



Advocacy Strategy Tool

Guidance and templates for early childhood program leaders

NOVEMBER 2021

About This Tool

User:	Early Childhood Program Leaders
Tool Description:	This tool is designed to support early childhood program leaders develop a customized policy advocacy plan to form the backbone of an advocacy and awareness effort. Leaders can use this tool to reflect on their organizational capacity to engage in policy advocacy, determine their organization’s advocacy priorities that centers families and communities of color, identify allies who can support their efforts, and then develop an action plan with specific advocacy targets and tactics.
Tool Parts:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reflect on Organizational Capacity 2. Identify Advocacy Priorities 3. Assess the Advocacy Landscape 4. Identify Advocacy Targets 5. Determine Advocacy Tactics & Action Planning

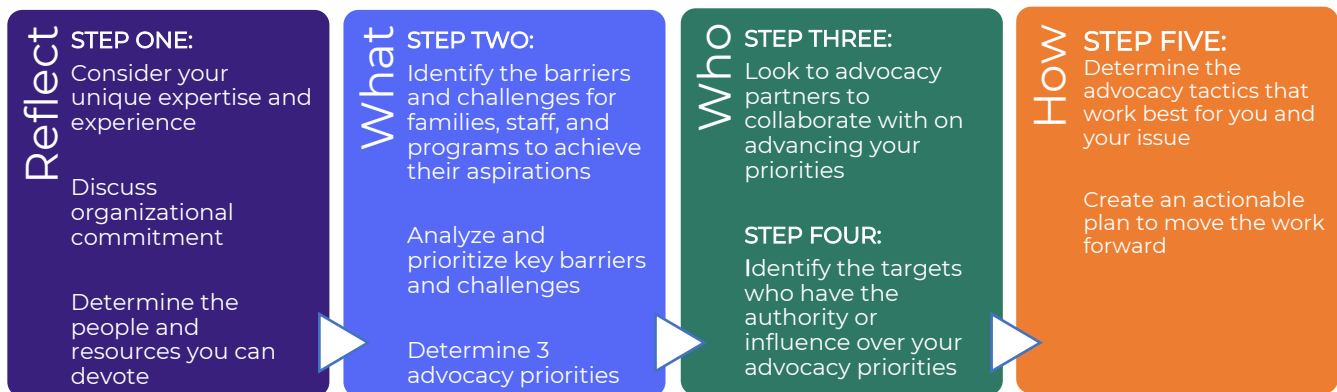
Introduction

Early childhood program leaders have deep expertise on the well-being of young children, families, the early childhood workforce, and early childhood programs, services, and organizations in addition to having strong relationships with families. Typically, early childhood program leaders are eager to dive into advocacy work because they see consistent challenges faced by the families they serve and/or they continue to face barriers in how they are able to adequately support families that cannot be fixed with organization-specific solutions alone.

Evidence continues to tell us that these barriers and challenges are often exacerbated for programs serving families of color in historically marginalized communities and the families of color themselves. Oftentimes, it’s these challenges that bring organization leaders to advocacy work. While any way early childhood program leaders engage in advocacy is fantastic, taking the time to determine strategic ways to engage in advocacy work – particularly in ways that centers the experiences and voices of families of color – can be more effective in working towards successful policy solutions.

Getting Started

This tool provides you with a step-by-step process for reflecting on your organizational capacity to engage in policy advocacy, identifying organizational advocacy priorities that centers families and communities of color, identify allies to collaborate with on your advocacy priorities, and then develop an advocacy action plan with specific advocacy targets and tactics. The guide is divided into five distinct steps that walks you through a process of reflection before identifying the what, who, and how as outlined, below.



Although this guide has been structured in a step-by-step process, advocacy is rarely developed in a linear fashion and the process may have different starting points. Depending on the circumstances in your organization, community, or state, you can use this tool at whichever point is most helpful. Use the pieces of the process that match your needs – and adapt them to fit your organization.

STEP ONE: Reflect on Organizational Capacity

Organizational leaders who are on the frontlines working directly with families and their young children have first-hand knowledge about how early childhood systems are working to support families – particularly families from historically marginalized communities like families of color – and where systems are falling short. When gaps and challenges related to policies and systems are evident, organizational leaders recognize that their on-the-ground perspectives and voice can be influential to improve public policies and public budgeting decisions in more effective and equitable ways. This is where advocacy comes into play. With this experiential knowledge and first-hand perspective, it is important for community-based organizations and agencies to understand their own capacity to engage in advocacy work to make an actionable and successful plan.

Getting Started: Convene your team to collaboratively reflect on the following questions on 1) the expertise your organization brings, 2) your commitment to advocacy, and 3) the people power and resources available to engage in policy advocacy efforts. Take notes directly in this document or write and collaborate on chart paper.

1. Understanding & Expertise

Every organization brings unique expertise and experience to advocacy work. Reflecting on the following issues can support you to identify where you might focus advocacy efforts, where you may have more to learn, and help you position your unique strengths with the media, legislators, policymakers and advocacy partners and allies. **Reflect on this question: What organizational expertise, experience, or understanding does our organization bring on the following issues?** When reflecting on the below questions, consider engaging families, staff, organizational leaders, and Board members in this process. If as an organization, you find yourself lacking capacity to walk through this tool, consider tasking a board member to lead this effort.

Organization’s expertise and understanding on:	Reflections
Delivering high quality early childhood practices to families who have been historically marginalized	<i>Insert your responses here</i>
Policies and best practices that result in more equitable and improved child and family outcomes	

How public policies impact our programs' delivery and services	
How public policies impact our workforce – our staff	
How public policies impact the families we serve	
How public policies are developed and implemented	
Insights from individual, enrollment, and program data as well as family survey data	
<i>What's missing? What other expertise and experience do we bring?</i>	

With these reflections in mind, look across your reflections and consider:

- Where do we excel and where might we want to prioritize our effort?
- What are the levels of understanding across our board, our staff and our families on the above issues?
- Where do we want to strengthen our capacity or learn more?

2. Organizational Commitment

Next, discuss with your team the perspectives and voices that shape your organization's **commitment**. Understanding where potential organizational barriers or challenges exist to engage in advocacy work is important to consider. This is also a time to consider how race equity shows up as opportunities or challenges for your organization, how these inequities are influenced by systemic challenges, and how this influences how you engage in advocacy. Reflect on the following questions and consider how it influences your advocacy priorities?

- What is our **staff – including senior leadership's** – level of commitment to participating in early childhood policy and advocacy work? What is our staff's level of commitment to dismantling systemic inequities to promote racial equity? Is there shared commitment across staff? Where might there be less commitment and why?
- What is our **Board's** level of commitment to participating in early childhood policy and advocacy work? What is our board's level of commitment to dismantling systemic inequities to promote racial equity? Is it shared across the board? Who are the key champions?
- Whose voice is shaping the priorities and the commitment?
- How are we leveraging a diverse and representative group of families, staff, organization leaders, and Board members in these efforts? Is anyone left out? If yes, how can we include them in these efforts in equitable and strategic ways?

3. People Power & Resources

Lastly, consider the roles, staff time, and resources available to advance your policy advocacy work. Document your ideas and plans here.

- Who will serve as the lead point person for our organization's advocacy efforts? How much time do they have (ex how many hours per week or month could be devoted?)
- Who else will be engaged in advocacy? (Consider the senior leaders, staff, board, and families discussed above.)
 - What might their role(s) be? (This may become clearer to you as you move through Step Five in this tool.)
 - How much time do they have?
- What **financial resources** are we able to dedicate to support early childhood policy and advocacy work?

Sample table

Name	Role in Org	Role in Advocacy	Areas of Expertise	Hours/Week
<i>First Last</i>	<i>Executive Director</i>	<i>Lead of Advocacy</i>	<i>Program Funding</i>	<i>5 hrs./week</i>
<i>First Last</i>	<i>Board Member</i>	<i>Engaging Legislator</i>	<i>Communications</i>	<i>2 hrs./month</i>
<i>First Last</i>	<i>HS Coordinator</i>	<i>Tours of our program</i>	<i>Family experience</i>	<i>1 hr./month</i>
<i>First Last</i>	<i>Parent Leader</i>	<i>Social Media Lead</i>	<i>Facebook</i>	<i>2 hrs./month</i>

Next Steps

- At the completion of Step One of this tool, you have reflected on:
 - your organization’s areas of expertise and strengths,
 - your organization’s commitment to racial equity,
 - opportunities for additional learning, and
 - your organization’s time and resources available to advocacy.
- Based on these reflections, consider the strengths, time, and resources that might shape your advocacy strategy this year. Consider if your organization needs time to build your understanding and knowledge of policy advocacy work.
- Then, move on to *Step Two: Identifying Your Advocacy Priorities*.

STEP TWO: Identify Your Advocacy Priorities

Even before reflecting on your organization’s strengths, areas of expertise, commitment to equity, and time and resources available to engage in advocacy as outlined in Step One; organizations are typically eager to dive into advocacy work because they have already identified a challenge that cannot be fixed via organizational strategies alone. Oftentimes, it’s these challenges that bring organization leaders to advocacy work. This is fantastic if you already understand your primary challenge and want to focus on addressing it through policy change.

And even with this (or likely absent this if you’re reading this tool), it can be helpful to understand the shared vision and aspirations across your organization, your staff, and importantly, the families you serve as it relates to your organization’s mission and what families dream about for their young children. With this shared understanding, determining the structural barriers and challenges that stand in the way of achieving those aspirations can help you either identify your advocacy priorities or confirm that the challenge that brought you to this tool is where you want to focus your organization’s time and energy in an effective and efficient way.

Here are some steps to take to go from aspirations to advocacy priorities for your organization; *Strategies to Engage Families, Staff & Your Board* on page 9 can help you consider different processes to ensure the perspectives of families, staff, organization leaders, and the Board are included throughout.

- **Identify your shared vision and aspirations.** Presumably, this already exists for your organization within your mission and vision statement. You can dive a bit deeper by reviewing your organization's strategic plan to understand shorter-term goals. Couple this with ways to hear from families about their aspirations and goals as it relates to the work of your organization and how you support them and their children.
- **Brainstorm a list of structural barriers and challenges** facing families in your program, your staff, and your organization with reaching those identified aspirations. Consider generating an inclusive list of potential barriers and challenges in collaboration with families, staff, and your board. Understanding the evidence you have to demonstrate these structural barriers and challenges can be helpful. Your organization likely has access to family surveys, community needs assessments, program and outcomes data, and other data to help inform this process (this data can also be used as you're filling in the chart on page 10). Disaggregating data by race, ethnicity, home language, and other demographics can help you understand the impact these barriers and challenges have on families from historically marginalized communities including families of color.
- **Prioritize your list of structural barriers and challenges.** After this initial identification of structural barriers and challenges, you may end up with a long list. In collaboration with families, staff, and the board, narrowing down to 1-3 barriers/challenges that you would like to prioritize tackling through your advocacy efforts will allow you to stay focused and use your capacity and expertise strategically. Consider the following questions to help determine how to identify your top 1-3 barriers/challenges.
 - *What issues lend themselves to your organization's area of expertise and thus influence?* This was perhaps determined when you were working through Step One, the *Organizational Capacity Reflection* tool.
 - *Which of these structural barriers and challenges disproportionately impact families and staff from historically marginalized communities like communities of color?* If you are unsure, consider spending time researching evidence of the challenges identified, with data disaggregated by race (both quantitative and qualitative).
 - *Of the structural barriers and challenges identified, which would have the most impact on families, staff, and your program and reduce inequities if the challenge was addressed?* This may be a challenging question to answer but reflecting on this question as an organization would allow for robust discussion to help prioritization.
 - *Which of these structural barriers and challenges could be addressed via public policy solutions?* It would also be worth considering feasibility given your community/state's political context. If public policy solutions and political feasibility are less familiar to you, it may be worth reaching out to early childhood policy organizations to help answer these questions (laid out in Step Three).

- **Document your top 3 structural barriers and challenges and transform them into advocacy opportunities.** Use the chart on page 10 to map out your 1-3 priority barriers/challenges and the evidence you have. Consider rephrasing these barriers and challenges as opportunity statements that communicate your advocacy goals. This simple rephrase will result in you having your top *advocacy priorities*. For example:
 - Challenge: “Families want consistent teachers for their children, our staff are underpaid, and our organization struggles to retain teachers yet we can’t afford to pay them more.”
Advocacy Priority: “The early childhood workforce needs to be better compensated.”
 - Challenge: “Families can’t access early intervention services because of long waitlists.”
Advocacy Priority: “Families need timely access to early intervention services.”

Strategies to Engage Families, Staff & your Board

Throughout your process, it’s essential to engage those most affected by the advocacy priorities – or advocacy agenda – you’re advancing. To identify priorities, it is recommended that you hear from all levels of your organization – the families you serve, your staff, and your organization’s leaders including your Board. To ensure that equity is centered in these discussions, it is strongly recommended that you intentionally include diverse perspectives from families and staff, particularly families and staff of color. You might consider utilizing already existing opportunities to gather input on identifying aspirations and challenges, such as during a staff meeting, Board meeting, or a meeting of your parent committee if you’re a Head Start grantee, as examples. If an existing meeting doesn’t exist, finding dedicated time to engage families, staff, and the board is important.

You could consider various processes to gather this insight such as the following ways:

- ❖ Identify aspirations, brainstorm structural barriers and challenges **on chart paper**, and then use dot voting to identify the top three. It’s best if you use this process, to ensure that the individuals in the room represent the constituency for whom you are identifying barriers and challenges.
- ❖ **Offer a simple survey** with structural barriers and challenges based on what you know that also includes an “other (please specify)” option, and offer ranked voting. This can be done on paper so families can quickly fill it out in person during drop-off/pick-up, during home visits, or other opportunities. If you go this route, be sure to offer the survey in languages that match the home language of your families.
- ❖ Consider an amended version of the **Consensus Decision-Making Process** that allows for more discussion across all constituencies, if you have time and space to do so.

Next Steps

- Once you’ve explored the table below, you will have identified your advocacy priorities! Move on to *Step Three: Assessing the Advocacy Landscape* to identify the allies in your state and community who can help you advance your policy priorities.

	Families	Early childhood workforce – Your staff	Program(s) and Your agency
Aspirations			
Structural Barrier/Challenge #1			
Evidence to demonstrate this barrier/challenge.			
How does this disproportionately impact families and staff of color, and/or programs & agencies serving communities of color?			
Advocacy Priority #1 <i>Rephrase your barrier/challenge into an advocacy opportunity</i>			

<p>Structural Barrier/Challenge #2</p>			
<p>Evidence to demonstrate this barrier/challenge.</p>			
<p>How does this disproportionately impact families and staff of color, and/or programs & agencies serving communities of color?</p>			
<p>Advocacy Priority #2 <i>Rephrase your barrier/challenge into an advocacy opportunity</i></p>			
<p>Structural Barrier/Challenge #3</p>			
<p>Evidence to demonstrate this barrier/challenge.</p>			
<p>How does this disproportionately impact families and staff of color, and/or programs & agencies serving communities of color?</p>			
<p>Advocacy Priority #3 <i>Rephrase your barrier/challenge into an advocacy opportunity</i></p>			

STEP THREE: Assess the Advocacy Landscape

After you have reflected on your organizational capacity and identified your top 1-3 advocacy priorities, assessing the advocacy landscape in your community can help you identify allies who can support your efforts to advance your policy priorities and even identify potential challengers along the way. If your organization is new to advocacy work, identifying other organizations engaged in similar policy advocacy efforts in your community and partnering and collaborating with them could help you be more strategic and efficient while amplifying your efforts. In other words, this could result in more effective advocacy. If you're not sure where to start with this landscape, oftentimes, a state-level early childhood advocacy organization is a good first partner to reach out to, as they could likely help you identify other potential allies on your priority issues at both the state and community levels.

	Name, website, key contact	Policy priority alignment with your organization	Current ways you're connected	Ways to better connect for advocacy purposes
Membership organization that you belong to (e.g. State AEYC, State Subdivision of the Division for Early Childhood)	Name: Website: Key Contact:	Priority #1 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Potential Ally Priority #2 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Potential Ally Priority #3 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Potential Ally		<i>e.g. partner on an advocacy event with them</i>
Early childhood advocacy organizations (e.g. state Kids Count organization, Partnership for	Name: Website: Key Contact:	Priority #1 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Potential Ally Priority #2		<i>e.g. sign-up for e-bulletins, follow them on social media, attend their conferences/ advocacy events, build</i>

Advocacy Strategy Tool

STEP THREE



<p>America's Children state or local affiliate)</p>		<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Potential Ally</p> <p>Priority #3 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Potential Ally</p>		<p><i>relationships with their staff</i></p>
<p>Local early childhood community collaborations (e.g. prenatal-to-eight collective impact network)</p>	<p>Name: Website: Key Contact:</p>	<p>Priority #1 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Potential Ally</p> <p>Priority #2 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Potential Ally</p> <p>Priority #3 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Potential Ally</p>		<p><i>e.g. become a member</i></p>
<p>Early childhood advocacy coalitions (e.g. Prenatal-to-Three Coalition)</p>	<p>Name: Website: Key Contact:</p>	<p>Priority #1 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Potential Ally</p> <p>Priority #2 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Potential Ally</p> <p>Priority #3 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Potential Ally</p>		<p><i>e.g. become a member</i></p>

<p>Other organizations supporting issues relevant to families (e.g. research partners in higher education, anti-poverty advocacy organization, business groups)</p>	<p>Name: Website: Key Contact:</p>	<p>Priority #1 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Potential Ally</p> <p>Priority #2 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Potential Ally</p> <p>Priority #3 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Potential Ally</p>		<p><i>e.g. sign-up for e-bulletins, follow them on social media, attend their conferences/advocacy events, build relationships with their staff</i></p>

Next Steps

- At the completion of this step, you have reflected on potential advocacy partners to support your priorities.
- Based on these reflections, decide which organizations you'll reach out to, who will do it, and your goals for your conversation with them.
- Then, move on to *Step Four: Identifying Advocacy Targets*

STEP FOUR: Identify Advocacy Targets

Once you have identified your policy priorities (Step Two) and other allies you can collaborate with (Step Three), identifying and understanding who your advocacy targets are can help you determine the most strategic advocacy tactics to pursue.

Advocacy targets are:

- individuals in a position with decision-making authority, such as: a legislator, a program administrator within state or local government, county commissioner, school board member, etc.,
- individuals who can influence those with decision-making authority, such as: families, community leader, business leader, donor, etc.

If you need assistance with identifying advocacy targets, it may be helpful to have a discussion with some of your allied policy advocacy organizations you identified in *Step Three: Advocacy Landscape Tool*. These organizations are immersed in this work, so their insights and expertise might help you identify your key targets. These allies have political insight to help you understand where you can add the most strategic value based on your organization's capacity and expertise (as identified in Step One) when it comes to who you might target in your advocacy efforts. For example, you may choose to organize the families and parents you serve in advocacy efforts or target a particular policymaker who carries a lot of influence over your priority issue.

Some things to consider to help you identify your target(s):

- Who has the decision-making authority over your advocacy priorities? In other words, who can help you bring the policy change you hope to achieve?
- Who has the greatest ability to influence your primary target(s)?
- Who do you have access to or good relationships with already that can help you advance your priorities?

In the table below:

1. Identify your advocacy targets for each priority.
2. Assess their current stance on your priority area.
3. Take notes on who influences your targets and what they need to take action.

Advocacy Priorities	Target	Target's Stance on Priority	Who influences the target? What do they need to act on your priority issue?
<p>Priority #1</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Champion <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Opposed <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know 	<p><i>e.g. if an elected official, are they influenced by hearing from families in their district, a major employer in their district, a key donor. Does the target need to know more about the issue and why it matters, do they need to understand that many of their constituents support the issue, do they need to "see" the issue in action?</i></p> <p><i>e.g. if families are the target, do they need trainings on how to engage in advocacy and the tactics they can take?</i></p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Champion <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Opposed <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Champion <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Opposed <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know 	
<p>Priority #2</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Champion <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Opposed <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Champion <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Opposed <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Champion <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Opposed <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know 	

Advocacy Strategy Tool

STEP FOUR



Priority #3		<input type="checkbox"/> Champion <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Opposed <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Champion <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Opposed <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Champion <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Opposed <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	

STEP FIVE: Determine Advocacy Tactics

Once your organization has reflected on its capacity, identified its advocacy priorities, learned about who you can collaborate with on your issues, and identified your advocacy targets, the next step is determining which advocacy tactics to take! The chart below offers potential actionable ways to get involved in advocacy, however this list is by no means exhaustive. The advocacy tactics you decide on should be strategic to your organization and feasible and determined based on what might be influential to the targets you identified in Step Four. Again, your allied policy advocacy organizations you identified in *Step Three: Advocacy Landscape Tool* could be great resources to help you narrow in on the tactics you should take. Finally, remember all of your targets are people, just like you and the families your program serves. The things that influence you also influences your targets, particularly hearing information from people they know and trust. The value of relationships cannot be understated.

Advocacy Tactics	Effort	Types of Activities	Potential Metrics
Communications Communications tactics can reach a broad audience to do multiple things: educate, influence, and mobilize.	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repost or retweet sample social media posts from advocacy organizations. Share advocacy opportunities from advocacy organizations in your agency's newsletter or bulletin. 	Number of likes, views, retweets
	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop your own social media posts on your advocacy priorities directed at your targets. Write press releases, op-eds, and letters to the editor on your priority issues. 	Number of likes, views, retweets Media placements
	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop templates for op-eds or letters to the editor that can be used by your network. Build relationships with media outlets (TV, radio, and traditional news journalists) and leverage these relationships for coverage of your issues in the news. Develop podcasts, video/TV, or radio campaigns Develop and maintain a coalition website 	Media placements; number of relationships with media; number of website hits; reach of podcast, video, TV, radio campaign

Policymaker Education	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with policymakers at their coffee hour or in-district events • Invite policymakers to your already planned events – e.g. annual fundraiser, Fall family event, diaper/backpack drive. • Attend an advocacy event organized by a peer organization • Commit to contacting your policymakers when partner advocacy organizations put out action alerts 	Number of meetings/contacts with policymakers
	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a relationship with your elected official, county/state-level program administrators, or other target(s) – learn about their priorities and their motivating interests around your priorities, and hopefully build a two-way relationship where they come to you for your perspective on important issues • Testify at hearings or submit testimony • Develop a guide with talking points for your Board, staff, and families so they can engage in advocacy efforts 	Number of meetings/contacts with policymakers, materials created
	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite policymakers to visit your program and invite the media • Organize a family/staff roundtable for policymakers to hear concerns from families/staff 	<p>Number of meetings/contacts with policymakers</p> <p>Number of staff and families who connected with a policymaker</p>
Increasing Your Advocacy Capacity and the Advocacy Capacity of Your Community	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subscribe to e-bulletins/newsletters and follow community- and state-level early childhood advocacy organizations on social media • Join your community or state-level early childhood advocacy coalition • Attend advocacy trainings at conferences or advocacy-focused webinars 	Number of staff/families you serve that attend trainings or advocacy coalition related events

	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In partnership with advocacy organizations in your community/state, host advocacy trainings for your families and staff • Organize a letter writing campaign • Develop a relationship with reputable business and community leaders who are aligned on your issues; build them up as champions on your issues • Have an outreach table at fairs to share information about your priorities • Write publications and white paper on your priorities with advocacy recommendations 	Number of people reached in trainings/ events, number of champions developed, number of publications written
	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire a staff person whose job is focused on policy advocacy • Organize a group of parent/family leaders and collaborate with them to be ambassadors on your advocacy priorities; ensure the parent/family leaders represent the diversity of the families you serve – particularly families of color. 	Number of FTE dedicated to policy advocacy work, number of parent leaders

Bring it All Together: Action Planning

After working through Steps One through Five by identifying your priorities, thinking strategically about your targets and what influences and motivates them, and then considering the various advocacy tactics you might take, the below action planning chart can be used to help you translate all of your great work and thinking into an actionable advocacy plan.

	Advocacy Tactic(s)	Start Date	End Date	Who is getting this done?		Resources	
				Lead	Support Person(s)	Budget	Staff Time
Priority #1 – Target 1							
Priority #1 – Target 2							
Priority #2 – Target 1							
Priority #2 – Target 2							
Priority #3 – Target 1							
Priority #3 – Target 2							

Conclusion

When advocacy plans are developed with awareness and understanding of organizational capacity, clear advocacy priorities, in collaboration with other advocacy partners, and with strategic targets and tactics, the result is a more intentional and effective advocacy plan. Ensuring that family perspectives and the perspectives of on-the-ground staff who work directly with families – particularly families and staff of color – will result in an advocacy plan that will more likely work to reduce structural inequities that shows up in the challenges and barriers faced by your programs and families. Remember, you are never alone in policy advocacy work and that advocacy is all about relationships. If nothing else, building relationships with key allies so they can tell you when and how to engage in timely opportunities is an excellent way to stay connected to public policy advocacy efforts. Ultimately, deciding as an organization to engage in policy advocacy work is commendable, and the deep expertise you bring directly serving families with young children will be a significant added value to the policy advocacy work happening in your state and community.

Resources

[Child Care Aware](#) offers various tools and resources including an advocacy from home toolkit and how to advocate webinars.

The [Division for Early Childhood](#) offers resources on how to build relationships with elected officials, as well as resources on specific advocacy opportunities around Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education.

[First Five Years Fund](#) offers specific tools and activities to engage in time-sensitive early care and education advocacy opportunities at the federal level.

[NAEYC's Build Your Advocacy Skills webpage](#) provides a collection of tools and resources around federal and state advocacy, electoral advocacy, and communications tools.

[National PTA](#) has a thorough advocacy toolkit to help guide you through some of the details of some of the various advocacy tactics laid out in Section Five like hosting a site visit, communications strategies, and joining coalitions.

[Start Early's \(formerly the Ounce\) 2009 Early Childhood Advocacy Toolkit](#) provides an introduction to advocacy; and while some of the content is Illinois specific, many sections are general enough to be applied to any state/community.



 /startearlyorg

 @startearlyorg

 /startearlyorg

 /startearlyorg