

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNSEL FOR CHILDREN



Better Public Policy for Children, Youth and Families:

An Advocacy Guide



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“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

- Margaret Mead, American Anthropologist

The purpose of this document is to promote policy advocacy on behalf of children, youth and families. Advocates are permitted, and encouraged, to photocopy and disseminate parts or this entire guide, with appropriate credit given to the National Association of Counsel for Children.

Much of the material in this guide is drawn from a similar publication by Miriam Rollin for the National Network for Youth. Some material was gathered from the publication of the 105th Congress “How Our Laws Are Made” (revised 11/12/97). Information regarding advocacy by non-profit organizations was drawn from publications of the Alliance for Justice and Independent Sector. Material on media strategies was gathered from “How to Tell and Sell Your Story,” by the Center for Community Change (1998), and from “The Children’s Advocates Campaign Strategy Book,” by the Coalition for America’s Children. Editing by Laoise King and Marvin Ventrell is greatly appreciated.

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I. The National Association of Counsel for Children

The NACC was founded in 1977 to promote quality representation of children in the legal system. The NACC is a non-profit professional membership organization dedicated to enhancing the well being of children by promoting excellence in the field of children's law. The NACC works to improve legal protection and representation of children by training and educating child advocates and by effecting policy and legal system improvement. The NACC is a multidisciplinary organization with approximately 2,000 members representing all 50 states and many foreign countries. NACC membership is comprised primarily of attorneys and judges, although the fields of medicine, social work, mental health, education, and law enforcement are also represented.

NACC programs include publications such as the quarterly newsletter, *The Guardian*, *The Children's Legal Rights Journal* and annual children's law manuals. The NACC also sponsors the Rocky Mountain Child Advocacy Training Institute (a trial skills training) each spring and participates as *amicus curiae* in cases of national significance to children. The NACC has a policy agenda, a national child advocate awards program, and a speakers bureau. NACC state and local affiliates also exist to promote the mission of the NACC on a local level. The NACC national office in Denver serves the needs of members as a children's law resource center. Membership in the NACC is \$75 annually. To join, return the membership application on this page. For more information, visit the NACC web site (you may also join online) or contact the NACC at:

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Application for Membership	
Name:	
Firm/Company/Agency:	
Degree and Occupation:	
Address:	
City/State/Zip:	
Phone:	
Fax:	
E-mail:	
Ethnicity (optional):	
<input type="checkbox"/> Please enroll me as a member: <input type="checkbox"/> Regular (\$75); <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting (\$100); <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining (\$150); <input type="checkbox"/> Patron (\$250); <input type="checkbox"/> Student (\$35)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Please enroll me in my local affiliate (not all areas have affiliates established)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Enclosed is my check payable to NACC in the amount of \$ _____.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Please charge my <input type="checkbox"/> VISA; <input type="checkbox"/> MASTERCARD;	
Card Number:	
Expiration Date:	
Signature:	
<input type="checkbox"/> As a benefit of my membership please sign me up for the NACC Federal Policy Network!	



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNSEL FOR CHILDREN

POLICY AGENDA

Preface The NACC believes that all children must be valued as human beings, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, age, social class, physical or mental disability, gender, or sexual orientation, and must be vested with certain fundamental rights, including a right to physical and emotional health and safety. In order to achieve the physical and emotional well being of children, we must promote legal rights and remedies for children. This includes empowering children by ensuring that courts hear and consider the views of children in proceedings that affect children's lives.

Attorneys for Children

1. Children's attorneys play a critical role in empowering children and ensuring that children's views are heard in legal proceedings. Additionally, the presence of children's attorneys is critical to ensuring the timeliness of proceedings.
2. The NACC believes that attorneys representing children and families should have a combination of knowledge, training, experience, and ability which allows them to effectively discharge their duties to their clients. The NACC supports federal, state and local programs to enhance the competence of these attorneys.

Child Welfare Policy

1. The NACC believes that, in order for justice to be done in child abuse and neglect related court proceedings, all parties should be represented by counsel. The children who are the subjects of these proceedings are usually the most profoundly affected by the decisions made in these proceedings, and these children are also usually the least able to voice their views effectively on their own. However, in many jurisdictions, the courts do not appoint independent attorneys for all children in abuse and neglect related proceedings. NACC insists that federal, state and local law should mandate that independent attorneys be appointed to represent the interests of children in all such proceedings. In addition, the NACC believes that CASA volunteers can serve an important role in ensuring that children and their families receive appropriate services and assistance by investigating and reporting to the court and by exchanging views and coordinating efforts with the children's attorneys. Children's attorneys, however, remain uniquely qualified to provide a legal voice for children in these legal proceedings through presentation of oral and written submissions to the court. CASA volunteers can therefore supplement but not supplant the efforts of children's attorneys.
2. The NACC believes that child welfare systems must be funded adequately and must offer a combination of preventive and reunification services to children and families, as well as the placements and services needed by children in custody of the State. In addition, child welfare systems must provide adequate case management and permanency planning services to link children and families with appropriate services, and to provide appropriate placements for children.

3. The NACC believes that the court system should be the vehicle for prompt and just determinations in child abuse and neglect related proceedings – proceedings which should minimize the further trauma to child victims. The NACC favors federal, state and local programs to help bring court systems closer to these ideals.

Juvenile Justice Policy

1. The NACC believes that juveniles accused of offenses should be represented by competent counsel in all court proceedings, including post-disposition proceedings.
2. The NACC believes that juvenile justice systems must be funded adequately and must incorporate a full range of effective programs, services, and placements ranging from prevention programs to community-based services to secure placements. Such a continuum of programs, services, and placements, often referred to as “graduated sanctions systems,” should be available in every state and the NACC supports federal, state and local programs to help bring systems closer to that ideal. The NACC believes that the death penalty is never an appropriate sanction for crimes committed while a juvenile.
3. The NACC believes that the juvenile courts, with their focus on individualized justice, should be the vehicles for prompt and just determinations in juvenile justice proceedings. The NACC favors federal, state and local programs to assist juvenile courts in accomplishing that task. The NACC opposes federal, state and local policies which remove juvenile courts’ discretion as to when children are tried as adults, and/or which result in juveniles being placed with adult offenders. Such policies only reduce public safety (by increasing juvenile recidivism) and place children at risk of sexual and physical assault and even murder by adults.
4. The NACC believes that racial disparity is a significant problem at every stage of the juvenile justice system (as it is in the criminal justice system as a whole). The NACC supports federal, state and local policies which address that problem.
5. The NACC believes that status offenders (those whose acts would not be crimes if committed by adults, e.g., truancy or running away) should not be confined in secure facilities; rather they should be provided prompt and appropriate interventions to avoid future delinquency. The NACC supports federal, state and local policies which assist in providing such prompt and appropriate interventions.
6. The NACC supports policies which limit juvenile access to guns.

Child Custody Policy

1. The NACC believes that, while legal representation is not required for every child who is the subject of a child custody determination, the judge *should* appoint an attorney to represent the child in certain cases: when there are certain substantive allegations which make child representation necessary -- i.e., when there is an allegation of child neglect or abuse (physical, sexual or emotional) by a parent or household member, when there is a culture of violence between the parents, when there is an allegation of substance abuse by a parent, when there are allegations of non-paternity, or when there is an allegation of or fear about child snatching -- as well as when there are certain procedural situations which make child representation necessary -- i.e., when a child will be a witness or when the case develops an extremely adversarial nature (especially one that is attorney-driven). In addition, the judge *should consider* appointing an attorney to represent the child in certain

cases: when there is an allegation of mental illness on the part of a parent, when a custodial parent is relocating geographically, when child representation can reduce undue harm to the child from the litigation itself, when the child has exceptional physical or mental health needs, when the child expresses a strong desire to make his or her opinions known to the judge, when there is a pro se parent, when there is a third-party custody action against a parent (e.g., by a grandparent), or when the failure to appoint such a representative for the child would otherwise impede the judge's capacity to decide the case properly.

2. The NACC believes that the federal Parental Kidnapping Prevention Act (PKPA), which is designed to prevent parents from taking children across state lines to relitigate unfavorable child custody and visitation determinations (such determinations to include those made in the context of domestic relations, child welfare, adoption, and other child custody-related cases), has effectively protected children from the harm resulting from such parental actions, and should be maintained in its current form without substantive amendments except for an amendment establishing federal district court jurisdiction to resolve conflicting state court claims to jurisdiction over child custody cases, thereby nullifying the Supreme Court decision in *Thompson v. Thompson*, 484 U.S. 174 (1988).

Criminal Justice Policy

1. The NACC believes that in addition to civil law remedies (such as civil child welfare proceedings and civil proceedings to recover financial damages), victims of child maltreatment benefit from a criminal justice system which recognizes the importance of effectively prosecuting crimes against children and considers the special needs of child victims.
2. The NACC supports legislation and rules requiring courts to appoint an independent attorney for the child victim in cases of criminal prosecution of child maltreatment. (See *Guardians Ad Litem in the Criminal Courts*, National Institute of Justice, US Dept. of Justice, 1988).
3. The NACC supports legislation and policies that provide victim services to child victims of maltreatment. (See 18 U.S.C. §3509(h)).
4. The NACC supports legislation and rules allowing special procedures to protect child victims from harm caused by the criminal justice process, including hearsay exceptions and videotape testimony when the victim of a crime is a child. (See *Child Abuse and Neglect State Statute Series*, Volume IV, Child Witnesses; USDHHS, NCCAN, NCPCA, APRI; 1/800-FYI-3366).
5. The NACC believes that states should enact and enforce "felony child abuse" laws that give states a prosecutorial charging option in addition to traditional criminal statutes. (See *Child Abuse and Neglect State Statute Series*, Volume V, Crimes; USDHHS, NCCAN, NCPCA, APRI; 1/800-FYI-3366).

II. Using This Policy Guide

Purpose of Guide:

This guide is intended to be a useful tool for ALL advocates for children, youth and families, from the first-time visitor to Capitol Hill to the long-time advocate. While designed to facilitate advocacy at the federal level, this guide can also assist you in advocacy with state and local policymakers.

Structure and Use of the Advocacy Strategies Part of this Guide:

The guide includes a section on why you should advocate for children, youth and families, and sections explaining a variety of strategies (including phone calls to Representatives and Senators, letter-writing, Hill visits, site visits, media work and reaching out to allies in your community) to use in advocating for children, youth and families. We hope you will take the time to skim through these sections once. For first-time advocates, these sections will provide much new, exciting information and provide you with a sense of the breadth of advocacy opportunities that await you. For long-time advocates, these sections will provide a sense of how you will be able to use the guide as a reminder checklist, when needed. Then hold on to the guide and put it in a place where you can easily find it. When you decide to utilize a particular strategy you can follow the easy, step-by-step approach presented in the section on that strategy.

Structure and Use of the Guide's Appendices:

The guide also includes several appendices. The first four appendices provide some in-depth reference material on the federal legislative and spending processes. This material need not be read cover to cover, and may be somewhat complex; it is intended to be a reference document. For example, when you receive an alert on a particular issue that says something about a committee “mark-up” on a bill, you can use the index (Appendix IV) to find the page in Appendix I in which mark-ups are discussed, and understand what’s happening on the Hill and why advocacy at that point is critical.

Appendix V provides important information on the rules about lobbying and non-partisan electoral activity by non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations, including those receiving federal funds. Again, this material is complex, but you should read it to get a sense of the rules that govern non-profit advocacy. Then, when you start engaging in advocacy, use it as a reference to address any specific question that may arise.

Finally, the guide ends with appendices that provide you with contact information for federal policymakers, a helpful website list, and information on how the National Association of Counsel for Children can assist you in your advocacy activity.

III. Why Advocate for Children, Youth and Families?

As a citizen of the United States, you have a *right* to contact your elected officials and share with them your views about issues important to you. This right is guaranteed by the 1st Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Nearly every day Congress, the President, state officials and local policymakers all make decisions that impact the lives of families and young people. These elected officials also make decisions that affect community-based agencies that help youth gain access to the supports and opportunities they need to become contributing members of their communities. As a citizen who cares about our nation's children, youth and families, you have an *obligation* to communicate with policymakers about issues that affect families and young people.

There are several myths regarding policy advocacy on behalf of children, youth and families that we will now dispel:

MYTH #1: Federal policies are so far removed from day-to-day work with children, youth and families that changes in those policies won't have a big impact on families and young people.

FACT #1: If Congress eliminated funding for the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act programs, which support the work of local agencies serving children, youth and families, this would have a huge negative impact on families and young people. If Congress required the participation of families and young people on all of the federal, state and local committees that make decisions on programs for children, youth and families, that would have a significant impact as well – a positive one.

MYTH #2: You have to be a real expert on the issues – a “policy wonk” – to talk to policymakers who are also experts on those issues.

FACT #2: If you are an attorney, judge, social worker or other professional working with court-involved children and families, or a staff member, board member, volunteer, supporter and/or beneficiary of one or more community-based programs for children and families, you ARE an expert. Your day-to-day experiences with children, youth and families and programs serving them provide you valuable insights into policies that would help – or harm – families and young people. On the other hand, policy makers and their staff deal with many different issues daily, and generally have limited understanding about how public policies affect children, youth and families.

MYTH #3: You have to be a lobbyist in D.C. to know enough about the policy-making process to understand when or how to become involved.

FACT #3: This guide provides you with information about the federal legislative and budget processes and advocacy strategies for policy improvements related to children, youth and families. Now all you need is the status and substance of these proposals. On an on-going basis the policy representative at the NACC can provide you with all the information on the status and substance of pending legislation that you need to do advocacy (see “How the National Association of Counsel for Children Can Help,” at the end of this guide).

MYTH #4: Other people will speak to the policymaker about the issue.

FACT #4: It's amazing how few people ever contact policy makers; there's no guarantee your elected officials will hear your side of an issue unless you present it to them. Even if others ARE speaking to the policymaker about the issue, your contact is still very important: more contact means a greater chance of influencing the policymaker.

MYTH #5: Non-profit charitable 501(c)(3) organizations and those who work in them are not allowed to do policy work.

FACT #5: Non-profits can do a significant amount of public policy advocacy work that the law does not even consider to be “lobbying.” And non-profits can perform lobbying activities as long as they stay within the legal limits (see Appendix V: “Advocacy and Electoral Activity by Non-Profit Charitable Organizations”). In fact, non-profit agencies can even do some election-related activity as long as it is non-partisan and follows the rules (see Appendix V).

MYTH #6: You have to be rich or well known to make a difference.

FACT #6: Think about this: one drop of water can change very little, but many drops working together over time can reshape rock. Similarly, one voice alone may change little, but many voices working together over time can reshape national policy for children, youth and families. Policy makers need to be responsive to their constituents in order to get re-elected. However, policymakers only hear from a small number of their constituents each year; thus, every contact carries the implicit support of many other constituents who have not contacted that policymaker. If a policymaker gets 10 contacts in one day on a children, youth and families issue, she or he may take notice (this is sometimes referred to as the “myth of the marching millions”—that’s one myth we’d like to promote, rather than dispel!).

Even if you understand that the myths described above are just myths, you may still find excuses for not getting active in advocacy. Actually, many of us use the same excuses to avoid exercise – excuses like, “I’m too busy,” “I’m not good at it,” or “I haven’t done it in so long...” – but those excuses shouldn’t stop you from advocating any more than they should stop you from exercising.

- “Too busy”: It is true that most people who work with court-involved children and families are already stretched thin by an excessive workload. However, policy advocacy should not be considered an add-on to your job responsibilities; consider advocacy an essential part of your job functions. Just make a little time for advocacy in your schedule, and make it happen!
- “Not good at it”: Most people drawn to work for children, youth and families make excellent advocates; they are good at listening, good at communicating, and they care. That is the foundation for being an EXCELLENT advocate! But if you still feel as though your advocacy effectiveness is not what you would like it to be, just read on... If you follow the advice in this guide, you will be convincing policymakers in no time!
- “Haven’t done it in so long...” Well, WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?!?!?!?

So what really happens when advocates ignore the myths and recognize the facts? Better policies for children, youth and families! To cite a few recent examples: (1) in 1998, advocates prevented Senate passage of harmful federal juvenile justice legislation that would have locked up more runaways and put more youth in adult jails (S. 10); (2) also in 1998, advocates persuaded Congress to increase youth crime prevention funding from \$20 million to \$95 million; (3) in 1999, advocates succeeded in getting enacted legislation to expand and improve the federal Independent Living Program for older foster care youth. In every case, advocates for children, youth and families around the country spoke out to federal policymakers in significant numbers and made a difference!

So join the fun and be an effective advocate for children, youth and families!

IV. Policy Advocacy for Children, Youth and Families: Introduction and Basics

Introduction

OK, so you want to be an effective advocate for children, youth and families ... LET'S GO!!! There are a variety of strategies advocates can use to improve public policies relating to children, youth and families. Some strategies involve directly contacting policymakers – phone calls, letters, visits, site visits and testimony – while other strategies involve reaching policymakers and the public through media – letters to the editor, op-eds, meetings with editorial staff to generate editorials, press releases, press conferences, speaking on radio or TV talk shows, public service announcements and paid media. While one or two people utilizing both direct and indirect advocacy strategies can have a significant impact, that impact is multiplied many times when organizing strategies are utilized to generate greater numbers of advocates for children, youth and families. With a greater number of advocates, we not only strengthen the effectiveness of the direct and indirect advocacy strategies mentioned above, we also create other avenues of advocacy, such as (non-partisan) election-related advocacy (see Appendix V).

Basics

Do some homework before you start advocacy:

- Develop a one- to two-page, concise description of who you are: your (and/or your organization's) mission, goals, structure, and activities for and with children, youth, and families. If possible, include any effectiveness data from evaluations of your (and/or other local) program(s).
- Be prepared to summarize the information on you and your organization in a sentence or two (for phone calls and letters to policymakers, meetings and site visits with policymakers and contacts with the media and the public).
- Develop a one- to two-page, concise description of the issue on which you will be advocating, including: a brief statement of the issue; the title, bill number, and status of any pending legislation on the issue; what you want the policymaker to do; your reasons for wanting that action; and how the policymaker's decision will affect your agency and the families and young people in your community – the community that the policymaker represents. NACC Policy Network e-mails and the *Guardian* newsletter can give you up-to-date information on legislation and its status. Policy staff at the NACC office can provide you with any further information on pending federal legislation affecting children, youth and families.
- Be prepared to summarize the information on your issue in a sentence or two (for phone calls and letters to policymakers, meetings and site visits with policymakers, and contacts with the media and the public).
- Do homework on each of the policymakers you will be contacting. Determine if they have been supportive of your issues in the past. Also, find out if they are on committees with jurisdiction over the legislation in which you are interested. Complete lists of all Congressional committees and reports of all recorded votes in Congress are available via the Internet, at thomas.loc.gov, a federal legislative database that is searchable by

keyword. That database can also connect you with each Congress Member's website. Another useful site for finding information on policymakers (including who your state and federal representatives are) is government.aol.com/mygov/.

Always, in any public policy advocacy effort, remember the following:

- A little prior planning goes a long way.
- Be passionate about the issues – passion is contagious!
- Be patient and persistent – policy victories sometimes take a while.
- Be up-front and honest. Base your position on the facts without exaggeration. You must establish yourself as a credible, honest person who is providing a service to the policymaker.
- Personalize issues – tell stories from your experiences.
- Be polite and positive; don't threaten, insult or otherwise offend policymakers, their staff, the media or the general public. If you can't get their support this time, there is always a next time.
- Prepare persuasive "sound-bites" to support your position. Keep your reasoning concise, simple, and persuasive – easy for policymakers and the public to understand and accept. "Sound-bite" is only a dirty word when your opposition has one and you don't.
- Present the issues the way you want others to see them; you – and not your opponents – should frame the debate. For example, your opponents may try to frame an issue as "Are we going to lock up kids, or be soft on crime?" You frame the issue as "Should we invest now in programs that engage youth positively, or pay the much higher cost of incarceration later?"
- Everyone is a potential ally. Don't "write off" any policymaker. Members from both major parties and from all points along the conservative/liberal spectrum are potential supporters, given the proper persuasion. At a minimum, you may be able to lessen the extent to which an opposing member will be vocal in their opposition on your issue.
- Assume little expertise on the part of the policymaker or staff person regarding your issue/program. Explain any acronyms you use (e.g., CAPTA, JJDP, PKPA, etc.).
- Be prepared to compromise. Sometimes victories come in parts.
- Pursue broad-based support. People of all kinds can join in the effort, regardless of age, race, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, political party affiliation, occupation, etc.
- Educate the public on your issue (through events, media, etc.). Public opinion in your favor can make a big difference in persuading policymakers!
- Use creative approaches in promoting issues. An innovative visual event can bring important media, public and policymaker attention to your efforts; just exercise your judgment to differentiate between innovative, persuasive action and wacky or marginalizing behavior.

- Know your opponents: who they are, what they're arguing (this will help you anticipate challenging questions, and prepare answers for them), and what tactics they're using (such as the top 10 Ds: Deflecting the Debate to other issues; Discounting the importance of the issue; Denying the truth; Deceiving the public and policymakers; Delaying; Dividing your advocacy coalition; Dulcifying or appeasing your coalition with small concessions; Discrediting or trying to Destroy your organization; or true Deal-making), so you can plan accordingly.
- Keep your eyes on the prize. Don't let opponents or media distract you from conveying your message.
- Keep up your spirit. Small setbacks along the way are a given; benefit from them as the learning opportunities they are, and move on.
- Seize opportunities when they arise. When a policymaker is giving a local presentation or holding a town hall meeting, ask questions about your issue. When the media is covering a local event, share your fact sheet with them and talk to them. When you are at a local meeting, bring flyers on your issue.
- Show appreciation. Send a thank-you note after a relevant vote on your issue if the policymaker voted appropriately, spoke in support of your position on the issue, offered an amendment on your issue, etc.
- Celebrate every little victory. It gives you momentum to get through the few rough spots! Advocacy is fun, so don't forget to enjoy yourself!

V. Advocacy Strategies

A. Calling Your Members of Congress

Who are they, and what's their number?

The Members of Congress (two Senators and one Representative) who represent you have offices both in D.C. and in their state/district. You can call any Member of Congress in D.C. through the Capitol Switchboard: (202)224-3121 or (202)225-3121.

You can also find out who your Senators are (and get their in-state contact information) via the Internet at www.senate.gov . Similarly, you can find out who your Representative is (and get their district contact information) via the Internet at www.house.gov/writerep/.

What should I say?

- Identify yourself (name, organization, city, and your title).
- Ask to speak with the Member of Congress. Often, the Member will not be available, so ask to speak with the legislative assistant handling your issue.
- Introduce yourself to the Member or staff person (name, organization, city and your title).
- Briefly identify the issue you're calling about and state the action you are requesting ("please support" [or if speaking with the staff person, "please tell Rep. Smith that I urge her to support"] "H.R. 9432, the Strengthening Child Abuse Prevention bill").
- Give a sentence or two with the arguments in favor of your position on the legislation, especially information about how the bill would impact the Member's state/district.
- Answer questions (or if you don't know the answer, tell them you'll get the answer for them shortly, and do so!).
- Listen carefully to what the Member or staff person says; they may convey important information regarding the legislation.
- Ask for that Member's position on the legislation.
- You may also ask for a written response to your call.
- Thank them for their time and consideration.
- E-mail NACC policy staff (marollin@aol.com) regarding any important information gathered during the phone call, including the Member's position on the issue; and send a copy of any response letter to NACC. The NACC policy staff can use this information in further advocacy efforts.
- If the staff person is not available at the time you're calling, try back once or twice. If you keep missing the staff person you can leave a message on voice-mail or with the receptionist, but you may want to follow-up with a faxed or mailed letter to make sure you get your points across and to make a response more likely.

B. Writing Letters to Your Members of Congress

Remember, it is easy to reach your elected officials. Correspondence should be mailed or (if urgent) faxed (but not e-mailed unless a Member or staff person has specifically requested that mode of communication) and should follow these simple guidelines:

- Address one issue per letter. Avoid mixing a request for legislative action with an invitation to visit your agency/court, for example.
- Identify yourself, and simply state the purpose of your letter in the first paragraph (including any bill number and the action requested). Craft a clear and courteous message that the reader can easily follow.
- Provide local data and examples of specific youth and families served by your agency (you can avoid using names, to prevent breach of confidentiality) to support your position. Lawmakers want to hear about their constituents and the communities they represent.
- Ask for the Member's view on the legislation, and then share a copy of any response letter from a policymaker with the policy staff of the NACC; that information is useful, when the policy staff meets with the staff of that Representative or Senator.
- Thank the Member for their consideration of your views and offer further assistance (express willingness to answer questions, respond to concerns, etc.).

While letters to lawmakers should be in your own words (and on your agency's letterhead or with your address included), it may help to follow the key points outlined below. The fictitious sections that immediately follow each key point are examples of how you might address each item. Try to keep letters to one page.

Dear Senator _____:

Identify yourself and your reason for writing.

Example: As crisis services director at Outstretched Arms, a temporary shelter for runaway and homeless youth here in Arlington, I'd like to encourage your support of S.518. The Youth Shelter Services Expansion Act could help many of the estimated 1.3 million American young people who run away each year or are homeless.

Present some basic facts on the issue, especially statistics from your city/county/state.

Example: In Virginia alone, as many as 5,000 youth between the ages of 12 and 18 are without shelter on any given night during the year. In Arlington County, our agency sees between 600-800 youth in crisis a year. Last year we successfully reunited 90 percent of these youth with their families.

Explain why they should honor your request.

Example: The Youth Shelter Services Expansion Act would greatly help us reach Arlington's youth in high-risk situations. Additional support for our emergency services, which S.518 would provide, could allow us to add a volunteer host-homes program and expand our outreach to youth and families before serious problems arise. We do our best to give families the support they need to stay together, but when a young person cannot be reunited with his/her family, we must assist in their transition to adulthood. S.518 allows for transitional living programs for youth who cannot be reunited with their families. We very much want to start such a program for young

people in our county who lack a safe place to live and adults to guide them as they finish the business of growing up.

Thank them, offer your assistance and request a response.

Example: Please help in this important work by supporting S.518. The youth and their families of Arlington County and surrounding Virginia communities are counting on you. If you have any questions or concerns regarding Outstretched Arms or the issues that today's young people face, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter, and I look forward to hearing your views on this legislation.

Sincerely,

J. H. Ziegler
Crisis Services Director
Outstretched Arms

C. Visiting Members of Congress

You can visit your Senators and Representative when they're home (typically Friday through Monday or during one of the Congressional recess periods), or when they're in D.C. (usually Tuesday through Thursday while Congress is in session). To make an appointment to meet with a Member of Congress, call their appointment secretary/scheduler; give your name, organization, city and the issue you will discuss during the visit.

Before the visit:

- If you have more than one office to visit, schedule your visits with sufficient time to allow for meetings starting late and time to get from one office to the other. Do not arrive late. If you anticipate that you will be late, call ahead.
- Invite board members, other staff, young people and local officials interested in your program to participate in the meeting. Non-traditional allies, such as business people and law enforcement, can also be helpful. Getting an appointment with a member of Congress is often easier if you arrange a group meeting.
- Plan your presentation to last only five minutes and no longer than 10 minutes. Do not expect Members of Congress or staff to spend more than 15 minutes with your group. Any additional time can be used to discuss your key points in detail.
- Have more than one person in your group speak during the presentation. Prior to your meeting, outline what you want to cover in your presentation and divide up roles and talking points. It is often helpful to choose who in your group will initiate the meeting and facilitate the meeting.
- Be prepared to answer questions about who you are and what you have presented.
- Bring handouts on your organization and your issue to give to the Member of Congress and/or staff person.

During the visit expect:

- That a meeting on the Hill can and will take place anywhere – in a Member's office, in a committee hearing room, in a cafeteria, in the hall or in a reception area.

- Interruptions, tardiness, sudden departures and rescheduled or canceled visits. Anticipate bells ringing and changes in whom you will meet.
- A neutral reaction. Members of Congress and their staff are seldom in a position to make firm on-the-spot commitments. A favorable response is a commitment to “do the best possible.” A more likely response is agreement to consider the proposal.

Do:

- Always begin your meetings by thanking the Member of Congress or staff person for allowing you the opportunity to meet with him/her and, where applicable, thank him/her for past support of your issue/organization.
- Use your time effectively. Be clear about who you are, what you do, and what you want. The decision-maker should leave the meeting with a grasp of how your agency helps young people and their families and needed federal policy actions.
- Be relaxed. Use a conversational tone in your presentation. Don’t read a prepared statement.
- Wear nice clothes, and avoid chewing gum or drinking coffee during the appointment. Appearance isn’t everything, but it can make a difference with some Members and staff.
- Give examples of children, youth and families you have worked with and what you do to intervene effectively on behalf of young people and their families. Ideally, you should include families and young people in your group so that a Member or his/her staff can hear their stories firsthand.
- Listen. The Member or staff person may have some important and relevant concerns about the issue. The Member or staff person may also have some suggestions that could help promote your position on the issue (i.e., they may know of other Members who might be supportive of your position). If the Member is supportive of your position, request that they play a leadership role with colleagues (other Members of Congress) on the issue. The Member may be willing to circulate a “Dear Colleague” letter, speak with other Members on the floor or send a letter on your issue to the Chair of the relevant Committee. Make a note of all views, concerns and suggestions and convey that information to NACC policy staff.

Don’t:

- Don’t be surprised by a lack of interest or what seems like a negative or skeptical reaction.
- Don’t be defensive or argumentative.
- Don’t answer a question to which you do not know the answer. Make a note about the question and tell him/her that you will call or write back with the answer.
- Don’t threaten a Member of Congress or a staff person who does not support your position or issue with action against him/her by your organization. Such threats are always counterproductive.
- Don’t ignore, insult or burn bridges with a Member of Congress or staff person, no matter how insignificant his/her role.

- Don't be self-righteous about yourself, your issue or your organization. Remember, there are hundreds of groups who are lobbying for issues and programs designed to help people and improve our world.
- Don't trash the current administration (e.g., for not proposing sufficient funding for your program). You do not need any enemies in the executive branch. Also avoid criticizing any Members of Congress.
- Don't talk negatively about a Member of Congress or staff person to your colleagues while you are in the Congressional office buildings. No matter where you go – in the hallways, in the cafeterias, on the sidewalks – you never know who may be listening!

After the visit, remember to...

- Send a note thanking the Member and/or staff person for the visit. Reiterate the major points you made during the visit, include information about your agency, and provide answers to any questions that you were unable to answer at the time of the visit. Contact NACC policy staff if you need assistance answering questions.
- Follow up with the Member and staff. Place your lawmaker on your newsletter mailing list. Arrange a site visit. Contact the staff person you met during your visit when other issues arise. You want them to consider you a resource on children, youth and family issues.
- E-mail NACC policy staff about the visit so they can use the information throughout the year.

D. Setting Up Site Visits

One of the most effective ways of educating legislators about the principles and programs of work on behalf of children, youth and families is to invite them to visit your agency/court. By visiting your agency, a Member and his/her staff have the opportunity to see firsthand some of the problems that families and young people in your community face. They can also learn about the programs that support the safety and positive development of young people and their families.

Suggestions for setting up a site visit:

- Call your lawmaker's nearest local office. For the phone number call directory assistance or get it from the Member's website, available from thomas.loc.gov. If you prefer to send your Member a written invitation, see the sample letter below.
- Identify yourself and briefly describe your agency/program. Ask to set up a time for your Member of Congress to visit.
- If the staff person asks for a written invitation, provide one as soon as possible.
- Once the date is scheduled, plan what programs or services you will highlight, with whom the Member will meet and other details. Some agencies recruit key community players (i.e., chief of police, school principal, county supervisor) to help brief Congressional visitors. Be sure to include children, youth and families. Members of Congress, as well as their staff, have reported that conversations with young people and their families have strongly influenced their legislative work and advocacy on behalf of programs for children, youth and families.
- If you decide to invite local press, inform the elected official's office of your intention.

- On the day of the visit show your program in action. You should craft your messages carefully and provide an introduction to:
 - your agency's mission;
 - the programs and services your agency provides;
 - the program you wish to highlight and how it works (e.g., a profile of eligible families and young people, how services are accessed, the chronology of a typical case and types of supports and opportunities provided, number of families and young people served, and length of time the program has been in operation);
 - specific challenges faced by the children, youth and families your agency serves;
 - community involvement in your programs;
 - the cost-effective, flexible nature of community-based agencies, including effectiveness data from program evaluations; and
 - how your day-to-day work relates to national policymaking (explain how federal grants support your program activities or help you leverage additional local and state dollars).
In other words, communicate what your work is, why it is essential and how policymakers can help.
- Arrange for a photograph. A photo of your Member of Congress at your agency may be useful in generating press or for inclusion in an agency newsletter. Your lawmaker will undoubtedly be pleased to be seen as active in the community.
- If you can not schedule a visit, you may need to develop stronger relationships with local congressional staff who may be able to help you schedule a visit. In addition, a call from an active local Republican or Democratic party member can sometimes help, depending on the party affiliation of the Member of Congress. So, think about who on your board of directors or in your community may have connections. Also, find out dates of town meetings and other events that your Representative or Senators will be attending. Go to these events, introduce yourself and try to find ways that your elected officials and their staff can become acquainted with you and your agency.

Sending a Letter of Invitation to Your Member for a Site Visit

While letters to lawmakers should be in your own words, it may help to follow the key points outlined below. The fictitious sections that follow each key point are examples of how you might address each point. Letters should not exceed one page. And be sure to send information about your agency.

Sample site visit invitation:

Dear Senator _____:

Identify and invite

Example: As the Executive Director of Bridges for Youth, I would like to invite you to visit our emergency shelter, transitional living and youth drop-in programs.

Overview of agency

Example: Since its founding in 1976, Bridges for Youth has helped over 15,000 young people in crisis. We primarily serve youth from Eliot County and surrounding Maryland counties, but we have also worked with runaways from across the United States. Federal, state and private dollars allow us to offer comprehensive services to runaway, homeless and other youth in high-risk situations and their families.

What will the visit consist of?

Example: Our staff, volunteers, youth and other community partners will be on hand to show you our programs and discuss all that Bridges for Youth is doing to ensure young people's safety and positive development.

Logistics

Example: We ask for an hour of your time to tour our programs. Perhaps you could visit us during your next trip home. I will follow up with your appointment secretary to arrange an appropriate time.

Thank you

Example: Thank you for your leadership on behalf of Maryland's young people and their families.

Sincerely,

Karen Forkidds
Executive Director
Bridges for Youth

Sample site visit confirmation letter:

Dear Senator _____:

Confirm place, date and time

Example: I am writing to confirm your upcoming visit to Bridges for Youth on Tuesday, February 13 at 2 p.m.

Give overview of visit

Example: We will show you our agency in action. Our staff, volunteers and youth participants look forward to giving you and your staff an introduction to three Bridges for Youth programs: Transitions (transitional living apartments for youth between the ages of 16 and 21), Bridgefinders (temporary crisis and shelter services for runaway and homeless youth), and ReachOut (youth drop-in center).

Thank you

Example: On behalf of the youth and the families we serve, thank you for your commitment to helping young people make a successful transition to adulthood.

Sincerely,

Karen Forkidds
Executive Director
Bridges for Youth

E. Testifying Before Congress

Many state and local policy bodies allow citizens to sign up to testify just before a hearing begins, and no written statement is necessary. Congressional hearings are somewhat more formal and you need to be invited to testify by the Chair or Ranking Minority Member of the committee or subcommittee holding the hearing, and written statements usually must be submitted at least one day before the hearing (often multiple copies are requested by staff). NACC policy staff can assist you in preparing any testimony for Congress.

It is important to prepare your testimony in advance of any public hearing. Ideally, you should type out your testimony, read it a few times, prepare an outline to speak from and practice speaking from it out loud. This way you can have a more conversational tone in your testimony, and even get some eye contact with policymakers now and then. Try to avoid reading your testimony. Even the most animated reader can't make testimony that's being read sound really interesting. Remember, you can usually submit your written statement for the record, so you don't have to worry about covering every single point in your oral presentation. By the way, your written statement should include a cover sheet with the name of the committee/subcommittee, the date of the hearing, and the topic of the hearing, along with your name, title, organization and city.

It's best to arrive a little early at the hearing room; you can sit down, relax, and focus your thoughts. (If it's hot outside, you can cool down, and if it's cold outside you can warm up. If you were rushing to the hearing from something else, you can catch your breath.)

In your introduction, greet the policymakers (a spirited "good morning" or "good afternoon" with eye contact), identify your name, your title, your organization and the issue you are addressing, and thank the Committee/Subcommittee for allowing you the opportunity to testify. Address all comments to the Committee/Subcommittee, not the audience. Your voice should be loud and clear (without shouting). Don't rush; a few pauses can be useful. You should have listened to any prior testimony, so avoid restating what's already been said. Close your statement with a very brief summary of your position, your appreciation of the opportunity to testify, and an offer to answer any questions the Committee/Subcommittee may have.

Sometimes Committee/Subcommittee members are distracted during your testimony – they may be speaking with other members and/or staff, or reading correspondence, reports or even the newspaper. Do your best to connect with them using your passion, eye contact, strategic pauses, etc. If all that fails and they're still not paying attention, don't take it personally. Policymakers are busy people, often going all day from one event to another. They (or their staff) will read your written statement later.

Make sure to keep within the parameters specified by the Committee or Subcommittee (e.g., time frame for submitting written testimony, number of copies to be submitted, time frame for giving oral testimony, etc.). Follow the advice given earlier in this guide, including relevant suggestions from the advocacy "Basics" and "Visiting Your Members of Congress" sections (e.g., as with visits, try to present testimony as a youth/adult partnership effort; family and youth testimony can be especially compelling). Three tips for those who want to go the extra mile: you may seek other organizations to sign on to your testimony, to give it more weight; you may also wish to contact and coordinate with other panel members in advance of the hearing; you may even plant some questions with legislators who support your views.

If you've never testified before, see if you can attend another hearing of the Committee/Subcommittee prior to your testimony to get a feel for the room, the policymakers, the

kind of questions they ask (if any), and what the experience is like. If you're testifying before Congress for the first time, check out C-SPAN (cable TV) which, in addition to House and Senate floor debates, also periodically covers Committee/Subcommittee hearings.

After the hearing, debrief with others from your organization who attended the hearing. Evaluate what was done well, what could be improved next time, and what follow-up needs to occur.

NOTE: It would be unnatural for you to NOT be at all nervous before testifying, especially the first time. Try to relax as much as possible and be yourself (if appropriate, you can even inject a moment of humor in your testimony, to help connect personally with the policymakers). Remember that policymakers are people just like you, and that most of them are looking for information from you to help them do the right thing.

F. Building Congressional Relationships

You may have written a letter to your Senator in the past about increasing child abuse prevention program appropriations, or placed a phone call to your Representative opposing proposals that would allow more juveniles to be tried as adults. You may have visited your Representative and Senators while you were touring Washington at some point. Your Representative may even have visited your agency. Yet, you may still feel a little uncertain about how to build strong relationships with your Senators and Representative.

We know that building relationships with elected officials is not second nature to most of us. However, there are few differences between working with families and young people and cultivating relationships with elected officials. Building trust, listening, sharing, treating others as resources, educating and staying respectful, credible and reliable are all skills you use every day. Your role as an advocate will be easier if you realize that policy advocacy is just an extension of the work you do every day with children, youth, families, funders and community leaders.

Keep in touch with your Members of Congress. As issues affecting children, youth and families arise, call your Members or their staff to discuss these issues. Demonstrate that you are a reliable source of information. Ideally, your Members will become resources for you as well.

A relatively small investment of your time each month – a few 10-minute phone calls – can yield impressive results in developing a relationship with a Member of Congress and his/her staff. That relationship can make the difference between being just another advocate or being an *effective* advocate and having a positive impact on national policy affecting children, youth and families.

It also is beneficial to thank a Member each time they vote for or co-sponsor legislation that would help young people and/or your agency. If a Member is a strong and active supporter of positive legislation, you may want to further recognize him/her with an award or certificate of appreciation.

Be sure to share any information you receive about the Members' views on legislation and their plans for amendments, etc. with the public policy staff of the NACC.

G. Congressional Staff

Senators and Representatives have offices in Washington, D.C. and in their home districts. Home district office staff are typically oriented towards constituent services (e.g., a "caseworker") and arranging events in the district. Therefore, if you are calling to set up a site visit or appointment in the district, call the district staff.

D.C.-based legislative assistants are usually the prime contacts for the Member on substantive issues pending in Congress; each legislative assistant is assigned to handle several issues for the Member. Members who are committee or subcommittee chairs (and most ranking minority members) also have committee/subcommittee staff in addition to their “personal” staff. The committee/subcommittee staff do almost all of the work for that Member on legislation within the subcommittee or committee jurisdiction. Advocates should establish and maintain good relationships with them as well.

Other staff in Congressional offices include: an appointments secretary/scheduler (contact him/her if you want to schedule a meeting with the Member in D.C.); a press secretary (contact him/her if you’re inviting the media for the Member’s visit to your agency); and support staff, which may include a secretary, a receptionist, a legislative correspondent (usually a legislative assistant in training) and/or an office manager. Last, but definitely not least, are the two staff who run the Member’s office: a Legislative Director, who makes recommendations regarding the pros and cons of issues, and an Administrative Assistant/Chief of Staff who has a close relationship with the Member, manages the office (assigns work, handles personnel decisions, etc.) and keeps an eye on the political implications of issue decisions.

A relationship with both the Member and the legislative assistant handling children, youth and family issues is ideal. The Member ultimately makes the decisions, but the staff conducts research, develops most of the talking points and drafts legislation. You could even have different people in your agency cultivating different contacts. For example, the executive director could cultivate the relationship with the Member, and a case worker/attorney could work on the relationship with the Member’s staff.

H. Timing and Targets of Hill Advocacy Contacts

Which Member of Congress should you contact? Generally, you want to contact and establish relationships with the Members and staff that represent you. Members listen to constituents much more than non-constituents. Non-constituent contacts may be largely ignored unless the Member has ambitions for national office or you can provide some unique and particularly useful information to the Member.

When should you make advocacy contacts to your Senators and Representative? Advocates can contribute their views and ideas to policymakers at almost every juncture in the legislative process. If you have a Representative or Senator on a relevant subcommittee, you may want to contact them at the beginning of the Congress and sustain the relationship throughout their tenure. Renew the contact when a hearing on a relevant bill is scheduled and seek to testify. Make contact again as legislation moves toward subcommittee mark-up and then at the time of full committee mark-up and again when the bill is on the floor.

You have a particularly important opportunity and responsibility as an advocate for children, youth and families if you are a constituent of a Representative or Senator who serves as the chair of a key subcommittee or full committee. Chairs decide whether and when to hold hearings on legislation, and who will testify. For any major legislation, chairs typically draft the version of the bill that their subcommittee or committee will consider. Chairs usually determine whether or not a mark-up will be held and when. Chairs write the committee reports on legislation and chairs also manage the consideration of the bill on the floor. Chairs lead the efforts in House/Senate Conference to develop compromise legislation that can move toward enactment. A committee chair can even advocate to colleagues on the Budget and Appropriations Committees for more funding for certain programs that his/her committee oversees.

If you are a constituent of a relevant subcommittee or committee chair in Congress, or any other key Member, try to be as active as you can in policy advocacy for families and young people. Key members of Congress include the ranking minority members of important subcommittees or committees as well as the House and Senate leadership for both parties. Even if your Senators and Representative are not on any key committee, subcommittee or in the leadership, they may have a connection to a Member who is.

The earlier in the process you make your position on legislation known, the greater the chances are that your views will be considered. It is much easier to change a provision in a bill through informal contacts prior to a subcommittee mark-up than through an amendment at mark-up. Similarly, it is usually somewhat easier to get a successful amendment to a bill in subcommittee than in full committee.

I. Overall Hill Advocacy Tips

Consider the following:

- **Bi-partisanship is important.** Bipartisan sponsorship or commitments of support for any legislation or amendment you are promoting increases the chances that the legislation or amendment will pass. At a minimum, it is important to have at least some majority party Members support your amendment or legislation.
- **Remember:** there is so much legislation awaiting Congressional action at any given time; it can take a long time for a bill to wind its way through the legislative process; and there are so many potential legislative obstacles to overcome. The sooner advocates can get legislation introduced and moving, the better.
- **It usually takes several tries to get legislation passed.** To paraphrase Scarlett O’Hara in *Gone with the Wind*, “Next year IS another session!” Sponsors may introduce legislation knowing that the chances of passage in that session – or even that Congress – are minimal. Introducing legislation provides a vehicle for educating and gaining the support of other Members, the White House, executive agencies and outside groups.
- **Because you never know when you will need the assistance of a particular Member, always remember that there are no permanent friends and no permanent enemies – there are just permanent interests!** A Representative or Senator opposing your position on one issue may become your primary ally on another issue. Therefore, always try to maintain a friendly demeanor, and recognize that sometimes you may have to agree to disagree on a particular issue.
- **Understand that most policymakers have other priorities and larger political agendas to promote.** Unfortunately, it is rare for a Member of Congress to take on policy affecting children, youth and families as their primary area of recognized leadership. Don’t be disappointed. Work to raise the profile of the issues with your Members of Congress as much as possible.
- **"If you are new to lobbying, remember that there is no one right or wrong way to lobby. There are as many ways to lobby as there are people who do it. Remember, too, that you won’t learn to lobby by reading this book or any other. You learn to do it by doing it."** Bob Smucker, *The Nonprofit Lobbying Guide*, 2nd Ed., 1998, Independent Sector, D.C.

- **Policy advocacy in Congress can be challenging and frustrating, but it can also be incredibly exciting and fun!** Just imagine catching C-SPAN one evening, and hearing the words YOU wrote turning up in your Representative's floor statement on a child-related bill! It really is amazing how much impact advocates can have on the development of federal children, youth and family policy!

J. Administrative Advocacy

When legislation is enacted, the policymaking process is not over. The Administration must then implement the legislation. While many of the tips for legislative advocacy are also applicable to advocacy with executive branch agencies and officials, there are some unique aspects to administrative advocacy that should be noted.

It can be difficult to find the right office or person in the Administration to talk to on a particular issue. Executive agencies are incredibly complex and finding the right office and person making decisions on your issue can be difficult. Further, executive agencies are highly compartmentalized, so the right person on one issue is probably not the right person to talk to on another seemingly closely related issue. There may be different right people on a given issue, at different levels of the hierarchy: one person (a career civil servant) may be very well versed on the issue, but not have the authority to make the decision; another person at a higher level (a political appointee) may have the authority to make the decision, but have little understanding of the issue and, if a political appointee, may have motivations other than pure substance determining the decision. Finally, there is a high level of turnover, so the right person one month may have been moved by the next month. Of course, the NACC staff can help direct you to the appropriate decision-makers in federal agencies.

Perhaps more challenging than finding the right person/office is actually influencing them, once you find them. Unlike Members of Congress, administration officials and agencies have no grassroots constituency to whom they are accountable. It is said that agencies have a constituency of one: the President. As a result of this lack of a direct constituency (and often insufficient numbers of staff), there is a much lower level of responsiveness to letters and calls. While you can be sure that a Member of Congress tracks how many letters and calls they're getting on a particular issue, there is no such certainty regarding letters and calls to executive agencies, EXCEPT in two circumstances: comments submitted in response to the publication of a proposed rule in the Federal Register, and calls and letters to the White House.

When a proposed rule or other proposed action (e.g., program plan) is published in the Federal Register with a specified public comment period (and you submit comments to the appropriate office within the designated time period), the agency will consider your comments and is legally required to do so. That does not mean they must do what you recommend, but that they take all comments into consideration and must provide justification for their decision.

If you wish to weigh in with the Administration on an important issue – including whether the President should sign or veto a particular bill – you can call the White House comment line (202-456-1111), send a fax to the White House (202-456-2461), send an e-mail to the White House (president@whitehouse.gov) or send a letter to the White House (The President, The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20500). The White House staff tallies its incoming communications and provides regular reports to the President. Obviously, this approach is most persuasive if you can organize a large number of such communications to arrive at the White House in a short period of time.

Another way to influence the Administration is through Members of Congress. If you get Members of Congress to write to and/or call the Administration on an issue, you are much more likely to get a response and – more important – favorable action. The chairs of relevant Congressional committees and subcommittees (those which have authorizing and oversight jurisdiction over the agency in question or those which appropriate funds for the agency) are the best points of contact, but the Administration will probably respond in some way to any Member of Congress.

K. Getting Positive Media Coverage

Every day, television, radio and print media shape public opinion, and the opinions of policymakers. Turn on a television news program, or pick up the local newspaper and you'll find that the coverage of children, youth, and families issues tends to be limited to anecdotal and problem-focused stories. For example, a news story begins, "Yesterday, a 17-year-old was arrested on charges of having robbed a grocery store at gun point ..." Media coverage rarely focuses on youth in high-risk situations who have NOT committed any crimes, and it almost never highlights programs successful in reaching and positively engaging young people and their families. Because the media plays such a critical role in shaping public opinion and public policy, advocates for children, youth and families must strive to get positive media coverage of issues related to young people and community-based programs that work. Positive media coverage can accomplish other goals as well, including enhanced visibility and name recognition for your organization, increased fundraising, membership/volunteer recruitment and changing public behavior (e.g., reducing smoking, drug use, drunk driving, etc.).

The following strategies can help advocates of children, youth and families achieve positive media coverage of important issues.

L. Overall Media Tips

- **Do your homework regarding particular reporters and media outlets (i.e., particular papers or stations).** Identify the five or 10 reporters that cover children, youth and family issues for the media (papers/stations) you want to reach. Then – media websites now make this particularly easy – look up the stories (or editorials, or op-eds) related to children, youth and families they've run for the past six to 12 months. The more knowledge you have about the media outlet and reporter, the more you can tailor your "pitch" to them.
- **Establish and nurture relationships with reporters.** Just as establishing and nurturing relationships with Members of Congress is critical to success in influencing their policy decisions, establishing and nurturing relationships with reporters is just as critical to success in influencing their coverage of issues important to children, youth and families. Many of the tips provided in the advocacy "Basics", "Visiting Your Members of Congress" and other advocacy strategy sections of this guide are also applicable to media contacts. One way to begin establishing relationships with reporters is to respond to press inquiries. Be a credible source for them, and you'll be on their source lists for future articles on issues relating to children, youth and families. Keep names, phone numbers and fax numbers of all media contacts. Don't hesitate to call when you have a story for them to cover. And always remember, when speaking to the media: think carefully before answering questions, and assume everything is "on the record," unless you have developed a very high level of trust with a particular reporter (usually over several years), and have mutually defined "off the record" to avoid confusion (e.g., Does it mean they can publish what you said, but can't identify the source? Or does it mean they can't publish what you said at all?).

- A key to the success of media strategies is your ability to “**frame the message**” for the media. Chris Jahnke, a media trainer with “Positive Communications” in D.C., suggests following the 5 Cs in framing the message:
 1. *Clear*: your message should be clear, simple, without jargon, with only three or four message points.
 2. *Connect* with your target audience, through an image or analogy they can relate to.
 3. *Compelling*: your message should be compelling, with a powerful, dramatic image that will make the audience want to act.
 4. *Concise*: your message should be a SHORT sound-bite (for electronic media, an 8-second phrase; for print media one or two sentences).
 5. *Continual*: you should repeat your message over and over again in the same interview and in every interview.

- **A central rule for verbal communication with the media is “stay on message.”** Do not let questions pull you off into discussing some tangential or unrelated issue. Your answer to all questions should ALWAYS, politely but forcefully, come back to a restatement of your message. Use the “ATM” technique: Acknowledge the question (“that’s true” or “that’s not always the case”); Transition to the key message (“but what’s really important to remember is that...”); Message (restate your message). It may seem a little rude to avoid fully discussing a reporter’s question, but that’s the rule of the game, and reporters understand it.

- **Try to find a “hook.”** There are a number of possible “hooks” to get the media’s attention and give them a reason to cover your issue/story. Use one or more of the following to find “hooks”:
 1. Local interest: As with Members of Congress, hometown stories (e.g., the release of new local data on the number of runaway, homeless and street youth) play well with local media.
 2. Human interest: As with Members of Congress, the media appreciates hearing – and writing about – the stories of real, live people.
 3. Intervention of a prominent public figure: If Michael Jordan (or even the local chief of police, or chair of the local chamber of commerce) just decided to join your advocacy effort, THAT’s worth a press release...
 4. Irony: When you learn that your state has tougher laws against animal cruelty or neglect than against the abuse or neglect of children and youth, that’s an “ironic” hook.
 5. Injustice: If your community is jailing runaways or other young people who have committed no crimes (many of whom are victims of abuse), that’s an injustice that may play well with the media.
 6. Injury: The old media adage, “If it bleeds, it leads,” is still very true; if a young person is harmed on the streets after having sought shelter when the shelter was full, use this tragedy as an opportunity for some public education about the need for funding increases for homeless youth shelters.
 7. A fight: Are you considering filing suit against the state for locking up runaways? Call your local media! The media loves a good controversy!
 8. Milestone: When your agency is about to cross the threshold of reaching the ten-thousandth family or young person, that may be deemed newsworthy.
 9. Time of year: Mothers’ Day and Fathers’ Day are great hooks for family preservation-related stories; “back to school” time in late August/early September works on education issues.
 10. Anniversary: Plan on using the April anniversary of the Columbine school shooting to raise awareness on the issue of how communities can better reach youth in high-risk situations.

- **Take advantage of a pre-existing line of coverage to address your issue.** If your local paper has been giving a significant amount of coverage to a particular event/issue, see if there's a way to use that as a "hook" for coverage of your issue. BE CREATIVE! For instance, if a paper is doing a series of articles on the class action lawsuit against your state's child welfare system and the system flaws that led to the lawsuit, pitch the relevant reporter as follows: "Gee, that's a great series you're doing on the problems in the state child welfare system; there's actually another problem with that system that I haven't yet seen mentioned in your articles: the extent to which the child welfare system is primarily ignoring adolescents, and thus helping to create a population of homeless youth!" Or, in the rare occasion of a national media line of coverage that's relevant to child and family issues (e.g., the Elian Gonzalez case), use it to get your message out: "I'm glad you guys have had such in-depth coverage of Elian's case; perhaps you'd be interested in how many children are needlessly separated from their parents right here in Podunk, simply because of homelessness and poverty..."
- **As with any advocacy strategy: follow-up and evaluate.** If the reporter does a good piece on your issue, or the editors publish a good editorial, follow-up with a "thank you" phone call or letter. With the "herd instinct" in the media, one good story will often generate several more in other media outlets. After a media strategy has been utilized, evaluate its effectiveness: how much coverage did your efforts yield? What did you learn from the effort? What should you do different next time? Recognize, as part of your evaluation, that there are events beyond your control that impact the extent of your media coverage (wars, bombs, blizzards, hurricanes, Presidential impeachments, etc.). And send a copy of written coverage to NACC staff, please!

M. Key Media Advocacy Strategies

1. **Write letters to the editor.** When writing a letter to the editor, look at the letters section of the newspaper, call the newspaper or check their website to obtain information about letter submission requirements. Your chances of having your letter published are greater if you write your piece in response to a recent news event, article, editorial, or op-ed piece. Make it brief (250 words or less). Include your name, title, organization, address and phone number (they don't print address and phone number, but many publications call you before publishing your letter to confirm that you wrote it and would like it published). If you have relevant credentials/expertise, say so. Follow the advice in the advocacy "Basics", "Writing Your Members of Congress" and other advocacy strategy sections of this guide. Include an attention-grabbing fact or analogy and local information, and show a little passion! Don't be disappointed if your letter isn't published, especially if you submitted it to a wide-circulation paper (New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Chicago Tribune, etc.). Try again next time!
2. **Write Op-Eds**, which are longer (500 - 700 words) opinion pieces often published "opposite the editorial page" – hence, the name "op-eds."
 - a. As with letters to the editor, you should look at the op-ed section of the newspaper to get a sense of what their op-eds look like. Op-eds may be tied to recent or upcoming events, or may be addressing more long-term issues. As with letters, include your name, title, organization, address and phone number, and any relevant credentials/expertise. Don't forget to follow the advice in the advocacy "Basics", "Writing Your Members of Congress" and other advocacy strategy sections of this guide. As with letters, include an attention-grabbing fact or analogy and local information, and show a little passion!

- b. Newspapers are more likely to publish op-eds signed by experts in the community. As a person who works with children, youth and families and as an advocate you have credibility to write on youth issues. Another strategy for placing an op-ed is to find a recognizable person in your community to submit the op-ed on your behalf.
 - c. When submitting an op-ed, send it to the largest paper in the area. If they reject it, try sending your piece to a smaller paper. Do not be discouraged if your first op-ed is not published; it sometimes takes a few submissions.
 - d. Call the paper to follow-up on your op-ed 3-4 days after you submitted it. You can “pitch” the importance of the issue to their readers. (Then, don’t call again until your next op-ed submission.)
3. **Meet with editorial boards.** Newspapers frequently take positions on issues and write editorials that can shape public opinion. Sometimes it is helpful to sit down with the editors who write the editorials and educate them about issues impacting children, youth and families. That way, you can have some input as to which positions they take on an issue. (If they have already published an editorial on your issue, but you disagree, write a letter to the editor or op-ed.) Keep a news clip file (or check out their website, if they have one) for articles, editorials and op-eds related to children youth and families, so that you are familiar with their coverage of the issues important to you. Again, try to follow the tips provided in the advocacy “Basics”, “Visiting Your Members of Congress” and other advocacy strategy sections of this guide. Call to identify the appropriate person to meet with and then speak with her/him to schedule the meeting. Have several people attend the meeting, including community leaders, families, children and youth. In advance of the meeting, determine who will lead the meeting, who will speak, on what topics, and in what order.

At the editorial board meeting:

- Open the meeting by stating your case briefly (in 5 minutes). State your position on the issue, the evidence that supports this position, the anticipated criticisms of the position and appropriate responses to those criticisms. Afterwards, expect questions.
 - Maintain a cordial atmosphere even if the editorial staff appear to disagree with your position. They may, in fact, disagree, or they may be playing “devil’s advocate” to fully explore your position. As with policy-makers, there are no permanent friends or permanent enemies in the media, so be polite.
 - Give them a one-page fact sheet on your issue.
4. **Send out news releases.** When you are planning an agency or public event to raise awareness about youth-related issues, you should send a press release to the media outlets, which include newspapers, television and radio stations in your area. Even if you are not planning an event, send the media press releases on developments that are truly newsworthy. (Caveat: You lessen credibility if you regularly send news releases on information that is not newsworthy; it’s like “crying wolf” – when you really DO have something newsworthy, they won’t read it.)
- a. Press releases should be approximately one page, double-spaced, and sent on your organization’s letterhead. At the top of the release: on the left put “For Immediate Release” and the release date; on the right put a contact name and phone number; and just

- below that, in the middle, put your headline. If your release is more than one page, put “MORE” at the bottom of the first page, and then put a shortened heading and “Page 2” at the top of the second page. To signal the end of your release, center the symbol “###” two lines after your last sentence. A press release should never exceed two pages.
- b. The first paragraph should begin with a dateline (e.g., “Washington, D.C., February 8”), and should continue with a brief summary of the release (Who? What? Where? When? Why?), written in a way that will interest the reader and encourage them to read on. The most important information should be near the beginning of the release, and the least important should be at the end.
 - c. Opinions should be in quotes from a named official of your organization (put the quote first, name second: “...,” said ...), and quotes should sound like something someone would say, rather than something someone would write. Throughout the release, use active verbs, rather than passive ones (e.g., “NACC members met with key Members of Congress today,” rather than “Key Members of Congress were met by NACC members today”). If statistics are used, spell out numbers and percentages less than ten.
 - d. Again, follow the advice in the advocacy “Basics”, “Writing Your Members of Congress” and other advocacy strategy sections of this guide.
 - e. Follow-up with a phone call to see if the appropriate reporter got the news release, and to offer to provide any further information they might need.
 - f. Try to avoid sending out a news release in the middle of a major national breaking news story (war, bomb, blizzard, hurricane, etc.); your release will be ignored. Sometimes a major story breaks just after you’ve sent your release out; just hope that you’ll have better luck next time!
5. **Hold press conferences and briefings.** A well-organized press conference can be used to highlight a newsworthy development or event. Similarly, a press briefing can provide useful information to the media about an issue already receiving media coverage. Make sure that the development, event, or information is important enough to warrant the press conference/briefing. Again, try to follow the tips provided in the advocacy “Basics”, “Visiting Your Members of Congress” and other advocacy strategy sections of this guide.
- a. When planning your press conference or briefing be sure to consider the following: 1) the best location (preferably, a convenient one for reporters to get to, with visual interest and relevance to the issue, without too much background noise; in any case, you need adequate space and several electric outlets for lights, cameras, microphones, etc.) and the best timing (preferably Tuesday through Thursday, from 10:00 am to 11:00 am) for the event; 2) the message you want to convey; 3) who will speak at the event (not too many people! two to four should be plenty, and make sure they’re knowledgeable and articulate) and for how long (presentations should be brief, and there should be plenty of time for reporters’ questions); and 4) topics to be covered by each speaker. It is helpful to have a well-recognized community leader — someone the media will quote — speaking at the press conference or briefing. Also, voices of children, youth and families can be very powerful in conveying your message. Be sure that they have an opportunity to relay their story at any press event.
 - b. If possible, schedule your event on a “slow news” day — a day when there are no other major news events expected that would take media attention away from your event.

- c. Three or four days in advance of your event fax a press advisory to the media. In the advisory include: a brief explanation of the event worded in a way that would entice reporters to attend; a list of who will be at the event; details of where and when the event will be held; and a contact name and number to call for further information. Include the Associated Press (AP) and United Press International (UPI) wire services on your media fax list (to get your event listed on the “Day Book”). To be sure that the media has received your press advisory, follow-up with at least one phone call contact with each reporter, and, ideally a second call the afternoon before a morning event (or the morning of an afternoon event).
 - d. Prepare press kits with the press release, fact sheet(s) on the issue(s), and the list of speakers (perhaps with brief bios) for distribution at the event. A greeter should ask each reporter to sign in (name, paper/station, and phone number) as they pick up their press kit.
 - e. At the event, have appropriate and attractive visuals. The surroundings at the event convey your message just as much as the words spoken. Such visuals are also necessary for attracting television reporters and newspaper photographers. Some examples of visuals are banners, pictures (blown up so they can be seen from a distance), graphic charts (also blown up) and other props.
6. **Radio and Television Talk Shows** – appearing as an invited presenter and calling in:
- a. To appear on a radio or television talk show, use the advocacy skills and techniques described throughout this guide to convince the show’s producer that the issue is one that should be on the air: it is important to many viewers/listeners, it is interesting, and the discussion will be lively. Demonstrate other media interest in the issue (share copies of articles, editorials), and note any experience you’ve had with public/media presentations on the issue.
 - b. When a producer calls to invite you to appear on a program (because of the excellent media work you’ve done utilizing the strategies described above), ask for information about the proposed appearance: the show, the host, the station, and the location (if it’s a radio program, they’ll usually have you participate over the phone; if it’s a TV program, you’ll need details on where to go and any transportation assistance they’ll provide, if necessary); the length and format of the program (audience questions, call-in questions?); whether the program is taped or broadcast live; the host’s position on the issue, if any; names and organizations of other guests who will be appearing with you; and questions they expect to ask you (these may not be exactly what will be asked, but having them will enable you to prepare better). During the appearance, don’t read a pre-prepared statement; relax, be yourself, and just have a conversation. Don’t forget to mention your organization’s phone number while on the air, so viewers/listeners can get further information.
 - c. If you know in advance about a radio or television call-in program related to your issue, spread the word to your network to generate calls into the program that are consistent with your organization’s views. Ask callers to be patient; they may get a busy signal, or be put on hold for a long time. They need to be persistent, and keep trying to get through.
7. **Public Service Announcements (PSAs), paid advertisements, or Public Access Cable TV** Public Service Announcements on the radio and television can be an effective way of announcing a meeting or public event, changing citizen behavior (e.g., reducing smoking, drug use, drunk driving, unprotected sex, etc.), soliciting membership and donations, or

providing general information about your organization to the public. However, a “spot” will not be accepted for use as a free PSA if the message is deemed too political (e.g., partisan or related to issue advocacy). Often PSAs air in the middle of the night, or at other times when the audience is relatively small. While placement of PSAs is free-of-charge, they can be expensive to produce. Paid advertisements in print or electronic media can be an effective means of communicating your message. However, this too can be very expensive. If your agency cannot afford the expense of producing a PSA or placing an ad, the NACC suggests that you try submitting a radio PSA in the form of a written script that can be read by the radio announcer, who is an experienced and familiar voice to the public ear. Sharing a message with the public via Public Access Cable TV is a low-cost option that is growing in popularity. Otherwise, focus your efforts on getting free media coverage through the other methods described above.

Better media coverage of issues important to children, youth and families is not only an end in itself, but it also is a means to further other advocacy goals. For example, you can photocopy and distribute any published articles, editorials, letters to the editor or op-eds to policy makers. The printed word sometimes has a power greater than advocacy statements; use that to your advantage in your advocacy work.

N. Cultivating Community Allies

Your voice as an advocate can be effective, but you can multiply your effectiveness if you recruit other organizations and individuals in your community to join with you. Coalition-building and grassroots organizing are keys to building a large and powerful nationwide constituency to promote positive policies for children, youth and families.

1. Coalition Building:

Your first step should be to organize a coalition of children, youth and family advocates in your community, if no such coalition already exists. The following is a list of some types of possible local coalition partners:

- American Association of University Women (AAUW)
- Associations of professionals working with children, youth and families (e.g., social workers, juvenile officers, teachers)
- Boys/Girls Clubs, YMCA/YWCA, and other traditional youth development organizations
- Business leaders
- College/university campus groups
- Chamber of Commerce
- Child abuse prevention organizations
- Child advocacy organizations
- Civil rights advocates
- Clergy, congregations
- Community health centers, pediatricians and other health care providers
- Corporate sponsors of Safeplace (firefighters, public libraries)
- Junior League chapters
- Juvenile court judges, prosecutors, and defense attorneys
- Juvenile Justice State Advisory Groups (SAGs)
- League of Women Voters
- Local planning groups/commissions that address children, youth and families issues

- Parks and recreation centers
- Parent, teacher, student associations (PTA, PTSA)
- Religious youth organizations
- Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis and other service clubs
- School districts and boards
- Sheriffs/police
- Unions
- United Way
- University/college partners (especially ones that place interns in our programs)

Send out an invitation to all of the above – and any others you can think of that might be interested – to come to an initial advocacy coalition meeting. At the meeting, provide a brief informational presentation on some of the policy advocacy issues that you would like the group to consider working on. Then, through a well-facilitated participatory process (we strongly recommend using the “Technology of Participation” facilitation method; call NACC for more information), develop the coalition’s initial youth advocacy goal(s) and strategies to achieve the goal(s) (this guide may be a useful tool for that discussion), and sign up participants onto committees, each of which can then coordinate action within that strategy. Committees could be formed on:

- Coalition Building (reaching out to organizations);
- Grassroots organizing (reaching out to individuals);
- Lobbying (reaching out to decision makers);
- Communications/Media (reaching out to the media and developing a website);
- Non-partisan Elections Work (reaching out to candidates and voters);
- Legal Action (preparing for a lawsuit, if appropriate, e.g., if your city is jailing runaway youth on a regular basis);
- Publications (written tools for outreach); and
- Fundraising (to pay for the effort).

At the close of the full-group coalition meeting, brief initial committee gatherings should occur, to select the initial Chair and to designate a first committee meeting date, time and location. The initial committee chairs – and others – can then be a “steering committee” for the coalition; a brief steering committee meeting can then occur to select an initial steering committee chair and to set a first steering committee date, time and place. Then your coalition is ready to roll!

Here are some keys to successful coalition building:

1. Clearly-defined goal(s) shared by all coalition members, recognizing and respecting each coalition member’s self interest.
2. Broad based coalition membership, with a diverse range of organizations and individuals.
3. Clear and democratic decision making structure/process that builds “ownership.”
4. Recognition that organizations’ strengths (and contributions to the coalition) vary.
5. Willingness to distribute credit for victories.
6. Willingness to “agree to disagree” on some issues.
7. Effective leadership (see below).
8. Regular communication.
9. One or a handful of designated spokespeople who are articulate, understand the issues, and are familiar with the coalition’s positions.
10. Celebration of small (as well as large) victories.

An important element of successful coalition-building is #7 above: effective leadership. Effective coalition leaders like people, communicate well, listen well, are flexible, work hard, and keep a positive attitude. They also:

- Facilitate group decisions rather than tell people what to do;
- Divide up and delegate work rather than trying to do everything;
- Show appreciation for others' good efforts rather than grabbing the spotlight;
- Welcome criticism rather than being defensive;
- Inspire trust through honesty rather than doubt through deceitfulness;
- Inspire the group through (realistic) optimism rather than defeatism;
- Spur individuals by believing in them rather than being cynical; and
- Occasionally, remind the group of the importance of the group's work for and with children, youth and families, and occasionally display some humor to reduce tensions.

2. Grassroots Organizing:

The community allies in your coalition, especially those that are well-known and respected in the community, can participate in visits to Members of Congress, make phone calls and write letters to Congress, help organize events and raise understanding of children, youth and families issues in the media and among the general public. It is particularly helpful when asking for increased funding for programs to have allies who are not recipients of such funding discuss the issue with Representatives and Senators. However, do you still want and need more voices to support your policy advocacy efforts? You – and the coalition – will need to begin to do more “grassroots organizing.”

The first place you can start in organizing is close to home (your agency). Start educating your agency's staff, clients, board members and supporters about the importance of policy advocacy on behalf of children, youth and families, and how to do it (feel free to use this guide). During key moments for issues on Capitol Hill, you should try to mobilize them so that more calls will be made and more letters will be sent to Congress. You should also encourage all of your colleagues in the advocacy coalition to do the same.

Your mobilization of people involved in the coalition and its member organizations is a great start in policy organizing. However, your impact would be multiplied many times if the coalition did further grassroots organizing, beyond its membership. That can be accomplished in three stages: recruiting people, retaining those who are recruited and mobilizing them for action.

Recruiting people to join your effort takes a little time and work, but it can be lots of fun and very productive. Strategies used to recruit include:

1. Arranging a large community meeting that is open to the public and widely publicized.
2. Speaking at other scheduled community meetings.
3. Bringing flyers to post on “public space” bulletin boards, to hand out, and to leave piles of copies EVERYWHERE, from grocery stores to churches to playgrounds.
4. Door-to-door canvassing.
5. Mailed letters and flyers.
6. Information dissemination tables set up in public places (grocery stores, malls, fairs, town meetings, other events).
7. Scheduled personal meetings (especially with influential community-members).
8. Phone solicitations.
9. Member-get-a-member campaign.
10. Family, friends, neighbors: how about a house party?

11. Using media (print, TV, radio, as well as local organizations' newsletters) to recruit (see this guide's section on media).
12. Establishing a web page, and having other relevant sites establish direct links to your site.

When you do membership recruitment, be clear about what you're asking people to do. (E.g., are you asking them to come to a coalition meeting? To serve on your steering committee or board? To make a donation, cash or in-kind? To recruit others?) Materials that are essential in recruitment efforts include: pads of paper and pens to sign people up, and flyers to hand out. Other useful materials include: brochures, banners, signs, T-shirts, bumper stickers, buttons, etc.

When recruiting, make sure you get lists of meeting attendees from every meeting you organize (i.e., sign-up sheets). Also try to get lists of participants from meetings you attend. Similarly, try to get contact information for people you meet during the above-listed recruitment strategies. A person or committee from the coalition should be responsible for entering lists into a computer database, so you can use them for further recruitment and grassroots mobilization (see below).

The next stage is retaining those whom you've recruited. The following are some tips for keeping people involved in your advocacy effort:

- stay in touch (regular contact, including some in-person contact);
- welcome and orient newcomers;
- pay attention to the inclusiveness of group process;
- act more, meet less (a clear agenda should be developed, in advance, for each meeting, and the facilitator should keep the group moving forward in the agenda);
- ensure that everyone has an opportunity to contribute to the effort;
- keep time demands modest;
- provide skills training; and
- provide social/fun time, too (envelope-stuffing pizza parties are a favorite team-building effort).

When action is needed on a policy issue – as indicated by the NACC policy staff, through an e-mail alert or through *The Guardian* – you should immediately disseminate an action alert to your grassroots advocates. Because mailings are time-intensive and costly, phone and fax contacts can be an effective means of disseminating action alerts. You can also form a phone/fax “tree,” where each person contacts three other people, to get your message to advocates in a timely way.

The most inexpensive, fastest and easiest way to send out action alerts, however, is via e-mail. Take advantage of this new tool which can enhance the timeliness of your communication with other grassroots advocates. Recognize, however, that the speed and ease of e-mail contacts come at a “cost”, in terms of effectiveness; personal phone call alerts are still much harder to ignore and more likely to get grassroots responses than e-mail alerts.

There is one strategy that both facilitates grassroots recruitment and accomplishes mobilization at the same time: incorporating an action element into every coalition, board, staff, volunteer, and recruitment meeting or activity. For example, pick a child, youth or family issue pending in Congress, hand out blank sheets of paper and pens as needed, and ask all meeting/activity participants to neatly hand-write a letter to their Representative or Senator on the issue right then and there, and designate 15 minutes of the agenda to accomplish this. Then, provide the relevant Hill address, and ask each participant to mail the letter within two days (letters mailed as a batch to the Hill are less effective). Having taken this action, meeting participants will find it easier to do the next policy action needed.

Finally, be sure to include children, youth and their families as partners in all of your advocacy efforts. As mentioned previously, Members of Congress find stories young people and their

families tell of their lives – and the impact of federally supported programs on their lives – to be especially powerful. These stories can influence Members’ views of federal programs like no other advocacy messages. Further, the energy and creativity that children and youth can bring to advocacy efforts make them great partners in advocacy. Advocacy can have an enormously positive impact on children and youth themselves by giving them the opportunity to be heard by national leaders and to experience the empowerment of knowing that they have made a difference.

Appendix I

Federal Legislative Process

A. Role and Structure of Congress

Congress, the legislative branch of the federal government, drafts and passes the laws of the nation. Under the direction of the President, the agencies of the executive branch administer the laws. Congress often gives those agencies the power to write rules and regulations that are needed to implement the policy goals set forth in the legislation. The court system or judicial branch settles all conflicts that arise in the interpretation of the laws.

The Congress consists of two chambers, the Senate and the House of Representatives. The system is designed so that each citizen in a state is represented by two Senators and one Representative. Every state has two Senators, each of whom serves a six year term. The terms are staggered so that one-third of the 100 member Senate is elected every two years. The terms of both Senators from any one state are arranged so that they do not terminate at the same time.

The House of Representatives, often referred to as the “House,” has 435 voting Members and five non-voting Members who represent the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and American Samoa. The number of Representatives from each state depends on the population of that state, as determined by the national census every ten years. So, while California has 52 Members, Montana only has one. Each state is divided into Congressional districts so that every Member from that state represents approximately the same number of people. The Members of the House serve two-year terms, with the entire House facing election every two years.

The Senate and House of Representatives share most functions – bills can be introduced in either chamber, and all bills must be approved by both chambers before they go to the President for his signature – but there are differences. For example, all tax and spending bills must be initiated in the House, while the Senate alone has the power to confirm Presidential nominations to federal courts and executive branch positions, and to approve treaties (through consideration by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and then approval by two-thirds of the full Senate).

Congressional elections occur in November of every even year. The following January a new Congress is convened. Each Congress lasts two years and is broken down into two one-year sessions beginning in January and ending towards the end of that year. Each Congress and session is numbered. For example, the second session of the 106th Congress was convened in January 2000. The first weeks of a Congress are usually spent selecting leaders and getting organized into committees and subcommittees.

Bills that are introduced but not enacted into law do not carry over from one Congress to the next. Each Congress starts out with a clean slate. It is common for Members of Congress to reintroduce bills that were not enacted in the previous Congress so that they can again begin their legislative journey.

B. The Birth of a Bill

1. **The Idea:** Ideas for legislation come from many sources. Members and their staff certainly bring their own agendas to Capitol Hill and develop and refine their agendas once in office. The White House and officials within federal agencies also can see the need for new policies or improvements in programs. An administration official often

drafts legislation that reflects the agency’s goals and then finds a Member of Congress to introduce the bill. Other times, ideas for legislation are formally promoted or endorsed by national organizations or powerful individuals before they are presented to Congress.

Most importantly, changes in federal policies and programs frequently result from people like you: involved constituents who understand the actual conditions in communities and the need for Congressional action. Constituents or local experts either bring their ideas to their local Member of Congress or present their ideas to a Congressperson through a national association similar to the NACC. In either case, constituents do not have to draft the actual legislative language of a bill in order to make suggestions. Legislative drafts are sent to the legislative counsel’s office on Capitol Hill to be correctly worded and formatted prior to introduction.

2. **Resolutions:** Bills are not the only forms of legislation. Resolutions, for example, express the views of Congress or determine the rules that will govern the House or Senate. Unlike traditional bills, resolutions do not have to be signed by the President, and they do not have the force of law. (Note: Joint resolutions proposing amendments to the Constitution must be passed by a two-thirds vote in each chamber and must then be approved by three-fourths of the states to go into effect.)
3. **The Introduction—Getting a Number:** When a bill is introduced, it is given a number so that it can be tracked through the system. Bills that originate in the House of Representatives are designated by the letters “H.R.” and a number; Senate bills are designated by the letter “S.” and a number. Numbers are assigned in consecutive order as bills are introduced. You should note that bill numbers do not carry over from one Congress to the next, even if a bill is identical to one introduced in a prior Congress.
4. **Building Support:** When a bill is introduced, the Member of Congress who wrote the bill is called the “Sponsor.” Other Members can sign onto the bill as a way of lending support for it; this is often done at the encouragement of a Member’s local constituents or national groups such as the NACC. Members who sign onto a bill before its introduction are called “Original Co-sponsors.” If they sign onto the bill after it has been introduced, they are simply called “Co-sponsors.” While it is rare, Members occasionally will withdraw their co-sponsorship of legislation if their position changes or if the bill is altered in a way that makes it undesirable. Since the number of co-sponsors a bill has reflects the support for its passage, recruiting co-sponsors for a bill is a tool that is often used in advocacy work.

C. Committee Structure

When a bill is introduced in either the House or the Senate, it is generally assigned or “referred” to the committee or committees with jurisdiction over the issue or program under consideration. While more than 7,000 bills may be introduced in each Congress, fewer than 400 of these bills are enacted into law. The committee and subcommittee structure, which is controlled by each chamber’s majority party, plays a significant role in determining which of these bills will move successfully through the process and be enacted into law.

Committees are established by a majority vote at the beginning of each new Congress, with each Committee addressing a range of issues. For example, three committees in the House relevant to children, youth and family advocacy issues are the Ways and Means Committee, the Committee on Education and the Workforce and the Judiciary Committee. The Democratic and Republican leadership in each chamber assign their Members to the various Committees. Most Members

seek appointment to the committees that oversee issues important to their constituents, or those that handle issues in which they have a high level of interest or competence.

1. ***Committee Leadership:*** The Members of a committee are ranked by the amount of time they have spent on that committee. The committee's "Chair" usually is the person of the majority party who has served on that committee the longest. Sometimes internal party politics will determine who is selected by the party leaders to chair the various committees. The Members of the committee's minority party have their own structure headed by the "Ranking Minority Member," who is often the person of the minority party who has served on that committee the longest.
2. ***Subcommittees:*** At the beginning of every Congress, each committee is broken down into subcommittees, each of which handles its own, distinct set of issues within the overall jurisdiction of the full committee. Only members of the full committee may be on a subcommittee; in fact, they may be on more than one. No Member, however, may chair more than one subcommittee.
3. ***Party Control:*** Every committee and subcommittee is purposely designed to have more members of the majority party than of the minority party. This way, the party that controls the House and the Senate can control which legislation is passed out of each committee and how it is amended throughout the process. There have been some times, however, when the minority party, with the support of a few Members of the majority party, have forced a bill onto the agenda or derailed majority-sponsored bills.
4. ***The Exception:*** One significant exception to the committee referral process exists in the Senate rules: a Senator may introduce a bill and (through unanimous consent) have it placed directly on the Senate Calendar just as if the bill had been reported out of a committee, thus bypassing the committee process. While this does not occur often, a Senator may use this rule if s/he believes the committee would be unsympathetic or the committee process would involve undue delay.

D. Subcommittee Consideration

After a bill is introduced and referred to a committee, the committee chair usually refers it to a subcommittee for initial consideration. Many bills never go beyond this point.

1. ***Hearings:*** The subcommittee chair may schedule a hearing on the bill so that the Administration, experts and individuals affected by the legislation can testify regarding their views on the legislation and recommend certain provisions or amendments. Hearings are usually held in Washington, D.C., but "field hearings" can be held in local districts. Most hearings are open to the public, and anyone may request to testify at a hearing. The final list of who testifies is controlled by the subcommittee chair. Those invited to testify are usually asked to submit written testimony and to limit their verbal testimony to five minutes. Photocopies of written testimony are often available at the hearing or at the subcommittee office after the hearing. Most chairs leave the hearing record open for 10-14 days after the hearing so that other interested parties can submit written testimony that will become part of the printed record of that hearing. The printed record may not be available from the subcommittee until several months after the hearing. The hearing record is analyzed by the subcommittee staff and utilized when they prepare the committee report (see below).

2. ***Subcommittee Mark-Up:*** If the subcommittee chair wishes to move the bill to the next step in the legislative process, s/he will schedule a subcommittee “mark-up” session. At the mark-up, the Members of that subcommittee will discuss and vote on the bill’s provisions. A subcommittee chair may bring to the mark-up, as his/her “Chairman’s Mark” (which becomes the base bill to which all amendments are offered), a version of the bill that is substantially different from the version that was originally introduced, sometimes called an “amendment in the nature of a substitute” (which replaces the entire bill, rather than just changing one piece of it, as typical amendments do). Any of the subcommittee Members may propose an amendment to the bill during the mark-up. Amendments can only be adopted to the bill by a majority vote. Once all of the amendments have been considered and agreed to, rejected, or tabled (set aside), the subcommittee then votes on whether or not to send the bill, as amended by the subcommittee, to the full committee for further action.

E. Committee Action

1. ***Marking Up the Bill:*** While committees can hold hearings, they usually do not. Instead, they often go right to the “mark-up” phase. The chair schedules the mark-up which is usually open to the public. Just like in the subcommittee, the bill is discussed by the Members and amendments may be offered by any Member of the committee and adopted by majority vote. At the conclusion of the mark-up, the full committee votes whether or not to report the bill favorably to the House or the Senate.
2. ***Reporting the Bill Out of Committee:*** If the committee votes to report the bill favorably to the House or Senate, they may do so in one of three ways. First, the bill can be reported without amendments, which is very rare. If the committee approved extensive amendments to the bill, the committee may report the original bill accompanied by an “Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute” consisting of all the amendments previously adopted by the committee. Alternatively, the committee may decide to report a “clean bill,” a new bill that incorporates those amendments. If that happens, the clean bill has to be officially introduced, given a new bill number, and then reported favorably to the House or Senate by the committee.
3. ***Non-Action:*** It is rare that a committee will report a bill unfavorably to the full House or Senate. Instead of taking a negative action against a bill, they usually either “table” the bill at the mark-up (set it aside), or simply never hold a mark-up on it. Either way, such a bill will probably never be considered by the full House or Senate – the fate awaiting most of the bills introduced in Congress.
4. ***Committee Reports:*** Most bills that are reported out of a committee are accompanied by a report prepared by the committee and subcommittee staff. This report may include excerpts from hearing testimony, justifications for and the specifics of each provision in the bill, descriptions of amendments considered, whether the amendments were approved or not, the final vote on reporting the bill, the text of the bill as reported, and any dissenting views on the legislation. These committee reports are important pieces of legislative history that explain the legislation to Members of Congress who will have to vote on it when it reaches the floor, but who are not on the committee and thus did not participate in the committee’s deliberation. The report will also guide agencies and courts in implementing and interpreting laws, once they have been enacted. After the report is filed, the bill may be scheduled for floor consideration in the relevant chamber.

While the committee processes in the House and Senate are substantially similar, the procedures that occur once a bill is reported out of committee differ significantly between the House and the Senate.

F. Floor Action in the House

1. **Rules:** Almost every bill considered by the full House of Representatives is given a “rule” that sets the time limits for debate and the specifics regarding how amendments to the bill will be considered. These rules change from bill to bill and are written and agreed to by the Rules Committee which, like other committees, is controlled by the majority party. An “open rule” is one that allows Members to propose any relevant amendments, while a “closed” rule is one that prevents floor amendments. A “modified closed rule” is one in which only certain specified amendments may be offered. A rule for a bill must be approved by a majority vote of the House before the bill may be debated on the House floor.
2. **Motion to Recommit:** No rule can deny the minority party the right to offer a “motion to recommit” the bill. A motion to recommit is usually offered by the minority party just before the vote on final passage. If the motion to recommit passes, the bill is then sent back to the committee level with instructions on how to improve the bill for later floor consideration. Since the minority party, by definition, does not have a majority of the votes, motions to recommit almost always fail.
3. **Suspension of the Rules:** Less controversial bills can be brought to the floor of the House under “suspension of the rules.” On Monday and Tuesday of each week and during the last six days of a session, a Representative may make a motion to suspend the rules of the House and pass a bill. Debate time is very limited, no amendments may be offered, and the legislation must be approved by a two-thirds vote; any fewer votes means the bill does not pass.
4. **Unanimous Consent:** It is possible to move to House floor consideration of a bill by unanimous consent (instead of pursuant to a rule), but that is rare.
5. **Discharge Petitions:** A bill may be considered on the House floor without a prior favorable committee report, but this is also rare. In these cases, a “motion to discharge” the bill from the committee is filed with the House Clerk. If a majority of the Members signs the motion, the motion is brought to the House floor. If the motion passes, the committee is discharged from further consideration and the bill is brought to the House floor for debate. Because the committee chair is always of the same political party as a majority of the Members of Congress, it is rare that a majority of the Members will sign the petition, thereby overruling the chair’s decision not to bring the bill up for action by the committee.
6. **Germaneness:** The rules of the House prohibit amendments that are of a different subject matter than the bill that is under consideration. This rule, commonly known as the “germaneness” rule, is considered the single most important rule of the House of Representatives because of the obvious need to stop Members of such a large body (435) from adding unrelated “riders” to the legislation at hand.
7. **Voting Methods:** The three most common ways to vote on legislation—in subcommittees, in full committees, or on the floor of the House or Senate—are: (1) by recorded vote,

sometimes requested after a voice vote (there is even an electronic voting system for recorded votes on the House floor); (2) by voice vote (with the presiding officer determining which side prevails); or (3) by unanimous consent.

G. Floor Action in the Senate

Unlike in the House, where rules are adopted by a simple majority and debates follow strict guidelines, the Senate rules for floor consideration of a bill are much looser and based on gaining the unanimous consent of all Senators. A bill in the Senate is primarily considered through either: (1) unanimous consent for passage of a completely non-controversial measure, or (2) a “unanimous consent agreement.”

1. ***Unanimous Consent Agreements:*** A unanimous consent agreement, sometimes referred to as a “time agreement,” sets the terms for how a bill will be considered in the Senate. It officially states that the bill is in order, often limits the amount of time for debate that will take place on the measure, and lists the amendments that will be considered. These time agreements are essential because without one, a Senator may speak for as long as s/he wishes. In those situations, debate on a bill ends when a Senator yields the floor and no other Senator seeks recognition. If a unanimous consent agreement is in effect, debate ends as scheduled by the agreement, unless a new unanimous consent agreement is adopted.
2. ***Filibuster:*** When there is no time agreement, Senators opposed to a measure may extend debate indefinitely by making lengthy speeches intended to prevent a vote on the measure. This tactic is known as “filibustering” and gives significant power to derail legislation to a minority of Senators who oppose the bill. Towards the end of a Congress, when floor time is very limited, even the threat by a single Senator to filibuster a particular bill can kill the chances that the bill will even be considered. A filibuster can be stopped only when 60 percent of the Senators vote to “invoke cloture”: close debate on an issue and force a vote.
3. ***Holds:*** A Senator may place a “hold” on a bill, another tool that is often used to block legislation. A Senator simply asks his/her party’s floor leader to object on his/her behalf to any unanimous consent request to consider a particular bill, at least until s/he has been consulted. At the end of a session, when time is short, a hold can mean the end of the line for a piece of legislation.

The power of a Senator to filibuster or place a hold on a bill is one of the reasons why the Senate is slower, more methodical and usually more moderate than the House. These rules force the majority party to work with the minority party in passing legislation. In the House, where a simple majority controls debate, there is little incentive for the majority party to work with the minority party on passing legislation.

4. ***Riders:*** Generally, there is no requirement that proposed Senate amendments be germane to the subject matter of the bill, except in the case of appropriation bills or when cloture has been invoked. Under the Senate rules, a “rider”, an amendment proposing substantive legislation to an appropriation bill, is prohibited. However, this prohibition may be suspended by a two-thirds vote.

A final note on Senate floor consideration: if there is a tie vote in the Senate, the Vice President is permitted to cast a vote to break the tie. This does not occur often, but it does happen (e.g., on a gun control vote in 1999).

H. Resolving House/Senate Differences

If the House and Senate pass identical bills, the legislation can be “enrolled” and sent directly to the President for action. Sometimes, the House or the Senate passes a bill previously approved by the other chamber with some minor or noncontroversial modifications. In this instance, a Member of the first chamber may ask unanimous consent to agree to the amendments of the second chamber. If there is no objection, the amendments are then agreed to and the bill is ready to be enrolled for presentation to the President.

Conference Committees: In most cases, the differences between the House and Senate bills are substantial or controversial. When that happens a Member, usually the chair of the committee of jurisdiction, requests unanimous consent to disagree to the amendments and request a conference with the other chamber to resolve the disagreeing votes of the two chambers. Each chamber may then pass a “motion to instruct” the conferees that, while non-binding, urges the conferees to accept or reject particular provisions in the bill. The Republican and Democratic leadership in each chamber then appoint the conferees who negotiate with the other chamber to resolve the differences. These members of the House/Senate conference committee are almost always drawn from the members of the committee or committees with jurisdiction over the bill’s provisions.

Although the conferees (“managers”) from each chamber meet together as one conference committee, they are in effect two separate committees. The group of conferees from each chamber votes separately and acts by a majority vote of that chamber’s conferees. For this reason, the number of managers from each chamber does not matter. A group of five Senate conferees on a particular bill wields exactly the same influence over the result of the House/Senate conference as does a group of forty House Conferees.

If the Conference Committee cannot settle all of the differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill, its members may report back to their respective chamber a statement declaring their inability to agree on particular provisions. These provisions may then be acted upon separately by each chamber. If the House and Senate cannot reach a final agreement on how to proceed, the legislation is stalled. On the other hand, if the conferees can settle all of the differences, identical bills are then reported back to the House and Senate for final passage. A bill cannot be enrolled and sent to the President until it has been approved in identical form by both chambers.

I. Presidential Action and Enactment

After the President receives the enrolled bill, there are four possibilities: (1) if the President approves the bill, he signs it; (2) if the President disapproves the bill, he vetoes it and sends a message to Congress stating his objections; (3) the bill may become law without the President’s signature if the President does not return a bill with objections within 10 days (excluding Sundays) after it has been presented to the President (in this situation, it becomes law as if the President had signed it); and (4) if the President decides not to sign the bill, but the Congress adjourns within those 10 days, the bill does not become law. This is known as a “pocket veto.”

1. **Overriding a President’s Veto:** A bill that is vetoed by the President can still become law if the House and Senate vote to override the President’s veto. A vote to override a veto must pass by a two-thirds vote in each chamber.
2. **Public Law:** Legislation that is enacted into law is given a two-part “Public Law” number. The first number indicates the Congress in which it was passed. The second number indicates the order in which the bill was enacted. For example, the first

enactment of the 106th Congress was P.L. 106-1. If a law is reauthorized by Congress or amended, it may still be referred to by its original public law number. That is why the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP A) is still sometimes referred to as Public Law 93-415.

NOTE: After a new program is enacted, there is often an executive branch process of regulatory development, with opportunities for public comment. (See Administrative Advocacy, above.)

J. Program Authorization and Oversight

Each Congressional committee, except the committees on Appropriations and on the Budget, are responsible for both initiating and overseeing programs and laws over which they have jurisdiction.

1. **Authorization:** The first step in initiating a new program is to have it “authorized.” Authorizing legislation, which like other bills must be approved by the Congress and the President as described above, establishes the program and usually sets annual spending limits for that program. During the annual appropriations process, Congress should not exceed this “authorization level,” though they are under no obligation to fully or even partially fund the program. It has now become common to authorize “such sums as may be necessary” for a program, thereby leaving the funding battles to the realm of appropriations (rather than authorization) decisions.

While there are some programs that are permanently authorized, most bills authorize program expenditures only for a limited period of time, usually 3-5 years. At the end of that time, the legislation should be reauthorized if the program is to continue. This is not always the case, though; the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, like many other programs, has continued to be funded for years after the authorization expired. When Congress is considering reauthorization of a program, it reviews the track record of the program and determines whether the program should be continued, amended or eliminated.

2. **Committee Oversight:** After a program or law is initiated, the committee with jurisdiction provides ongoing oversight to determine whether the law or program created by Congress is being implemented in accordance with the intent of Congress. During this process, which can include hearings and communications with federal agencies, new circumstances may arise that could lead Congress to enact new or additional legislation. The Committee may also request a study by the General Accounting Office (GAO), the investigative arm of the Congress, if its Members are raising questions regarding some aspects of how the program is being administered.

K. Federal Budget/Appropriations/Reconciliation Process

The annual federal budget, appropriations and reconciliation process, for each fiscal year running from October 1 through September 30, determines how much money every government program and agency receives.

1. **Budget Resolution:** Each year, the budget process begins in the summer when federal agencies develop and submit their budget requests to the President through the President’s Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Over the next several months, there is some back-and-forth between OMB and the agencies on the budget numbers. Early the following year, typically at the beginning of February, the President submits to

Congress a proposed budget for the coming fiscal year. Congress then aims to complete action by April 15 on a “concurrent resolution” known as the budget. This budget sets the guidelines for the appropriations process by imposing overall constraints on revenues and spending, and distributes spending among broad categories of programs known as budget functions. The budget does not include specific levels for individual programs, although it may be based on certain spending level assumptions for particular programs (any such assumptions, however, are non-binding).

The budget resolution is solely within the discretion of the Congress and, after being drafted by the Budget Committee in each Chamber, must be passed in identical form by both the House and the Senate. This is rarely done by the April 15 deadline. The budget resolution does not, however, go to the President to be signed or vetoed.

2. ***Appropriations Process:*** Once a budget is agreed to, the majority party leadership of each chamber then divide up the budget and allocate specific amounts to each subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee in that chamber. These subcommittees then make initial program-by-program spending decisions for the agencies and programs within their jurisdiction. Each subcommittee must adhere to the spending limit of their allocation and must not exceed the approved budget. Each subcommittee’s appropriations bill then goes through the entire legislative process as described above until it is signed into law or vetoed by the President.
3. ***Continuing Resolution:*** Often, appropriations bills for some federal agencies are not enacted by the beginning of the fiscal year on October 1. In such cases, agencies may be temporarily funded through a “continuing resolution,” which usually continues the previous year’s funding for a brief period of time. The purpose of a continuing resolution is to allow the Congress and the President to enact the remaining appropriations bills. Continuing resolutions may be routine and non-controversial, but they can also be quite contentious. Failure to resolve differences on a continuing resolution can result in a government shut-down.
4. ***Reconciliation Process:*** The “reconciliation process” is another mechanism Congress uses to constrain outlays. Reconciliation is designed to bring existing law that is not affected by the annual appropriations process (e.g., tax law and entitlement programs) into conformity with the budget. Entitlement programs are those that mandate the payment of benefits for any person meeting eligibility requirements, such Foster Care, Adoption Assistance, and Medicaid.

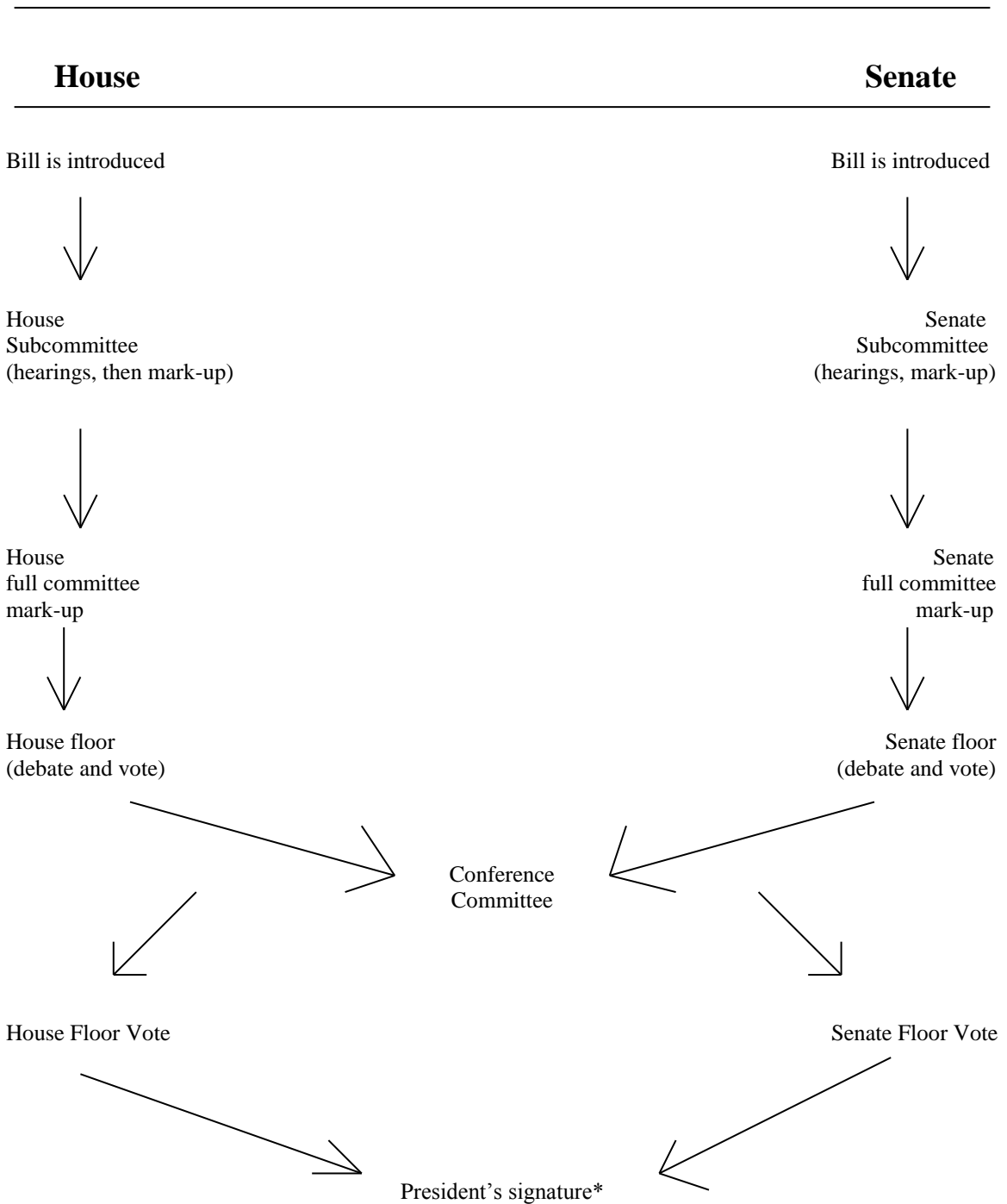
Reconciliation is a two-step process. The first step in the reconciliation process results from the budget resolution. The budget resolution instructs the corresponding House and Senate committees as to the amount of spending reductions or revenue increases a committee must attain in order to be in compliance with the overall budget. The committee then has the discretion to select the specific changes to laws or programs that must be made to reach the proscribed level of spending.

The second step is the drafting and consideration of the “omnibus reconciliation bill.” The Budget Committee of each chamber, based on the recommendations of the other committees involved, drafts the omnibus reconciliation bill and presents it for passage in the House and the Senate. (Note: When a reconciliation bill is on the floor of the Senate, no filibusters are permitted.) After House and Senate passage, the reconciliation bill is sent on to the President. Congress aims to complete action on a reconciliation bill by June 15 of each year, but again, this deadline is rarely met.

NOTE: In the Senate, reconciliation provisions must be “germane” to reconciling the budget. This principle is popularly referred to as the “Byrd Rule,” named after its sponsor, Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia, and may only be waived in the Senate by a three-fifths vote. [One year, a number of legislative changes were dropped from the reconciliation bill because of this rule; the legislative provisions were then humorously referred to as “Byrd droppings”.] Also, Congress must adhere to the “pay as you go” rule (the “Paygo Rule”), which requires that any new tax reductions or increases in spending on entitlements be offset by raising new revenues and/or by cutting existing entitlement programs.

Appendix II

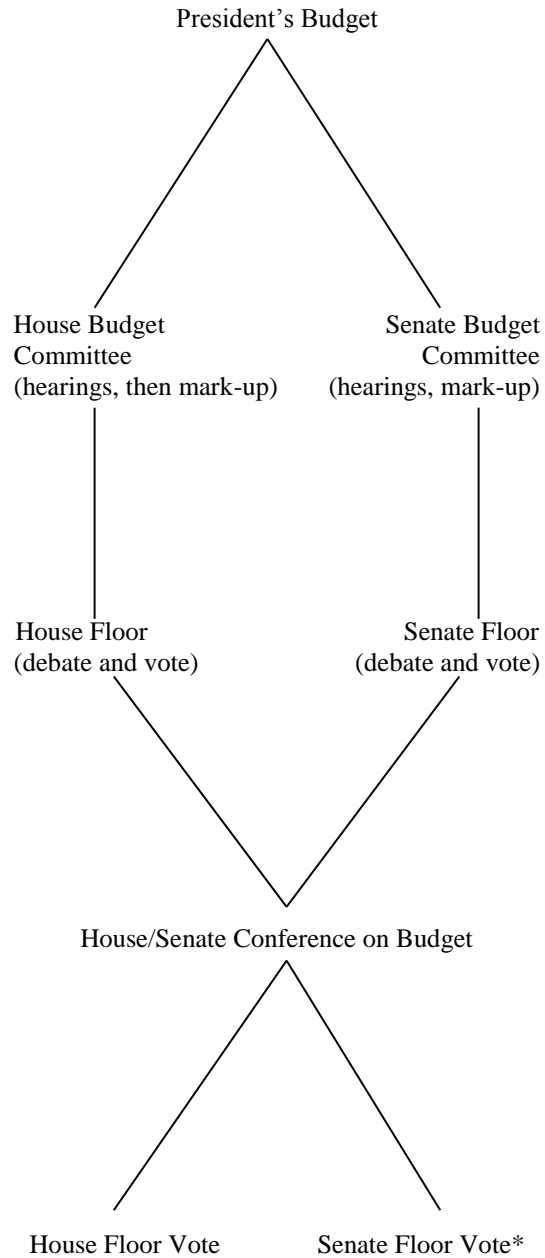
How a Bill Becomes a Law



***Note: If the president vetoes the bill, in order to override the veto, the House and the Senate must pass the bill with a 2/3 majority (if the vote is less in either chamber, the veto is sustained and the bill is not enacted).**

Appendix III

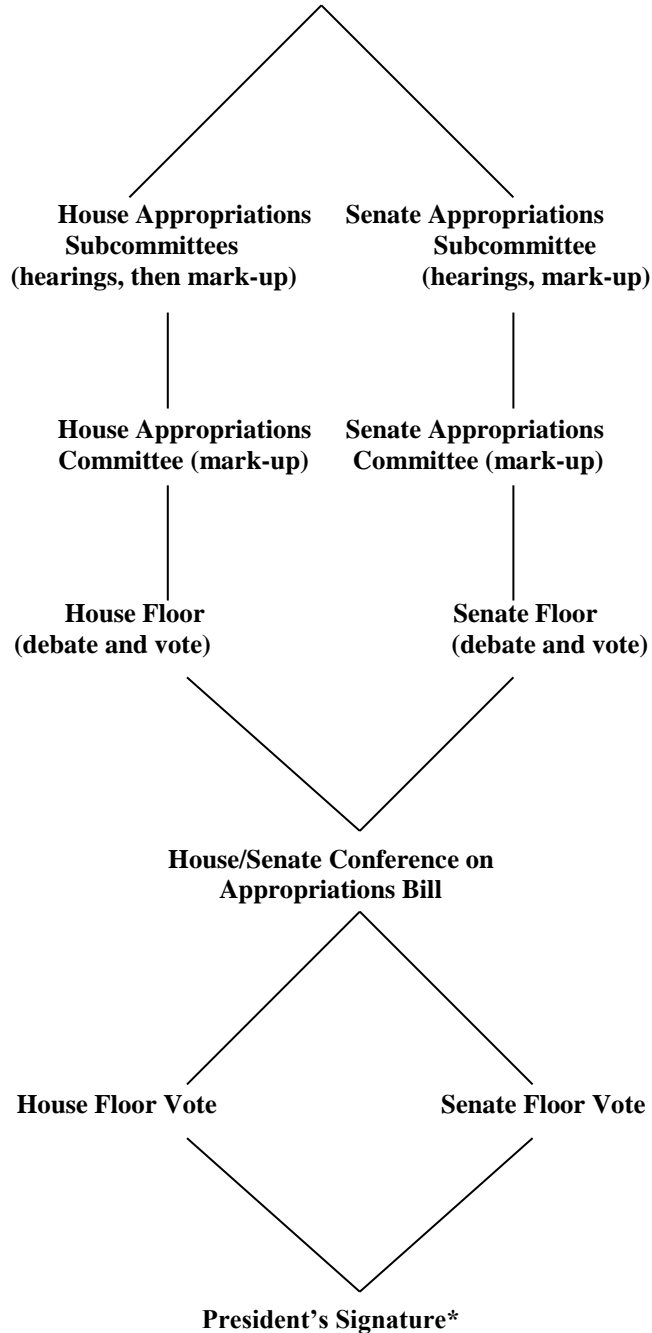
BUDGET PROCESS



***The Annual Federal Budget approved by Congress is a “resolution” not a “bill”, so it does not require a Presidential signature to become effective.**

APPROPRIATIONS PROCESS

After final passage of federal budget,
budget allocations are
made to appropriations subcommittees



*All FY01 appropriations bills must be enacted by the beginning of the fiscal year, October 1, 2000.

Appendix IV

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Appendix V

Advocacy and Electoral Activity by Non-Profit Charitable Organizations

Lobbying Limits and the 501(h) Election:

The first – and perhaps most important – point to make is that non-profit charitable organizations (recognized under Sec. 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code) ARE permitted to engage in federal policy advocacy activities. Second: federal tax law establishes limits to lobbying activities. While the limits are not particularly restrictive, they should be adhered to. Third: any non-profit charitable organization that does any real lobbying should keep track of lobbying activities and expenses. Fourth: any 501(c)(3) charitable organization that expects to engage in any real lobbying activity should consider making the election created in 1976 through Sec. 501(h) of the Internal Revenue Code (which can be accomplished by filing a one-page form, #5768, with the Internal Revenue Service). By making the 501(h) election, a non-profit avoids the vague standard that “no substantial part of a charity’s activities...be carrying on propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation,” and instead can apply clear expenditure tests: total expenditures for lobbying may not exceed 20% of the first \$500,000 in annual organizational expenditures, 15% of the next \$500,000 in expenditures, 10% of the next \$500,000 in expenditures, and 5% of the remaining expenditures, with a total lobbying expenditures cap of \$1 million annually; and expenditures for grassroots lobbying may not exceed 25% of the lobbying expenditure limit.

The standards applicable to organizations which make the 501(h) election are more favorable in other ways, as well. Electing organizations have very clear definitions of what does and does not constitute lobbying. Direct lobbying is defined primarily as communications with legislators and legislators’ staff that refer to and express a view about a specific piece of legislation; it is interesting that, when an organization contacts its members and urges them to contact legislators in support of or opposition to legislation, that is considered “direct lobbying,” as it is when an organization attempts to influence the public on referenda and ballot initiatives (because the public, in those cases, is in the role of “legislature” or “decision-maker”). Grassroots lobbying is a communication encouraging the general public to contact legislators regarding legislation.

The definitions of what is NOT lobbying are rather broad for 501(h) electing organizations. It is NOT lobbying when an organization: (1) contacts executive branch employees regarding regulations; (2) has volunteers who lobby (only expenditures for lobbying are measured); (3) sends out to its members public policy information on pending legislation that includes the organization’s position on the legislation, as long as the material does not encourage the members or others to lobby; (4) is responding to a written request from a legislative body for advice on pending legislation (e.g., a request from a committee that you testify); (5) lobbies legislators on matters that affect the organization’s existence, powers, tax exempt status, etc. (the “self-defense” exception); (6) makes available the results of “nonpartisan analysis, study or research” on a legislative issue, as long as it presents a full and fair exposition of the facts so that the audience may form an independent opinion; or (7) discusses broad social or economic policy issues whose resolution would require legislation – even if specific legislation is pending – as long as the discussion does not address the merits of specific legislation.

Another feature that makes the 501(h) election attractive is the penalty provision: unlike the situation for non-electing organizations, there is no withdrawal of exempt status for merely a one year violation (for withdrawal of exempt status, an organization must exceed the direct or grassroots lobbying limits by at least 50%, on average, over 4 years). A final desirable feature of the 501(h) election is that the managers of electing organizations never become personally subject

to a penalty tax because of the organization's lobbying (as they would in non-electing organizations).

Permitted and Prohibited Election-Related Activity:

There are very strict rules regarding 501(c)(3) charitable non-profits engaging in election-related activity. Such non-profits are strictly prohibited from: (1) giving a candidate an explicit or implicit endorsement; (2) making contributions (financial or in-kind) to candidates or parties, or setting up political action committees which do so; or (3) coordinating activities with a campaign for office.

These prohibitions leave quite a bit of room, however, for carefully crafted non-partisan election-related activity, such as: (1) non-partisan voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts; (2) conducting non-partisan "candidate forums" on issues of concern to the group (if the forum is open to all candidates, and managed in a balanced way, with a neutral moderator, and without stating the organization's position on the issues); (3) making substantive issue-oriented presentations, and providing substantive issue-oriented materials to (and arranging site visits for) platform committees, campaign staffs and candidates (ensuring equal availability of presentations and materials to – and visits by – all candidates), media and the public; (4) engaging in letter-writing campaigns to candidates, and urging them to make a commitment to supporting a specified agenda relating to children, youth and families; (5) reporting to the organization's normal constituency, as part of continuing lobbying, the votes of ALL legislators (not just candidates, and not only before elections) on issues of interest to the organization, indicating the position the organization took on the issues; and (6) allowing staff to participate as individuals in political campaigns (on their own time, not as representatives of the organization, and not using the resources of the organization).

Proscriptions on Lobbying with Federal Funds:

Pursuant to Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-122 (established in 1982), agencies which receive federal funds are permitted to lobby, but they must be able to demonstrate that NO federal funds were expended for lobbying purposes. In the intervening years since OMB Circular A-122 was established, the Office of Management and Budget has beefed up the audit process for nonprofits receiving substantial federal funding. OMB Circular A-133 requires organizations spending more than \$300,000 in federal funds to contract with an independent certified public accountant to carry out an independent and comprehensive audit of the organization's books and of its compliance with federal financial and program requirements. An important issue for these audits is whether the organization's use of federal funds complies with the cost principles of Circular A-122, including the prohibition on lobbying, and whether the organization's financial controls are otherwise adequate to assure that the organization is not charging unallowable costs to federal grants. There are also sanctions for organizations that violate the prohibition on the use of federal funds. If the violation is unintentional or minor, the principal sanction is that the organization must reimburse the government for the misspent funds. More serious cases can lead to the suspension or termination of grants and to the suspension or debarment of the grantee from receiving further awards. Debarment is government-wide, not limited to the single agency where the abuse occurred. Criminal sanctions apply in appropriate cases.

In addition, Title 31 of the U.S. Code, section 1352 (popularly known as "the Byrd amendment") specifically prohibits recipients of a federal grant, contract, loan, or cooperative agreement from using any federal funds to lobby regarding the award, renewal, or modification of any federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement. This same Code section requires recipients of

federal funds to file reports with the granting agency certifying that federal funds have not been used for prohibited lobbying.

It is worth noting, however, that even in those circumstances where explicit prohibitions against lobbying have been established, specific exceptions have been created, recognizing that nonprofits can be a source of useful information and insight. For example, grantees may respond to legislative requests for technical and factual information on a topic directly related to performance of a grant or contract.

This is not an exhaustive discussion of all of the Internal Revenue Code rules regarding 501(c)(3) non-profit advocacy and electoral activity, but it gives a general overview. For more information on these rules, contact:

Alliance for Justice

2000 P Street, N.W., #712
Washington, D.C. 20036
ph: (202)822-6070
www.afj.org

or:

Independent Sector

1200 Eighteenth Street, N.W., #200
Washington, D.C. 20036
ph: (202)467-6100
www.indepsec.org/clpi

For more information on election-related strategies for non-profit organizations, get a copy of The Children's Advocates Campaign Strategy Book, published by the Coalition for America's Children, Washington, D.C., August 1994 (available from the National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions, 401 Wythe Street, Alexandria, VA 22314; Ph:(703)684-1355; Fax:(703)684-1589). Also, see the Benton Foundation website at www.connectforkids.org.

Appendix VI

Capitol Phone Book

Source:	Number:	Information Provided:
U.S. Capitol Senate Inquiries House Inquiries	(202) 224-3121 (202) 225-3121	Operator can give you the phone numbers to your Senators' and Representative's offices
Senate Office Cloakrooms Democratic Republican	(202) 224-4691 (202) 224-6191	A staff person can give you information on what is currently on the floor and what is expected in the near future
Cloakroom Tapes Democratic Republican	(202) 224-8541 (202) 224-8601	Recordings of recent floor action and future legislative schedule
Document Room	(202) 224-7860	
House Office Cloakrooms Democratic Republican	(202) 225-7330 (202) 225-7350	A staff person can give you information on what is currently on the floor and what is expected in the near future
Cloakroom Tapes Democratic Republican Democratic Republican	(202) 225-7400 (202) 225-7430 (202)225-1600 (202)225-2020	Recordings of recent floor action Recordings of future legislative schedule
Document Room	(202) 226-5200	
General Numbers		
Legislative Information	(202) 225-1772	Current status of specific bills (you will need the bill number, name, or sponsor)
GAO (Government Accounting Office)	(202) 512-6000	Availability/ordering of GAO reports and legal decisions (Document Distribution)

Appendix VII

Internet Web Sites

A. Key Government Resources

Library of Congress, Legislative Information on the Internet
[current or previous federal legislation, committee reports, Congressional Records, etc.]
<http://thomas.loc.gov>

U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO)
[U.S. Code, Code of Federal Regulations, Federal Register, Other Government Publ.]
http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs

Children's Bureau (federal child welfare programs) at U.S. Dept. of HHS
<http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb>

Family and Youth Services Bureau (runaway and homeless youth programs) at HHS
<http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/fysb>

OJJDP (federal juvenile justice, delinquency prevention programs) at U.S. Dept. of Just.
<http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org>

B. Selected Child Advocacy Websites

ABA Center on Children and the Law
<http://www.abanet.org/child>

ABA Family Law Section
<http://www.abanet.org/family>

American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children
<http://www.apsac.org>

Child Welfare League of America, Inc.
<http://www.cwla.org>

Children's Defense Fund
<http://childrensdefense.org>

International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
<http://www.ispcan.org>

Kempe Children's Center
<http://www.kempecenter.org>

National Association of Child Advocates
<http://www.childadvocacy.org>

National Association of Counsel for Children
<http://www.NACCchildlaw.org>

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
<http://www.missingkids.org>

National Network for Youth
<http://www.nn4youth.org>

C. Useful Advocacy Resources

The Internet provides access to some excellent advocacy resources, especially on grassroots organizing and media advocacy. The NACC staff utilized these resources extensively in preparing this advocacy guide:

- Center for Community Change
<http://www.communitychange.org>
- 20/20 Vision
<http://www.2020vision.org>
- Vancouver Citizen's Committee
<http://www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook>
- Community Tool Box, University of Kansas
<http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu/tools/tools.htm>
- Find Contact Information for Your Elected Representatives
<http://government.aol.com/mynews>

Appendix VIII

How to Address Mail to Your Senators, Representative and the President

Senate:

The Honorable Jane Doe
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510
Dear Senator Doe:

E-mail addresses available via
the following website:
www.senate.gov/

House:

The Honorable John Doe
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
Dear Representative Doe:

E-mail addresses available via
the following website:
www.house.gov/

The President:

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500
Dear Mr. President:

Comment Line: (202) 456-1111
E-mail: president@whitehouse.gov

Legend for Congressional Office Abbreviations:**Senate**

SD: Dirksen Senate Building
SH: Hart Senate Building
SR: Russell Senate Building

S: U.S. Capitol, Senate side

House

CHOB: Cannon House Office Building
LHOB: Longworth House Office Building
OHOB: O'Neill House Office Building
FHOB: Ford House Office Building
RHOB: Rayburn House Office Building
H: U.S. Capitol, House side

Appendix IX

How the NACC Can Help

You're never alone in your efforts to engage in federal policy advocacy! The NACC can assist you in a variety of ways.

Policy-Related Publications:

The NACC produces a variety of publications that you may find useful in your public policy advocacy efforts:

- *Better Public Policy for Children, Youth and Families: An Advocacy Guide;*
- *The Guardian;* and
- Other publications.

Electronic Updates:

While Congress is in session, the policy staff of the NACC send out, as needed, up-to-the-minute information about what's happening in Congress and the federal agencies that will affect children, youth and families, and what steps advocates can take to influence federal policy decisions.

Training Sessions:

Through substantive and how-to sessions at the NACC annual conference, and through other trainings, the NACC brings important advocacy information to advocates for children, youth and families around the country.

Individualized Technical Assistance:

The staff of the NACC stand ready to assist you at any time. Just call, e-mail, fax, or mail your request for information or advice; we're here to help you to be an effective policy advocate!

Contact the NACC

National Office

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NACC Executive Director

Laoise King, Esq.
NACC Staff Attorney

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Fax 303/864-5351
Email: advocate@NACCchildlaw.org
Web: www.NACCchildlaw.org

Policy Office

Miriam A. Rollin, Esq.
NACC Policy Representative

6123 North 11th Street
Arlington, VA 22205
Tel. 703/538-7981
Fax 703/538-2485
Email: marollin@aol.com

**For Quick Reference, Use This Page To Record The Names And Phone Numbers Of Your
Members Of Congress**

Senator:
Phone Number (D.C.):
District Office Address:

District Phone Number:
Key Staff:

Senator:
Phone Number (D.C.):
District Office Address:

District Phone Number:
Key Staff:

Representative:
Phone Number (D.C.):
District Office Address:

District Phone Number:
Key Staff: