feel committed to the bill. It is always better to have bipartisan support. Find legislators who have a history of signing onto bills or amendments on the same general topic. Encourage constituents to call or write to potential cosponsors to request that they cosponsor the bill. Share your list of potential cosponsors with the sponsor's staff so that the staff can also contact them.

Step 3: Hearings-Getting the word out

Committees and their subcommittees hold numerous hearings during the year. Sometimes a hearing is on a specific piece of legislation; other times, the hearing is meant to provide general information about an issue. The length of hearings and the number of witnesses testifying vary.

The majority and minority members of the committee can select witnesses to invite to provide oral testimony.

Committee hearings are a time to get your word out. You may be called to testify on behalf of an organization, either individually or as part of a panel of witnesses. If so, you must submit written testimony, and you must be prepared to provide your oral testimony in no more than five minutes. You may or may not be questioned by committee members. Again, check the rules if you are testifying before a state legislative committee or regulatory body.

Your written testimony can be any length and serves as a report to the committee. The written testimony should be rich with data, anecdotes (as appropriate), and comments on the proposed language of the legislation. Oral testimony is time limited, so highlight the most important points of why you support the proposed legislative solution. Be candid about any practical problems you see with the proposed legislation: just because you are in favor of the goals of a bill does not mean that it is problem free. (And, indeed, note that the suggestions made in this section apply as well to legislation you oppose: You still may testify at hearings, send written testimony, etc.)

Even if you are not asked to testify, most committees' rules allow individuals and organizations to submit written testimony within two weeks of the date of the hearing. Do not submit testimony just for its own sake: Make sure that you are adding information that would not otherwise come out in the hearing. If your points are made by other witnesses, you can send a letter to the members of the committee supporting that testimony.

This is also an opportune point in the process to work with staff. Provide them with talking points about the bill and questions for witnesses.

Step 4: Markup of the bill-Negotiating changes

The marking up of a bill is one of the most important stages in the legislative process. Markup time is when the committee offers and votes on amendments to the bill.

Generally, you will have only one week's notice that a bill is scheduled to be marked up by a subcommittee or committee. You should find out whether the chair will offer a substitute bill with substantive or only technical changes and whether any other amendments will be offered at that time. If you want changes to the bill, this is your opportunity to work with a sympathetic member of the committee.

Contact a member of the committee and let him or her know what changes your group wants and why they are important. Give the staff the exact language and where it should appear in the bill. If the member agrees to offer your amendment, send a letter of support for the amendment, preferably with the signatures of other groups in your coalition or network, to each member of the committee, urging a vote in favor of the amendment.

If you cannot get a majority of members to agree to vote for the amendment, you may decide not to offer the amendment after all. An advocate and the member of Congress must decide the strategy together: whether the amendment should be withdrawn with a statement, whether it should simply be withdrawn, or whether it should be offered as an amendment to the bill when the bill reaches the floor.

After the committee votes on all the amendments, it takes a final vote on whether to report the bill out favorably to the full chamber. A reprinted bill shows additions to the original in italic type and deletions from the original language with strikethroughs. The committee staff writes a report that accompanies the bill, outlining its legislative history, the rationale for the bill itself and for any amendments to it, and a section-by-section analysis.

Step 5: Floor action-Amendments and passage

Now the majority and minority leaders consult on a schedule for the entire chamber to consider the bill. Whenever possible, the more significant and controversial matters are considered under unanimous-consent agreements limiting debate and time on the measure, any amendments thereto, and any debatable motions relating to it. This is done because debate would otherwise be unlimited.

House and Senate rules for floor consideration differ. Once a bill is on the floor before the Senate or House, any member can amend it. Your group may want to support or oppose these amendments. In either case, write a letter stating your position and send copies to each member of the chamber. Be clear about why you support or oppose the specific amendment.

In the House, any member who wants to offer an amendment to a bill on the floor must first file the amendment before the Rules Committee, which then decides whether to allow the amendment to be offered. By contrast, in the Senate a senator may rise to offer an amendment at any time without notice. As a result, advocates may not always know in advance what amendments will be offered on the Senate floor. Theoretically, the amendment must be germane to the subject matter of the bill, but this rule is liberally interpreted.

Sometimes the majority and minority leaders will agree to a limit on the number of amendments that either party may offer on a bill. This usually happens with important bills of broad scope. It is an effort to keep either side from delaying a vote on final passage by indefinitely offering amendments.

Step 6: Conference negotiations

Sometimes, instead of companion bills moving in parallel in the House and Senate, a bill passes one chamber and is sent directly to the other chamber for a vote.

When the House and Senate pass bills for the same program with differing content, the bills must go to a Conference Committee made up of members from both chambers and from the committees with jurisdiction over the bills. The conferees negotiate only matters that differ in the bills passed in the two chambers. Any language that is identical is not subject to conference; language that is similar is. Sometimes one chamber has entire programs and sections that are not part of the other chamber's companion bill. These can be negotiated and either adopted or deleted from the final report, with or without changes. Any matter that is not germane or that is beyond the scope of the differences between the two bills cannot be added at conference time, nor can conferees use the conference to insert new matters into the bill.

Once the conferees end their negotiations, they issue a conference report that both chambers must approve. Here again, advocates may want to take a position in favor of or in opposition to the conference report. If the conference report is not approved, then it is unlikely that Congress will take up that particular bill again that year.

After all amendments have been voted on, but before the final vote on the bill, a member of the House may offer a motion to recommit the bill, together with instructions, to the committee that reported it out. If your group opposes the legislation, find a champion to offer the motion to recommit. This is essentially the last opportunity to generate calls to ask legislators to oppose the bill by voting in favor of the motion to recommit. If the motion to recommit passes, there is no vote on final passage until the revised bill is reported back from the committee.\

Step 7: Signing or veto

If both bodies vote in favor of the conference report, the bill is sent to the president (or governor if it is a state bill), who has the option to sign or veto the bill. If signed, the bill is given a public law number and becomes statute. If vetoed, then the bill's proponents must decide if they have enough votes to override the veto.

4. Implementation: Regulation and Guidance

(from *Advocates in Action*)

The advocate's role does not end when the legislation is signed into law, for it must still be implemented. Advocates have two primary roles at this stage: helping organizations and the public understand how to implement the new law effectively, and assisting the agency administering the new program or policy to write regulations and guidance to ensure the best outcome is achieved.

Regulations

Regulations are rules promulgated by the executive branch of government, and they have the force of law. These rules help in the administration and enforcement of laws.

Regulations can dramatically affect how a new law is implemented. During the regulatory process, the executive branch can put its stamp on the new statute. When the executive and legislative branches are not of one mind, it is even more important for advocates to engage in the regulatory process.

Regulatory process

There is a process at the federal level and in state governments for promulgating regulations. In general terms, it involves an agency giving public notice of intent to issue regulations followed by an opportunity for the public to comment on the proposed text or outline of the regulation, and finally the issuance of the final text of the regulation.

Over the last decade, the federal government has given more leeway to states in determining how to implement new federal law. This shift in power is known as devolution. As a result, in some

areas such as elementary and secondary education new programs have been created by the legislative branch without accompanying regulations from the executive branch. At the state level, legislation can be very broad and state policymaking culture thus relies much more on regulation.

Advocates should pay equal attention to the regulatory and legislative processes. Working with coalitions that help with the passage of legislation, advocates should be informed about the federal and state regulatory processes and use their grassroots networks to attend and speak at public hearings and submit written comments.

Guidance

It is important for advocates to determine whether the executive branch intends to issue regulations or to provide guidance. Guidance documents do not have the same force as regulations. Like regulation, they are developed by the appropriate agencies and provide information on how to implement a law (as interpreted by the executive branch). Typically, the development of guidance documents does not entail the notice and comment process of regulations, so advocates must make an effort to contact the appropriate agency and try to help shape the final guidance document.

5. A Guide to Legislative Advocacy

(from Voices for Florida's Children, Advocacy Academy, <http://floridakids.org>)

These are “how-to” tips developed by Voices for Florida's Children on effective strategies for legislative advocacy for individuals who are not at the Capitol every day. Since effective advocacy is a 12-month job, the following fits into the category of a year-round homework assignment.

1. Don't be a stranger to your elected officials and their staff. The most persuasive messages come from familiar faces. Know them by name and make sure they know you by name. Anonymity is the antithesis of effectiveness.
2. Introduce yourself at every opportunity. Hand out your business card like candy at Halloween—always have extras. Invite officials to your programs for conversations and photos. Seeing is believing.
3. Always say “thank you” before you say “please.” Even if you disagree with your elected official's positions on some (or even most) issues, they are more likely to listen to you if you've found some way to praise them. If nothing else, thank them for the courage to be a public office holder.
4. A well-written, brief thank you note is always appreciated. Remember, officials get 25 complaints for every compliment. Like the wise maitre'd once said, “Only two types of people welcome an honest compliment—males and females.”
5. Concentrate on principles of policy, rather than the specifics. Trust that your “every day professional advocates” know the details; your job is to set the stage with your elected

officials to improve access for your advocates at the Capitol. The hometown connection is essential to help them listen with both ears.

6. Be concise and to the point. The history of your issue or program needs to be a paragraph or a two-minute presentation. The key to influence is not volume, but precision. Elected officials are not experts, but don't need to be overwhelmed with your knowledge. Have them trust you as someone to turn to.
7. Engage the media (or schmooze the newsies!!) who have the power to send your message far and wide. An expert source is golden to every reporter and editorial/opinion writer—but be careful: they should not perceive you as seeking “publicity.” Once you're viewed as an accessible expert when they're on deadline, you can pitch them ideas anytime.
8. Write Letters to the Editor. Submit guest op-ed columns, and encourage allies to do the same. The opinion pages are read word-for-word by every public official. You have their attention if your case is made in print. Never attack, always attract.
9. Advocacy is focused on the art of compromise, never expect it all. While we strive for unanimity, we work for majority. There's a difference between compromising principles (a no-no) and compromising in policy discussion.
10. While there's strength in diversity, there's power in unity. Bring as many diverse voices to your cause as possible, but reach a unifying message. Agree on the important goals and success will be achieved.

6. How Do You Get What You Want from Decision Makers?

(Adapted from the *Chapter Handbook* by Stand for Children)

1. BE STRONG AND ORGANIZED

Given that elected officials are fundamentally concerned with re-election or higher office—which requires votes—the most critical thing you can do to gain influence is to build a large, well-organized membership, which represents votes. Remember: the fundamental reason why children aren't a priority is because they lack power, not because decision makers aren't aware of their needs. If you have organized, you will have enough clout to be listened to and to get what you want for children from decision makers.

2. BE KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT THE ISSUES

Sharing firsthand testimony about the concerns you are working to address builds your credibility, as does having your research and bringing accurate information about potential solutions (what they cost, what outcomes will result, and how the solution will work). However, raising decision makers' awareness or just sharing research is not enough.

3. BE DIRECT AND RESPECTFUL

While our culture encourages us not to be direct, if you don't ask directly for what you want for children, you will never get a specific commitment from a decision maker. The goal is accountability—you want the decision makers you elect and whose salaries you fund with your tax dollars to go on record in support of children. If you are disrespectful, you alienate the decision maker, the public, and your own members.

4. BE KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT THE RULES OF THE GAME

You are always learning, so it is fine to ask decision makers questions about the decision making process, but the more you know ahead of time about when and how decisions are made, the better impression you will make on decision makers.

5. FOLLOW A DISCIPLINED PROTOCOL

- If possible, go with a team. Because when you bring a group:
 - Members feel more confident.
 - A public statement is harder for decision makers to retract.
 - It helps to have less confusion about what happened and what was really said.
 - It helps develop the leadership and commitment of more Affiliate members.
- Maintain formality. One tactic that decision makers use to prevent you from holding them accountable is to encourage you to relate to them in a personal way. If you feel sympathetic for them as private people, you are reluctant to force them to make difficult public choices. This is why you use decision makers' titles (i.e.: Congressman Jones, Mayor Smith) and not their first names and that is why you do not share meals.
- Plan your meetings to make sure you have clear goals, a clear agenda, and clear roles. When you meet with a decision maker to determine whether your solution is winnable, do so in a structured, organized way.
 1. Know exactly what you want to accomplish in the meeting.
 2. Have a clear agenda.
 3. Assign different members to roles based on their strengths.
 4. Practice and prepare by role playing.
 5. Have a briefing before the meeting to go over the goals, agenda, and roles.
 6. Evaluate afterward to arrive at a common interpretation of what happened, learn lessons, and figure out next steps.
- Dress professionally.

7. Preparing to Meet with a Policy Maker

There are different purposes to meeting with a policymaker. If this is your first meeting, you are trying to set a positive tone on which to build a relationship. This meeting focuses on raising the visibility of the affiliate, who it is and what its primary public policy concerns are, what "niche"

and special expertise the affiliate can bring to help the policymaker, and how to stay in contact on an ongoing basis.

Other meetings are for a specific policy purpose: commenting on legislation or proposed regulation; talking about an upcoming vote of the legislature or a council; trying to get a policymaker to introduce legislation; helping to shape upcoming hearings and other events that support a public policy proposal.

Here is some guidance on an effective meeting:

Plan Your Visit Carefully:

Be clear about what it is you want to achieve; determine in advance which member or committee staff you need to meet with to achieve your purpose. In advance, you should have checked any prior votes on legislation or proposals that the policymaker has put forward.

Make an Appointment:

No one likes people to “stop by” unannounced. When you do so, you are likely to get the cold shoulder. Always contact the office to set up a meeting even with staff. This shows respect for their time, and makes it more likely that you will meet with the right person(s). When you request the meeting, be sure to give the name of the organization, the purpose of the meeting, and how many people will be attending it.

Be Prompt and Patient:

When it is time to meet, be punctual and be patient. It is not uncommon in a busy governor’s or legislator’s office to have to wait because of constantly changing schedules. It is up to you to be professional in this situation. You can either wait a while and see if the meeting will still go forward within a reasonable time, or leave materials and contact information. If interruptions do occur, be flexible. Also, be prepared and willing to speak with staff. Since the staff does the background work and often makes the recommendations, it is not a snub necessarily to have the meeting changed from the actual policymaker to his or her staff.

Be Prepared:

Whenever possible, bring to the meeting information and materials supporting your position. Not everyone you visit will be well-informed or have past experience in the issues. Materials should be brief and concise, with information on how to receive additional reports if desired. Anticipate questions. If you don’t know something, don’t make it up. You can always provide the information in another day or two to ensure its accuracy and your credibility.

Be Political:

Wherever possible, demonstrate the connection between what you are requesting and the interests of the policymaker’s constituency. How does this issue affect the district, the county, or the state?

Be Concrete:

Be clear on your “demand” and ask for a commitment. Do you want the legislator to vote yes or no on an upcoming bill? Do you want him/her to cosponsor legislation? In many cases, the response will be “I don’t know yet.” Having asked, however, puts you in the position of following up more strategically.

Follow Up:

Follow up the meeting with a thank you letter that outlines the different points covered during the meeting, and send along any additional information and materials requested. If you asked for a commitment but did not get one, repeat the request and note that you look forward to a response.

CHAPTER FIVE

ADVOCACY MATERIALS

1. Your Data and Materials to Back Up Your “Ask”

Written information that is concise, brief and takes up only one issue at a time can be helpful in your advocacy. Information is not advocacy in itself; it is the tool for being persuasive. Here are some examples of the kinds of issue briefs the affiliate can create for handing out to policymakers and the public to build your case.

2. Issue Briefs

[State Affiliate name] *Policy Brief*

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION OF QUALIFIED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

Background

The demand for early childhood services has grown dramatically in recent years, given profound changes in family employment patterns and the increasing recognition of the importance of early education. High-quality early childhood programs depend upon three basic needs being met: high-quality programming for children, equitable compensation for staff, and affordable services for families. Nonetheless, there remains a persistent undervaluing of the work performed by early childhood professionals. When early childhood teachers and other professionals do not receive adequate compensation in good working conditions, children suffer the consequences.

Compensation is grossly inadequate.

The average annual starting salary for child care center workers is \$13,125 [replace with your state’s average salary]. Only 20% of child care centers offer fully paid health insurance to staff. The U.S. Department of Labor reports that child care workers are among the lowest paid workers in the United States, even though they have a higher education level than the average U.S. worker.

Inadequate compensation impacts the recruitment and retention of qualified teachers.

Annual turnover rate is more than 30% for child care teachers. Research shows that high staff turnover is a factor associated with poorer-quality programs and poorer child outcomes in language and social skills.

A significant investment is needed to ensure a more-qualified, stable early childhood workforce.

Research links the professional preparation and ongoing developing of qualified early childhood teachers to the overall quality of early childhood programs. For all children are to reap the benefits

of a high quality early childhood education, there must be a significant investment in the preparation and ongoing professional development opportunities of early childhood educators.

Policy Recommendations

In order to strengthen the quality of early childhood programs, policymakers in [state] must address the recruitment and retention of qualified child care staff by –

- Providing salary supplements for child care teachers that obtain higher credentials and degrees, and provide bonuses for those qualified teachers that remain in the field.
- Providing scholarships, grants, and loan forgiveness for early childhood staff so that they can obtain additional training and education.
- Developing mechanisms to allow child care staff to participate in health insurance and pension programs.
- Ensuring that child care quality improvement initiatives include resources for the recruitment, compensation, and retention of high quality early childhood staff.

Examples of Promising Strategies In Other States

Across the country a number of state and local initiatives are being used to address the crisis in the recruitment and retention of qualified early childhood program educators. The following are just a few examples. **[Delete examples below from your state or move it to the “background” section of the brief]**

Professional Development Incentives

- *T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood*® *Project (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps)* piloted in North Carolina and now implemented in 16 states, provides scholarships and bonuses to child care educators pursuing a degree or Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. The program involves a public-private partnership and requires a commitment from the provider to stay in the field.
- *The California Early Childhood Mentor Program*, operating in 64 community colleges, provides a stipend of roughly \$1,700 and an additional \$500 for early childhood staff who complete training to become on-site mentors of other early childhood teachers.

Wage Supplements

- *The North Carolina Child Care WAGE\$ Project* provides direct salary supplements up to \$3,000 a year to early childhood professionals (family child care providers and center staff including teachers and directors) who have a degree or Child Development Associate credential and commit to staying in the field.
- *The San Francisco CARES (Compensation and Retention Encourage Stability)* program is a local initiative that provides \$1.5 million in funding to support a corps of highly qualified early childhood professionals in all settings. Participants receive an annual salary supplement ranging from \$500 to \$6000 that increases as they pursue additional education.

Program Supplements

- *The Washington State Child Care Career and Wage Ladder* is a state pilot project. Employees of participating child care centers will be paid at differential rates depending on their job responsibilities, education, and years of experience. Centers must adopt the state's career and wage ladder specifying a base salary and wage increments for education and experience.

- *The Rhode Island statewide RItE Care* makes state health insurance programs for low-income families available to family child care and licensed child care center staff if their early childhood programs serve subsidized families.

For more information refer to NAEYC's Position Statements *Guidelines for the Compensation of Early Childhood Professionals* and *Quality, Compensation and Affordability*, available online at <http://www.naeyc.org>

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State affiliate is a membership organization of early childhood professionals working to improve professional practice and working conditions in early childhood education, and to build public support for high-quality early childhood programs.

3. State Fact Sheets

Ensuring the Well-Being of Our Children and Families

Federal, state and local government, communities, parents, and the private sector must share in the responsibility of ensuring the well-being of children and families. [STATE NAME] can and must do better to create opportunities that help all children and families succeed. We can invest now in our children and families and enjoy long-term savings, with a more vibrant nation of healthy, achieving children and more stable families. Or, we can fail to make the investment and pay the price; increased delinquency, greater educational failures, lowered productivity, less economic competitiveness, and fewer adults prepared to be effective, loving parents to the next generation of children. The time for action is now.

Working families need child care and supportive employer policies to be able to meet the needs of their young children throughout the day.

- In the United States the majority of mothers with children under age 18 work, including 59% of those with infants and 74% of those with school-aged children. **[Insert state/local data]**
- Approximately 13 million infants, toddlers, and preschool children are regularly in non-parental care in the United States, including 45% of children younger than one year. **[Insert state/local data]**
- The Census Bureau reports that approximately 50% of working families rely on child care providers to help them care for their children while they work; 25% rely on relatives for child care; and nearly 25% arrange work schedules so that no child care is needed (e.g. parents work different hours or days; one parent works during school hours and is home after school). **[Insert state/local data]**

Children, especially those from low-income families, need better access to high- quality early childhood programs.

- Research shows that high-quality early childhood programs help children—especially those from families with low-incomes—develop the skills they need to succeed in school. However, most programs in the United States are rated mediocre, and fewer than 10% meet national accreditation standards. **[Insert state/local data]**
- Across the nation child care fees average \$4,000 to \$10,000 per year, exceeding the cost of public universities in most states. Yet, nationally only 1 in 10 children who are financially eligible for child care subsidies is being served, and only 41% of 3 and 4 year old children living in poverty are enrolled in preschool, compared to 58% of those whose families have higher incomes. **[Insert state/local data]**
- Communities are becoming increasingly diverse and in order for early childhood educators to be effective they must be sensitive and responsive to children’s cultural and linguistic backgrounds. If current population trends continue, by the year 2010 55% of

America's children will be white, 22% will be Hispanic, 16% will be black, and 6% will be of Asian or Pacific Island. **[Insert state/local data]**

Too many children in the United States live in poverty, without good nutrition and health care.

- In the United States 18% of children under age 18 and 24% of children under age 6 live in poverty. It is estimated that 12 million children do not have enough food to meet their basic needs and approximately 3.2 million are suffering from hunger. **[Insert state/local data]**
- In the United States 15% of children under age 18—and 24% of those living in poverty—are not covered by health insurance. **[Insert state/local data]**
- Approximately one-third of children and nearly one-half of black children born in the United States have at least one health risk at birth. **[Insert state/local data]**
- More than 20% of 2-year-olds in the United States are not fully immunized. **[Insert state/local data]**

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[State Affiliate name] is a membership organization of early childhood professionals working to improve the professional practice and working conditions in early childhood education, and to build public support for high-quality early childhood programs.

4. National and State Data Sources

Annie E. Casey Foundation: produces an annual *Kids Count* report that provides state-by-state data on key indicators of children's well being. Visit their web site for online access to all the data at <http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/kc2000/> or call them at 410-547-6600.

Children's Defense Fund: produces a number of reports on an annual basis about children and how states are meeting their needs. Visit their web site at <http://www.childrensdefense.org> to access state data and profiles or call them at 202-628-8787.

Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics: releases an annual report entitled, *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being*. Go to their web site at <http://www.childstats.gov> or call the National Maternal Child Health Clearinghouse at 703-356-1964 to obtain the report.

National Center for Education Statistics: provides online access to education databases and updates national statistics on an annual basis in reports, such as *The Condition of Education*. Visit their website at <http://nces.ed.gov/> or call them at 202-502-7300 for more information.

National Child Care Information Center: provides links to child care research, state child care profiles and a searchable, online database with state-by-state information about children and child care. Visit them online at <http://nccic.org> or call them at 800-616-2242.

National Education Goals Panel: provides data about national and state-by-state progress in achieving the eight National Education Goals, including *State Scorecards*. Visit them online at <http://www.negp.gov> or call them at 202-724-0015 or 202-632-0957.

For more information visit NAEYC's web site at <http://www.naeyc.org>.

CHAPTER SIX

WORKING WITH OTHERS IN COALITION

There is power in numbers, and more resources too. NAEYC does not expect its Affiliates to work on policy issues alone, nor do we expect them to always take the lead in advocacy in their states and local communities. Every state and local community has other groups working on early childhood education issues. The task for Affiliates is to seek out these other groups, find out about their particular focus, and forge strategic relationships when possible.

This chapter focuses on building coalitions. It includes tips on how to work in coalition with other organizations, suggested groups that would make strong partners in this work, actions for Affiliate Policy Committees, and resources on how to link to other organizations. There is a list of Community Allies included, which contains web links and details about how to find out if there are state and/or local chapters of these organizations.

1. Building Coalitions

Policy advocacy can be most effective when groups work together in coalition. The most powerful coalitions are often those that combine groups that are traditionally not seen as direct stakeholders in the advocacy effort.

When looking for groups to work with on a particular issue, Public Policy Committees can discuss these questions:

- Who is already engaged in this issue?
- Who can bring additional resources (not just financial), clout, or expertise, to the effort?
- Has the Committee reached out to groups beyond early childhood education, such as community health centers, nurses, disability advocates, organized labor, business, or industry? Which groups are contacted will depend on the nature of the issue.

Effective coalitions are stable and formal. Regular meetings should be held, to share information, and keep everyone connected to each other and to the agenda. Every organization should designate one or more representatives who will commit to attending these meetings on a regular basis.

Choosing coalition partners is an important part of a strategic plan. A method of forming a coalition is to identify other groups that have some or all of the same interests. As long as there is some common objective shared by all the groups, the potential exists to form a coalition.

- One approach is to jointly develop and agree upon a **mission statement** and set of **guiding principles** for the coalition. All potential members must agree to these principles, even if there are differing opinions on specific issues.

Examples of State Organizations

Three key national organizations have members/offices in states. These state organizations are natural partners in coalitions with NAEYC affiliates. Each has resources—trainings, materials, and staff with advocacy experience— which Public Policy Committees can access.

- **Voices for America’s Children:** www.childadvocacy.org
Forty-four (44) member organizations across the states, many focus on early childhood education issues. These state organizations provide advocacy training and have many resources that AEYC affiliates can access.
- **National PTA:** www.pta.org
The National PTA has state and local offices that work on federal, state and local policies that impact children and their families from birth through higher education.
- **Children’s Defense Fund:** www.childrensdefense.org
CDF has offices in eight states and six local communities. Each office has a different focus within the mission of CDF, but some do work on child care and early education issues.
- **Stand for Children:** www.standforchildren.org
Chapters in local communities in six states. Chapters are local, citizen-lead, child advocacy groups.

2. Nontraditional Partners to Consider

(from *Advocates in Action*)

- **Parents:** Because parents are a child’s first advocates, they often make good advocates for all children in the community. Organized they are a very powerful voice. Parents are also an authentic voice seeking quality child care and school reform. Public officials often treat parents not only as concerned citizens, but also as influential constituents. State PTA organizations are potential partners.
- **Health care practitioners, law enforcement officials, and other professionals:** Having professionals in other fields as partners shows that your agenda is not motivated by self-interest. Such professionals can provide more data, expert witnesses on a range of topics, and connections to other families and community leaders.
- **Community-based and faith-based organizations:** These organizations, especially those that provide human or social services, often share the same concerns and can strengthen advocacy efforts by such activities as disseminating information in their newsletters.
- **Business:** Business leaders can be strong allies in advocacy efforts. There are a number of sound reasons for engaging the business community:
 - When business leaders speak, people—especially policy makers—listen. The public’s perception is that business leaders understand good investments and avoid “waste.”
 - Business leaders are unexpected messengers on issues dealing with children and families.

- Business leaders often have political and media contacts that early childhood education advocates have not been able to reach or convince.
- **Labor unions:** Unions have taken on issues of pay equity and workplace conditions that intersect with early childhood education concerns. Several unions have a long history of working on public policies to support well funded, quality child care and public schools and paid family leave. There are a number of reasons for engaging labor unions:
 - Labor unions have a history of advocating for better pay, family and medical leave, and other social issues at the state and national level.
 - They know how to organize people, whether it is recruiting new members to rallying members around an activity or issue.
 - Unions have at least one full-time lobbyist and a public relations expert—and sometimes many more—in each state affiliate.
 - Labor unions represent millions of workers and support not only issues that affect their members directly, such as access to affordable, quality child care, but also those affecting the working conditions of other workers, such as child care staff.
 - Because labor unions do campaign work, they conduct polling and focus groups and often have access to media that can enlarge a coalition’s efforts.

3. Checklist for the Affiliate in Forming/Joining Coalitions

- Ensure participation reflects affiliate priorities and policy program
- Ensure coalitions participation reflects birth-age 8 membership needs/concerns
- Know what the affiliate’s role in the coalition will be: lead, partner in message and strategy decisions, information dissemination
- Consider the resource allocation: is every coalition equal in the amount of time, staffing, and materials development?
- Have designated persons represent the affiliate at the coalitions so there is a visible, recognizable affiliate presence and voice

Tips on Coalition Building

(from Citizens for Missouri's Children, www.mokids.org)

Organizations join coalitions because of a simple fact of politics in a democracy: there is strength in numbers! Coalitions give advocates greater collective power because they maximize the strengths of the various organizations that are involved.

Often, coalitions are formed on a temporary basis to deal with a pressing issue and they dissolve upon completion of an issue campaign. Individual organizations must decide whether their views and interests are expressed and served by a particular coalition. If they are, the organization must then decide at what level it will be involved in the work of a coalition. Some groups simply endorse a coalition's mission and do little else beyond lending the credibility of their name; others will play an active role in the coalition's campaign, and still others will serve as full-fledged coalition partners, taking active leadership roles.

An organization level of involvement typically depends on the importance of the coalition's issue to the organization, the resources the organization brings to bear, and the strengths and weaknesses of the other groups affiliated with the coalition.

Tips on Coalition Building:

- Ask the key questions:
What does my organization bring to the coalition?
What benefits do we gain by joining—what do we gain?
How can we build relationships through this coalition?
What are the downsides of joining the coalition?
- Be clear about commitments and structure.
How formal will the coalition be?
Will you sign an endorsement letter?
How are decisions made; how will your organization's name be used?
How does your organization leave the coalition, if necessary?
- After forming a coalition, create an information packet that includes:
Cover letter explaining mission and issue positions;
Supporting materials (fact sheets, news clips, etc.)
List of Endorsing Organizations
(This issue packet can be used to inform the media, recruit new organizations, organize the grassroots, and educate decision makers.)
- Use the support you've built:
Organize a news conference
Send the endorsement list to targeted decision makers
Update and expand the endorser list

CHAPTER SEVEN

ACTIONS THAT INCREASE VISIBILITY AND ADVOCACY

There are a number of specific activities that Affiliates can organize in their states and local communities that promote awareness of an issue or call for action from policymakers.

Here are some examples of how to conduct different attention-demanding activities to supplement your ongoing advocacy and communications work.

1. Virtual Lobby Days

Not everyone can go visit his or her legislators or Congressional offices in person. As part of a strategic decision, an organization or coalition may need to get hundreds of contacts to a policymaker's office on a specific day, such as a day before a vote on a bill. Instead of everyone arriving at the state or federal Capitol, you can alert your grassroots to call or email the appropriate policymaker on a given day.

For example, a group of national organizations decided to designate March 4th as a national call-in day for child care funding with the US Congress in 2002 and 2003. The theme was "March Forth on March 4th," with a logo of baby shoes. The fields of each organization were contacted with the day to call, instructions on how to reach their members of Congress, and a sample message for the call. Although there was no vote that week, the purpose of the virtual lobby day was to raise attention to the issue of inadequate federal child care funding with as many voices as possible in every state and district.

2. Visits to Early Childhood Programs

(Excerpt from *Strengthen America: Invest in Early Education, Event Planning Kit*, Stand for Children, 2002)

This piece from Stand for Children talks about inviting members of Congress for visits to early childhood education programs when they are on recess. These tips can also be used for inviting State Legislators, who are in the local area year-round.

The point of a site visit is to raise awareness, debunk myths, and show strong community support. Too few elected officials understand the connection between high quality early education and school readiness. In addition, many have misconceptions about the realities of child care programs. Many think that because parents pay high tuition that centers are well resourced. Others think that teachers are well paid. Still others lack a clear concept of how greater public investments would specifically matter.

The following are some tips to help you plan an effective visit.

Scheduling:

- Plan the visit to maximize decision-maker attendance and attract media attention.
- Decision-makers are more likely to attend if you:
 1. Expect media attention.
 2. Will have large voter (parent) turnout.
 3. Have a relationship with them or can get someone with a relationship with them to ask them to come.

Visit Planning:

It is critical to plan a visit that *reinforces* the core message you want to relay. What makes a good visit?

- The site is a high quality program, but has clear struggles with regard to resources, compensation, affordability, etc.
- There is an opportunity to interact with parents and children, which will give a greater sense of urgency than just talking with administrators.
- Center administrators are well prepared.
- The program serves a mix of children and families. Visit programs that serve a diverse group of children. This will avoid generalizations about services only being needed by a specific group of people.
- A brief, well-planned presentation with ample opportunities for dialogue.

Activity:

- Attendees can be brought closer to the issue through interactive experiences. For example, sitting in little chairs with children in structured time (such as breakfast or story time) can be effective.
- If all visitors cannot be seated with the children, take part of the group on a tour of the facility before bringing them back to interact with the children.

Message:

- It is critical to convey a message that transcends the specific site, so that the elected official(s) walks away with a greater understanding about local child care needs, not just a specific opinion about one child care center they visited. All written materials and staff must be “on message” in order to make sure the focus stays on:
 1. The connection between the quality of a child’s early education experience and their school readiness.

2. The challenges that all child care providers face, i.e., attracting and retaining qualified staff, keeping tuition affordable for working families, having enough resources to operate quality programs.
 3. The urgent need for greater national investments this year.
- Give legislators written materials. Keep materials brief—i.e., a one-page fact sheet that highlights the message you want the legislator to take away.
 - Thank participants for taking the time to visit.
 - After showing them the center and sharing the challenges involved in delivering high quality early education with so few resources, ask any visiting members of Congress directly to vote in support of funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant [or, for state legislators, more state dollars invested in early childhood education].

3. Community Forum, Event, or Rally

There are some days in the year that present natural opportunities for public awareness and public policy events, such as Week of the Young Child, Worthy Wage Day, and affiliate conferences.

Below is an excerpt from *Strengthen America: Invest in Early Education, Event Planning Kit*, Stand for Children, 2002 with the steps for organizing a community event.

STEP 1: Decide the Program and Secure Key Participants.

Determine the program and identify community members to participate, potentially including a well-known community leader to speak or emcee the program in order to increase the event's appeal. Consider inviting local organizations working on early education issues to set up table at the event to share their information. Make sure you aren't planning your event at the same time as any other major events that would hurt your turnout.

STEP 2: Choose the Site.

A good site can make or break an event. How can you ensure that you select a good site?

When you are considering various sites, ask the following questions:

Site appeal

- Are people familiar with the site? People are much more likely to attend if the location is familiar.
- Does the site reinforce the message of your event? Consider places which focus on the needs of young children or which are familiar to parents of young children.

- Is the site a comfortable space for all people from your community? Consider places where people from all backgrounds would feel comfortable.

Accessibility

- Is there adequate parking?
- Is the site accessible by public transportation?
- Is the site accessible to people with disabilities?
- Is there a place for a sign-language interpreter to stand?

Space

- Can the site accommodate the number of people you expect to attend?
- Will you be able to fill the space? It looks better to have people fill a small area than spread across a large area.
- Is there a place for kids to play or to set up child care?
- Is there wall space for signs?
- Does the site already have equipment that you will need?
_____ Chairs _____ Tables _____ Platform _____ Outlets
- Are there three-prong outlets for sound equipment?
- Are there microphones? How many?

Program

- Will the site accommodate the program you have planned?
- Is there a lot of noise around the site or in the building?

Miscellaneous

- Are there restrooms?
- Is it air-conditioned?
- Does the site have any unusual factor that will create a problem? For instance, does the room have pillars that may block people's views?
- Does the site require any special permits, certificates of insurance, or a user fee?

It is important to do preliminary thinking about your event preparations.

Look closely at the work ahead of you and consider the following questions:

- How much time will you need to set up for the event?
- Do you need volunteers to assist with the setup?
- Do you need to bring supplies or equipment?
- Do you have visual aids that will demonstrate the message of the event?

2003 Missouri Advocacy Day

For more than 20 years, the Missouri Alliance for Children, Youth, and Families has coordinated an annual Advocacy Day in the state capital. Traditionally, the Advocacy Day is held on the last Tuesday of January each year. The planning for the 2003 Advocacy Day was led by the Missouri AEYC.

Spreading the Word

To let people know about the 2003 Advocacy Day, the organizers created a flyer that went out to early childhood programs in communities across the state. They also developed a letter informing legislators of the day and a poster for them to hang on their doors. Volunteers walked the State House and hand-delivered these letters to each office. Media releases were also developed to spark interest in the day and media attention. The Governor was invited to speak at the end of the day. Funds from a private foundation supported the outreach efforts.

Advocacy Day Activities

The day began with a morning speaker—the Director of the Department of Social Services—and the presentation of Child Advocate Awards in the Capitol Rotunda. Following the opening, there were two periods of workshops on a variety of advocacy issues (see attached).

Throughout the day, participants made visits to their Senators and Representatives. Participants were encouraged to make appointments ahead of time, but those who did not could take materials to the offices of their legislators. Legislators were given lapel pins to wear to signify their interest and commitment to children's issues. Also, each year one of the organizations in the Missouri Alliance for Children, Youth, and Families presents dolls to the legislators, who are supposed to give the dolls to an early childhood program in their community.

In the afternoon, the participants gathered in the front of the building where the workshops were held and marched to the Capitol. Signs were distributed and the group chanted, "We care about kids...Yes we do! We care about kids...They need you!" as they marched. The culminating event was an address by the Governor on the steps of the Capitol at the end of the day.

Outcomes from the Day

- Large attendance—More than 800 people attended the 2003 Advocacy Day. This was the largest crowd in the history of the event.
- Recognition for the Missouri AEYC—As the lead organizer of the Advocacy Day, awareness was raised on their efforts on behalf of children and families.
- Media attention—several newspapers and other media covered the event.
- Visibility for the issues—After the Advocacy Day, lobbyists could refer back to the event and claim that 800 people were speaking out on the issues of early childhood education.
- Momentum—The success of the 2003 Advocacy Day has sparked enthusiasm for next year's event.

Lessons Learned

- Reserve all of the public space for the event. Other groups may piggy-back on your event and the full impact won't be as strong due to confusion over which participants are there for the different events, and other similar issues.
- Make yourselves visible. Don't be afraid to be loud. A march with a chant can be very effective.
- Give the legislators something to wear or put up on their offices to show their support. Lapel pins and posters were used in Missouri. The posters were seen on office doors well past the date of the Advocacy Day.
- Find a way to recognize the legislative staff, who are the gatekeepers to the legislators. Often the staffs are women, who may understand the early childhood education issues and could have some influence on their bosses.

For more information, contact:

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MO AEYC Public Policy Co-chair
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4. Week Of The Young Child

The Week of the Young Child is an annual celebration that is sponsored by NAEYC. NAEYC designates the Week of the Young Child dates and theme, but events are planned and implemented by local communities. Celebrations are organized and coordinated by regional, state, and local NAEYC Affiliates, and by individual early childhood programs and community organizations providing services to young children and families.

The purpose of the Week of the Young Child is to focus public attention on the needs of young children and their families and to recognize the early childhood programs and services that meet those needs.

Your Week of the Young Child celebration may be large or small—whatever works best for your program or community. In some communities, the Week has become a huge event, eagerly awaited by children, families, and community leaders alike. In other places the celebration is much smaller and more narrowly focused. The key is to determine the level of celebration that your group will be able to implement successfully and then build from there.

5. Worthy Wage Day

Worthy Wage Day – May 1 of each year – is a good time to raise public awareness about the inadequate wages and compensation of the child care field, and how this problem leads to difficulties in recruiting and keeping good staff. Many organizations and child care programs use the day for public policy advocacy as well as general education. For example, you could hold a rally at the state capitol or work with a local paper’s editorial board to have them write about child care compensation and teacher quality issues that day.

Examples of Worthy Wage Day activities can be found at http://www.ccw.org/about_WWpacket.html

CHAPTER EIGHT

COMMUNICATING WITH THE MEDIA

When taking a position on a piece of legislation or calling attention to a critical issue in early childhood education, Affiliates need to know how to work with their local media to have their opinions transmitted widely. Being effective at this level involves strategy and a clear idea of what message you want to relay. Members of the media often have little time to learn a subject—NAEYC Affiliates must serve as well-prepared experts on the issues you know best.

This chapter includes tips on how to work with the media, writing letters and opinion articles, and answering questions when reporters call you. Included are sample press releases and opinion letters that can be used as templates and models.

1. Tips on Communicating with the Media

The first step in working with the news media is recognizing how many people haven't heard of our organizations, and aren't aware of the benefits of high-quality early childhood education. When people don't know about us, our advocacy work is even more difficult. The best way to build awareness of – and support for – our organizations and issues is through the news media.

The second step is understanding that reporters work under very tight deadlines, and under considerable stress. Recognizing those deadlines, and helping reporters meet them, will help you bring your issues and ideas to a much broader audience.

Whenever you communicate with reporters, consider the following tips:

Know what you want to say

You won't get your message across if it's not clear in your own mind. Write down the two or three most important points you want to make. Keep them short and to the point.

Say it well

Reporters don't like boring quotes. Use a brief but powerful metaphor or anecdote. Back your message with data from credible sources.

Say it clearly

Jargon is a barrier to communicating with reporters – and the public. Don't use shorthand terms or acronyms. Describe issues in everyday language.

Say it again

When you find a clear and effective way to make your point, stick with it. Avoid getting in extended discussions about other details of early childhood education. To make sure a reporter gets your main message, stay on that message.

Become a resource

Respect deadlines and provide good information (and if you can't, suggest others who can.) Reporters will learn they can rely on you in the future.

Reach out

Reach out to reporters. Build relationships. It's important to respond when reporters call, but you also need to contact them proactively, suggesting issues and ideas they should consider for future reports.

2. Communicating with the Media in Writing

Your written materials must clearly convey your key messages, but to attract the interest of reporters, they must also be newsworthy to the general public. Consider new developments and trends you can highlight that will be news to people in your community. For example:

- A new early childhood education center in your area.
- Rising local demand for high-quality child care/infant care/after-hours care.
- How your community or state compares to national trends or studies.

Writing news releases

When you write a news release, keep your message clear and concise. A news release should always be written like a news report – in an “inverted pyramid,” with the biggest point at the top, followed by supporting facts in order of significance. If reporters don't get your message from your headline and first paragraph, they probably won't read any further.

Reporters and editors thrive on hard numbers, so support your messages with credible data – either from your organization or from another recognized source.

Include a quote from a leader of your organization, stating your message in clear and strong language (for example – “The growth of NAEYC accredited programs in our state shows more people recognize how high-quality child care gives young children a great start on learning,” said Jane Smith.)

In your headlines, use clear and powerful words. Reporters will be more interested in

DRAMATIC GROWTH IN HIGH-QUALITY CHILD CARE

than they will in

INCREASE IN ACCREDITED EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

(Don't go overboard – support your rhetoric with facts.)

Include contact information (a name, phone number and e-mail) on the release, so that reporters can call with questions.

Your news release should be less than two pages, and ideally less than one and a half. If it's longer, your message isn't clear – on the page or in your own thoughts.

Writing opinion articles and letters to the editor

News releases are usually tied to a news event or an important trend. When you are trying to build interest in a public policy issue – and especially among policy makers – opinion articles and letters to the editor are another good strategy.

(See samples that follow)

The most important thing to include in an opinion article is an opinion. To get the interest of the op/ed page editor, you need to take a strong position on an issue that prompts different viewpoints.

Check if your newspaper has guidelines for opinion articles and letters to the editors. Many require articles and letters to be a particular length. Newspapers usually have a fax number and/or e-mail address specifically for submitting opinion articles and letters. Make sure to include your name, organization and city in your materials (and your phone number, in case they have questions.)

The basic guidelines for opinion articles are the same as for news releases. Make your message clear and strong, and put it at the beginning of your article. Support your arguments with facts, and especially with data. However, an opinion article should conclude differently than a news release, often with a 'call to action' or a clear re-statement of the main point.

A letter to the editor, usually in response to a published news article or editorial, is another way to build awareness of your organization and your position on a particular issue.

Like an opinion article, a letter to the editor is more likely to be published if you take a stand. Although there is no headline or title, you should frame your argument as you would in an opinion article, with your main thesis at the beginning, followed by supporting points and data.

3. Communicating with the Media by Phone

News releases, fact sheets and other printed material are important for putting your messages on record. Reporters can refer to them when writing an article to make sure they are presenting your points correctly, and can file them for future stories.

But reporters get stacks of news releases every day, and most end up in the garbage. After you've worked hard on your news release, don't let it get lost in the clutter. Pick up the phone and contact reporters directly about your ideas.

- Don't leave a message, because reporters get far too many of those as well.

- Get directly to your main message. Don't take a long time to introduce yourself or your organization – you can do that after you've interested the reporter in your issue.
- Once you get a dialogue going, use your supporting information and data. Each time you introduce a new example or point, tie it back to your main message.
- Don't talk too long. Keep your remarks concise.
- After you've finished the conversation, follow up by sending your news release and other information you discussed with the reporter.
- Be persistent, but not a pest. Remember that reporters are under deadline. Don't call a reporter late in the day (or late in the week) when they may be rushing to complete a story – unless they've called you for help. Try calling in the morning, when they may have more time to think about your story idea.
- Don't call too frequently. Call once with a really good idea rather than a dozen times with mediocre ideas.

Three Essential Steps to Communicating with the Media:

Know your audience – think about helping reporters do their job.

Keep your message short, clear and interesting – no jargon.

Pick up the phone – respond to their calls and make your own.

4. Actions for the Affiliate Public Policy Committee in Media Relations

- Designate spokesperson(s) with media.
- Designate person(s) to develop and disseminate press releases in consultation with public policy and President.
- Create press kit about affiliate.
- Develop local media list.

5. Sample Press Releases, Memos, and Op-Ed's

[Sample Press Release]

For more information, contact

[Insert Media Contact and Affiliate name]

[Insert phone number and e-mail address]

EDUCATORS URGE GOVERNOR [Name] TO START EARLY Early Childhood Education Called Key to School Improvement

[Community name], January 1, 2001 – As Governor [name] prepares for the upcoming State of the State address, a leading organization of early childhood educators in the state is urging **him/her** to make high quality early learning programs for young children a priority in **his/her** agenda and budget.

“Early years are learning years. If we want our children to succeed in school, we must support their development and learning before they reach the school house door,” said [Affiliate president name], the president of the [State Affiliate] Association for the Education of Young Children. “High-quality early childhood education provides children with a foundation for learning, and we urge the Governor to support families by helping to raise the quality of early childhood programs in [state].”

In the past few years, Governors across the nation have promoted better education for young children by funding a wide variety of initiatives. Most states invest in prekindergarten programs; 25 states provide higher subsidies to child care providers that meet quality standards; and 16 states fund a T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® project to provide scholarships and bonuses to child care teachers who acquire a degree or other credential and commit to staying in the field after they complete their education.

[Use the following statement if it applies to your state]. In [state] the [state early childhood initiative] is currently serving [number of children]. This is a good step toward improving the early learning opportunities in [state]. However, funding is inadequate to serve all the children who are eligible for the program and [Affiliate name] is urging the Governor to expand the program. In addition, they recommend [Provide specific information about an initiative your affiliate will be pushing this year.]

The [Affiliate name] advocates a comprehensive effort to improve the access to and quality of early childhood education, including:

- Providing professional development opportunities and adequate compensation for teachers and staff;
- Improving the health and safety of programs;
- Using developmentally appropriate practices to encourage literacy and learning from birth;
- Supporting the family's crucial role in early education; and
- Ensuring that all children have the opportunity to participate in high quality learning programs.

The [Affiliate name] is a membership organization of [number] early childhood professionals dedicated to improving the quality of early education programs for children birth through age eight.

###

[Sample Press Release]

For more information, contact
[Media Contact and Affiliate Name]
[Phone Number and E-mail Address]

Week of the Young Child Highlights Needs of Young Children in [Community Name]

Early Childhood: Where Our Future Begins

[Community Name], March 20, 2001 – [Affiliate Name and Community Partners] are sponsoring [Name of Your Event(s)] to celebrate the Week of the Young Child, April 1-7. The Week of the Young Child highlights the importance of families, early childhood professionals, and communities working together to support every child’s healthy development and early learning.

“Quality early childhood education is one of the best investments [Name of Community] can make for our children’s future,” said [Name and Title of Affiliate President or Other Spokesperson.] Research shows that children attending high quality programs are more likely to develop the language, pre-mathematics and social skills they need to succeed in school.

These local celebrations of the Week of the Young Child are designed to build broader support for early childhood programs that nurture young children’s early learning and growth. [Additional Details on Your Local Celebrations/Events.] “Early childhood is where our future begins,” said [Last Name of President/Spokesperson]. “If we value our children, our families, our schools, and our community, we must make accessible, affordable, high-quality early childhood education a priority.”

[Affiliate Name] advocates a comprehensive effort to improve the quality of early childhood education, including:

- Providing professional development opportunities and adequate compensation for teachers and staff;
- Improving the health and safety of programs;
- Using developmentally appropriate practices to encourage literacy and learning from birth; and
- Supporting the family’s crucial role in early education.

[Your Affiliate Name] has [number of members] early childhood professionals working together to improve professional practice and working conditions in early childhood education, and to build public support for high-quality early childhood education programs. [Your affiliate name] is an affiliate of NAEYC, the largest organization of early childhood educators and others dedicated to improving the quality of early education programs for children birth through age eight.

###

[Sample Memo Requesting an Editorial Board Meeting]

TO: Editorial Board
FROM: [Your name and organization]
DATE: [date of delivery]
RE: Support for Afterschool Programs

What do [name of community]'s children do after the school bell rings? For too many, the hours between the end of the regular school day and the end of parents' work day have been a time when kids watch television, surf the net, hang out with friends, and sometimes get into trouble.

That's exactly why afterschool programs have come to be so very popular, here and across the nation. They provide students with a safe place to learn, under the supervision of adults. And they provide working parents with the peace of mind that comes from knowing that their children are safe and cared for. That's crucial, because in two-thirds of U.S. households with married couples and children under age 18, both parents work outside the home. More than 28 million school-age children have either their only parent or both parents working outside the home. An estimated five to seven million – and believed to be upwards of 15 million – “latchkey children” go home alone after school each day.

As summer draws to a close, afterschool programs will again swing into high gear around [name of community]. Many, however, are facing a very serious threat from funding shortfalls. The 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative, the federal government's principal funding stream for afterschool, had been slated to expand its grant-making, but the budget crunch has taken its toll, and flat funding appears likely in the coming year. At the state level, the story is similar. [insert specifics about your state's funding, or say that state budget crises here and across the nation are forcing cutbacks.] The result is that successful afterschool programs, many that are just a couple years old, are being forced to close their doors or pare back their services.

The answer is for federal, state and private sources to renew their commitment to afterschool services. At the federal level, Congress and the President should return to the roadmap for steady afterschool funding increases that they agreed to in the No Child Left Behind Act. Similarly, the state legislature and Governor [insert name] should resist the temptation to balance the budget on the backs of working parents and their children. In addition, private support is desperately needed – in the form of volunteers, in-kind donations, and actual dollars.

On behalf of [organization, coalition, names of several groups], I hope you'll be able to find space on your editorial pages to urge all potential funding sources to step up to the plate. Toward that end, we would like to request a meeting with your editorial board to discuss the issue further, and to provide whatever information and materials would be useful to you as you consider the matter. I will be in touch to follow up in the next several days.

Thank you.

[Sample Op-Ed Cover Note – Put on Your Program’s Letterhead]

[Date]

[name of Op-Ed/Editorial Page Editor]

[name and address of newspaper]

Dear [name of Op-Ed/Editorial Page Editor]:

As you may know, in the last few years, afterschool programs have become more common and increasingly important to America’s families. Much of the recent growth of afterschool programs has been due to the federal government’s 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) Program, but state, local and private sources of funding have played an important role as well.

Although it appears now that Congress will reject the President’s proposal to cut the 21st CCLC initiative by 40 percent in the coming year, afterschool programs are still facing a severe funding crisis. Federal funding levels will likely remain flat in the coming year; and as state and local governments struggle to balance their budgets in times of economic hardship, afterschool programs are suffering.

The enclosed op-ed makes the case for a renewed commitment to afterschool funding, calling for increased public and private support. It’s offered to you as an exclusive in [city or state]. I hope you’ll find space for it on your opinion pages. Thanks very much for considering it.

Sincerely,

[your name]

[your affiliation]

[your address]

[your phone number, so they can call if they decide to print it]

[Sample Op-Ed to get US Congress to increase child care funding]

As a (*child care teacher/director/resource & referral agency director*), I work with families each day who struggle to go to work and afford quality child care. All parents want the best environment for their young children, but for most families, good child care is simply too expensive. Their child care arrangements are often unstable, and they do not know how they will go to work if those arrangements fall apart on a given day. I see families face these questions every day, and often I have no answer because the child care funding to help them simply isn't there.

Families should not have to decide between paying rent, buying food, and affording child care. In (*insert state*), too many families face these decisions because of inadequate funding for child care. (*Our state 1) had its waiting list grow by X number of children; 2) increased parent co-pays; 3) reduced eligibility qualifications, etc.*) Without a real increase in funding from the federal government, the gaps for (*insert state*)'s children and families will only get bigger.

According to the nonpartisan General Accounting Office, roughly half of the states balanced their budgets by cutting child care or crafting policies that make it more difficult for low-income families to get the child care assistance they need. Meanwhile, in his budget request for the coming fiscal year, President Bush asked Congress to cut 200,000 eligible children from child care assistance over the next five years. In the same breath, the Administration has called for an increase in the number of hours of work for welfare families. These families – and families transitioning off welfare or holding multiple jobs to avoid welfare – are playing by the rules, but the rules keep shifting. They want to work, but they also want their children in affordable, quality child care, where they will be safe and will get a great start on learning.

Under current funding, child care subsidies help only one in seven eligible children. That means six out of seven families struggle to find child care, and often have limited choices because they cannot afford quality programs. Without a significant increase in guaranteed funding, state lists of families waiting for subsidies will only grow.

The major source of funding for states and localities to help low-income working families afford safe, nurturing child care is the Child Care & Development Block Grant (CCDBG). The House has already approved funding for CCDBG, at a level that is woefully inadequate. That amount would provide only (*State allocation for \$1 billion mandatory over 5 years – see table*). Last year, the Senate Finance Committee approved a \$5.5 billion increase in child care funding on a bipartisan basis. Unfortunately, that bill was never signed into law. This amount would help forestall further state budget cuts and ensure that more families trying to leave welfare as well as low-income working families trying to stay off welfare receive help with their child care costs. Meanwhile, in the Senate, the funding legislation has stalled. Why? Because while some members of the Senate embrace the rhetoric about children and families, they won't make children a priority at budget time. It all comes down to whether the Senate is willing to provide a mere \$5.5 billion in additional guaranteed funding for child care to the states, spread over the next five years. That figure, in contrast, would mean (*State allocation for \$5.5 billion – see table*).

This figure will not break the federal bank. But it is critical to our nation's economic success, and to our children's success in school.

(Senator X), don't leave our children and working families behind. Now is the time to publicly commit to no less than \$5.5 billion in new mandatory funding for child care. To do less is to put our nation's economy, and our children's futures, in great jeopardy.

APPENDIX A

NAEYC Public Policy & Communications Resources

On the web:

Children's Champions, our Public Policy page on the NAEYC web site has background, federal and state updates, and critical issues information for you to use:

Action Center: sign up for NAEYC's free weekly updates on federal and state developments and to receive alerts to contact your members of Congress; find your members of Congress and media outlets with only your zip code

Federal updates: weekly updates on developments; background on major programs; NAEYC recommendations on major legislation; how the federal legislative process works

State updates: updates on new state legislation; links to national organizations representing state policymakers

Critical Issues: critical facts about children, programs and the early childhood workforce; reports and information on state policies on:

- Accreditation linked to tiered child care reimbursement and state prekindergarten programs
- Standards, indicators, and school readiness assessments
- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Financing a system – guide, glossary, slide presentation, NAEYC Policy Brief
- Coming soon – state program standards

Research & Reports: summaries of major national reports with links to the full document

Links to other organizations: wide array of national organizations that work on early childhood education issues

By email subscription:

Public Policy – free weekly updates on federal and state developments. Currently 8900 subscribers

Affiliate E-News – monthly emails to affiliates with newsletter ideas and other association information

State Policy Leaders Listserv:

Private listserv for NAEYC affiliate public policy chairs and affiliate staff to exchange, discuss and learn more about strategies and developments in the states and nationally.

To sign up, contact policy@naeyc.org with your name, position and email address.

Affiliate Conference Calls:

Conference calls with affiliates on critical federal developments and specific capacity building issues

Tools for Affiliates:

Template materials: issue briefs on accreditation, licensing and compensation
Sample press releases and op-eds – available by request

Self-assessment tool for public policy and communications work — available on Affiliate Relations web page

Do's and Don'ts of lobbying and political activity for nonprofit organizations — chapter from Advocates in Action on the Affiliate Relations web page

Advocates in Action: Making a Difference for Young Children – NAEYC book that provides guidance for any level of public policy advocacy, including use of media, grassroots, coalitions, and other strategies – book for purchase through NAEYC

APPENDIX B

DO'S AND DON'TS GUIDE FOR ELECTION YEAR ACTIVITIES

Every two years, Americans go to the polls to elect the federal, state and local officials who will govern them. Because of increased citizen awareness and media attention, elections provide an important opportunity to educate the public about the needs of children and families and to advocate for child-friendly public policies. In addition, state legislatures, city councils and Congress continue to meet and take important actions throughout election years, and legislators may be more open to hearing from the public when they are running for re-election. Just because it is an election year does not mean that NAEYC and its affiliates must stop educating the public about the needs of children and families or advocating for public policies that meet these needs. This memorandum addresses a number of typical election-year activities and explains how they may be conducted within the restrictions applicable to tax exempt organizations.²

Meetings With Legislators

NAEYC affiliates may continue to meet with legislators throughout an election year to press their legislative agendas at **legislative breakfasts** and in other settings such as **town-hall meetings**. Similarly, affiliates may continue to invite legislators to make **program visits** to observe effective programs in operation. And, affiliates may invite legislators and other public officials who are running for office to address their **annual conferences**, attend and speak at **fundraising** events, etc. Where the legislators who are invited are not running for re-election, these events present no legal risks to the groups. *Incumbent legislators who are up for re-*

² For more general information on these rules, see, Alliance for Justice, *The Rules of the Game*. In addition, if you work for Head Start, there are special rules. For those rules, please seek the advice of the National Head Start Association.

election may also be invited to attend these meetings as long as the events are not used as campaign events.

This means that incumbent legislators who are also candidates must not use affiliate-sponsored events --

- to distribute campaign literature,
- to solicit votes,
- to ask for volunteers, or
- to collect campaign contributions.

Supporters of candidates cannot take these actions on their behalf or carry signs supporting the candidate during the affiliate-sponsored event. As a general rule, NAEYC and its affiliates should not show any favoritism in whom they invite to such events. It is a good idea to invite representatives of both political parties and, if possible, to invite both legislators who are running and those who are not. Since many legislators may not be aware of the limits when they are meeting with tax-exempt groups such as NAEYC and its affiliates, it is a good idea to send them a letter before the meeting letting them know that the meeting or event cannot be used as a campaign event. A sample letter is attached as Attachment A.

One question that may arise is whether an NAEYC or an affiliate may present an **award** or otherwise honor a public official for his or her past service on behalf of children and families during an election year.

- If the public official has already announced that he or she is running for office, this poses a particular difficulty for the group because it may be perceived as an endorsement of the candidate. It should generally be avoided except under special circumstances, such as where the decision to make the award was made well before the official announced his or her candidacy, or the official is one of several honorees or awardees, some of whom are not candidates.
- It is also not a good idea to begin an award program for the first time in an election year if the award is being given to a candidate for office, because it may look like the award was created as a way of lending support to the candidate's campaign. If an affiliate decides to honor an official who is running for office, it should review all of its press statements very carefully to make certain that the affiliate does not suggest in its

advertisements, e-mails, handouts or other materials that it is endorsing the official's re-election, and the rules described above must be followed at the event to ensure that it does not become a campaign event for the candidate.

NAEYC and its affiliates may also meet with a candidate or campaign staff **privately** to discuss the organizations' priorities and to encourage the candidates to come out in support of the organizations' positions on issues. Such pledges can be very useful after the election when the group is seeking the candidate's support for a bill or a policy position. Although a small number of members may attend such meetings, the group must be careful **not to publicize the results of the meeting to the press, to the public, or to the membership or coalition colleagues prior to the election**, since this may seem like the group is supporting or opposing the candidate.

An Exception: Candidate Forums

The rule that public officials may not use affiliate-sponsored events to campaign for office has one well-recognized exception: tax exempt organizations such as NAEYC and its affiliates may, by themselves or with other organizations, sponsor forums at which all of the candidates for a particular office or group of offices are invited. Because these are explicitly campaign-related events at which candidates may ask for support from the audience, candidate forums must be administered very carefully to ensure that the sponsoring organizations do not convey any message of support for or opposition to any one of the candidates--

- *all* of the candidates for a particular office must be invited to participate in the same forum and be given equal opportunity to speak and answer questions;
- the questions or topics which the candidates are asked to address must not convey to the audience where the organization stands on that issue;

- the moderator should explain at the beginning and end of the forum that none of the sponsors supports or endorses any one of the candidates.

NAEYC and its affiliates may also use candidate forums sponsored by other organizations to educate the public about their issues and the candidate's positions. For example, groups may encourage the League of Women Voters or other groups who are sponsoring candidate forums to include questions about children's issues and may even suggest specific questions to be included. Also, groups may encourage their members and supporters to attend other groups' candidate forums and to ask the candidates questions relating to specific children's and family issues. **There is one caveat, however:** when NAEYC members ask questions they should be careful not to imply that NAEYC or its affiliates will favor the candidate(s) who provide the "right" answer to the question and will oppose any candidate who gives a "wrong" answer to that question. Open-ended questions, which have no obvious "right" or "wrong" answers, such as those in *Attachment B*, are therefore much better.

Working With Coalitions

NAEYC and its affiliates frequently work in formal and informal coalitions with other organizations in their communities. The question is frequently asked whether tax exempt organizations must discontinue these activities during an election season if the coalition includes unions, political action committees, and other groups that engage in partisan campaign activities. The answer is no - as long as the coalition itself is not engaged in partisan campaign activities.

For example, an affiliate may continue to be part of a state-wide coalition that is seeking more funding for child care subsidies or that is working to educate families about the child-care tax credit even though unions and other partisan groups are part of these efforts. If a coalition of which an affiliate is a part does get involved in partisan political activities, however, it will usually not be sufficient for the affiliate to avoid participating in those activities; the affiliate will need to remove its name as a supporter of the coalition for all purposes. Also, if an affiliate contributes funds to the coalition, those funds cannot be used to support any candidate.

Candidate Questionnaires

NAEYC and its affiliates may submit questions to candidates and may publish the candidates' answers in a newsletter or other publication if both the questions and the answers are presented in a way that does not suggest to the public which candidate is favored or disfavored by the group. This means –

- all candidates for a particular office must be asked the same questions and given the same opportunity to respond;
- the candidates' answers must be published without change, except for minor editing;
- the questions themselves must not imply that there is only one “right” answer and that the group opposes any candidate that does not give this answer.

Volunteer Activity

Although affiliates may not conduct partisan campaign activities, the officers, directors, employees and members of affiliates are free to engage in such activities on their own time if they are careful not to use any organizational resources (telephones, e-mail, postage, mailing lists, etc.) in these efforts. A person's own time usually includes weekends, holidays, vacations, evenings, and unpaid lunch periods. Even though they are acting as volunteers for a candidate, officers, employees, and members generally should not distribute campaign literature at NAEYC sponsored events. They may, however, place bumper stickers on their cars and wear campaign buttons to affiliate and NAEYC events. When acting as a volunteer for a candidate or a political party, individuals should **not** identify themselves as members, officers, or employees of NAEYC or any other tax exempt organization.

Ballot Measures

Although they frequently take place at the same time and appear on the same ballot as elections for public office, efforts to influence the outcomes of referenda, initiatives and other ballot measures are *not* considered to be political campaign activity and therefore are permissible for tax-exempt organizations. NAEYC and its affiliates may join and provide financial support to coalitions that are supporting or opposing ballot measures, may distribute literature supporting or opposing ballot measures, and may take people to the polls or provide other assistance to persons who want to vote on the ballot measure. *Expenditures to influence ballot measures are, however, treated as direct (not grassroots) lobbying activities by the IRS and therefore are subject to the group's lobbying limits on direct lobbying.*

Attachment A

Dear _____ :

The Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children is pleased to invite you to attend its bi-annual legislative breakfast to be held at the Marriott Hotel on February 21, 2004 from 8:00 to 10:00 am. This is our fifth year of holding this event. In past years it has been attended by more than 50 parents, child advocates and service providers who are concerned about improving the lives of low-income children and families. This year we hope to focus the discussion on [list legislative issues].

Because MAEYC is a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, we cannot support or oppose any candidate for public office and our legislative breakfast must be conducted in a strictly non-partisan manner. Public officials such as yourself who are invited to speak at the event are asked not to use it as a campaign opportunity in any manner, including asking for votes, soliciting contributions, distributing campaign literature or asking for volunteers to assist in their campaigns. These rules apply to staff and supporters as well.

We hope you will be able to attend the legislative breakfast and we look forward to a productive discussion with you concerning the needs of children and families.

Sincerely,

Attachment B

Advice on Questions You Can Ask, and Not Ask

Not allowed:

Last year, you voted against the needs of working families when you refused to support S.432, the Day-Care Improvement Act of 2003, which was supported by the AEYC and many other child advocates. Will you pledge to support similar legislation when it is reintroduced in 2004?

Governor Smith has said he wants to overhaul the current licensing standards for child care centers to make it easier for for-profit entities to enter this market. The AEYC and other organizations oppose any effort to weaken these standards. What are your views on this critical question?

If elected, will you support an increase of \$5 million in the Title XX program?

The AEYC is pushing for an increase in the T.E.A.C.H. (or other child care compensation initiative). Will you support increase funding to help raise the salaries of child care workers?

Permissible:

What are views on the needs of children in our state and what specific steps would you take to address these needs.

What kind of people will you be looking for to fill the positions of Secretary of Education, Director of the Division of Children's and Family Services, etc?

Our state currently ranks in the bottom 10% nationally in the amount we spend on day-care services for low-income residents. What are your plans for addressing this need?

What are your views on raising the compensation of child care workers?

APPENDIX C

A Selection of Links to Other National Organizations' Advocacy Information and Materials

Groups working on children birth to kindergarten: (some work on issues relating to older children too)

Better Baby Care Campaign

www.betterbabycare.org

Child Welfare League of America

www.cwla.org

Children's Defense Fund

www.childrensdefense.org

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids

www.fcik.org

National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies

www.naccrra.org

National Black Child Development Institute

www.nbcdi.org

National Head Start Association

www.nhsa.org

Stand for Children

www.stand.org

United Way of America

www.uwa.org

Voices for America's Children

www.childadvocacy.org

Legal Do's and Don'ts of Lobbying and Political Activity:

Alliance for Justice

www.allianceforjustice.org

Unions who work on Early Childhood:

American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees

www.afscme.org

Service Employees International Union

www.seiu.org

K-12 groups who work on birth through school-age issues

American Federation of Teachers

www.aft.org

National PTA

www.pta.org

National Association of Elementary School Principals

www.naesp.org

National Association of Bilingual Education

www.nabe.org

National Education Association

www.nea.org

National School Boards Association

www.nsba.org

School Social Workers of America Association

www.sswaa.org

Business groups

Committee for Economic Development

www.ced.org

Kiwanis

www.kiwanis.org

National Council of Latino Executives

www.cwla.org/programs/cle

Faith-Based

Ecumenical Child Care Network

www.eccn.org

Catholic Charities

www.catholiccharitiesusa.org

National Council of Jewish Women

www.ncjw.org

Groups representing government agencies and officials

Education Commission of the States

www.ecs.org

National Association of Counties

www.naco.org

National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education

<http://ericps.crc.uiuc.edu/naecs>

National Association of State Boards of Education

www.nasbe.org

National Conference of State Legislators

www.ncsl.org

National Governors Association

www.nga.org

National League of Cities

www.nlc.org

Disabilities organizations

Division of Early Childhood, Council for Exceptional Children

www.dec.org

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

www.asha.org

Easter Seals

www.easterseals.com

National Association of State Directors of Special Education

www.nasdse.org

APPENDIX D

NAEYC Affiliate Public Policy/Communications Self-Assessment And Capacity Worksheet

Affiliate Plan/Resources

Item	Yes	No	Action Steps
Public Policy and Communications part of affiliate plan			
Appropriate state and federal filings (501(h), etc)			
Resources for public policy activities defined in affiliate budget <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meetings• Conference calls• Material development• Material dissemination• Web• Grassroots email• Travel to NAEYC Leadership, etc			

Responsibilities of the Public Policy Committee

Item	Yes	No	Action Steps
Review and propose changes/additions to Public Policy Program			
Establish regular meetings (in person/phone) and communication as needed in addition with Committee and Board			
Communicate with the Governing Board			
Establish communication with local affiliates, membership, public through email; designate person(s) with responsibility			
Designate person(s) responsible for representing Affiliate in coalition meetings			
Provide training and information at conferences and other venues sponsored by the Affiliate			
Work collaboratively with person(s) responsible for public representation in speaking at functions, press, etc on message regarding policy items			

Public Policy Committee/Chair

Item	Yes	No	Action Steps
Public Policy Committee established			
Co-chairs/chair for term			
Members of Committee for term			
Responsibilities in writing			
Formal liaison with Board			
Public Policy Program established and reviewed annually			
Policy priorities established annually			
Person available for NAEYC chairs listserv; notify NAEYC of change in chairs			

Public Policy Program

Item	Yes	No	Action Steps
Public Policy program based on position statements or NAEYC template adopted			
Reviewed annually with Board approval/amendment			

Coalition Activities

Item	Yes	No	Action Steps
Participation reflects affiliate priorities and policy program			
Participation reflects 0-8 membership needs/concerns			
Participation reflects affiliate resources (financial/time) in relation to importance of the coalition's priorities			
Outreach to other partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other early childhood organizations • K-3 teachers, administrators • Parents, community-based organizations • Health and human services organizations • Business • Labor • Other 			

Grassroots Mobilization

Item	Yes	No	Action Steps
<p>Email communications for updates and alerts on state policy developments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person with designated responsibility for maintaining email list and sending out updates and alerts • Backup person designated • Advertise NAEYC Action Center email 			
<p>Mechanisms for growing the grassroots network for state affiliate list</p>			

Direct Advocacy

Item	Yes	No	Action Steps
Persons designated with responsibility for talking to policymakers as spokespersons for affiliate			
Lobby day(s) using membership with state Capitol in person and in “virtual” lobbying			
Visits with members of Congress as part of NAEYC Leadership/Policy conference and in the state/district			
Participate in coalition visits to state legislature/governor/agencies			
Use Week of the Young Child and other holidays for advocacy			

Materials/Education

Item	Yes	No	Action Steps
Issue briefs on critical issues for legislative/regulatory action that year			
List of contacts for state legislators/governor’s aides/agency heads/commissions and boards			
Newsletter or other affiliate communications with public policy update			
Distribution of NAEYC or NAEYC template materials on public policy issues (e.g. financing policy brief)			
Sessions at state and local conferences			

External Communications

Item	Yes	No	Action Steps
Designated spokesperson(s) with media			
Designated person(s) to develop and disseminate press releases in consultation with public policy and President			
Press kit about affiliate			
Media list			

APPENDIX E

Finding It On the Web

NAEYC's web site gives you links to hundreds of national organizations engaged in early childhood education, from professional development to advocacy. Below are some additional resources for:

- Data and research
- National, state and local government agencies
- Nontraditional partners

Data and Research Resources

US Census: www.census.gov

Bureau of Labor Statistics: www.bls.gov

US Department of:

- Agriculture: www.usda.gov
- Education: www.ed.gov
- Health and Human Services: www.os.dhhs.gov/
- Labor: www.dol.gov

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities: www.cbpp.org

Information on how federal tax proposals, legislation on welfare, child care, Medicaid and other programs impact state and beneficiaries.

The National Center for Children in Poverty: www.nccp.org

NCCP identifies and promotes strategies that prevent child poverty in the United States and that improve the lives of low-income children and their families. Founded in 1989, NCCP is part of the Mailman School at Columbia University. Fact sheets at www.nccp.org/fact.html and www.nccp.org/cat_8.html

The National Institute for Early Education Research: www.nieer.org

The National Institute for Early Education Research supports early childhood education initiatives by providing objective, nonpartisan information based on research. The Institute offers independent research-based advice and technical assistance to four primary groups: policy makers, journalists, researchers, and educators.

Education Commission of the States: www.ecs.org

The Education Commission of the States (ECS) is an interstate compact created in 1965 to improve public education by facilitating the exchange of information, ideas and experiences among state policymakers and education leaders.

National Child Care Information Center: www.nccic.org

The National Child Care Information Center (NCCIC), a project of the Child Care Bureau, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is a national resource that links information and people to complement, enhance, and promote the child care delivery system, working to ensure that all children and families have access to high-quality comprehensive services.

Kids Count: www.aecf.org/kidscount/census/

Kids Count, a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, is a national and state-by-state effort to track the status of children in the U.S. By providing policymakers and citizens with benchmarks of child well being, Kids Count seeks to enrich local, state, and national discussions concerning ways to secure better futures for all children.

National Center for Education Statistics: <http://www.nces.ed.gov/>

The National Center for Education Statistics is the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data that are related to education in the U.S. and other nations.