

# Amplify Your Voice

Advancing Your *Skills*  
as a *Family Leader*

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[txfvn.org](http://txfvn.org)



TEXAS FAMILY  
VOICE NETWORK



**Texas System of Care**  
*Achieving Well-Being for Children and Youth*

# Foreword

There are many systems in our communities, states, and country that have been created to support children and their families, including schools, social services, and health care services. It is critical that decisions about these programs, as well as new ones, are influenced by the children and families they are intended to serve. As a family leader, you can play an important role in ensuring that decision-makers understand what families need, how best to provide services to families, and influence the priorities for funding. Family leaders usually begin their leadership through speaking out or advocating for our children, our families, and ourselves. Our voices are defined by using our passions and strengths to make positive differences in the systems, services, and supports that affect our loved ones. Soon, we may see how our voice and experiences can benefit others. We begin building networks of mutual support and sharing the lessons we learned with other families and helping them to define their voices. We may become active in advocacy efforts related to community policy-making, perhaps providing public comment at board meetings, writing letters to the editor, or requesting meetings with local agency leaders. Some leaders want to boost their voices even more, working towards positive change on the state or national levels. This purpose of this document is to provide some guidance on ways to broadcast the power of your lived experience and local advocacy, amplifying your voice to effect change on state and national levels.

# Use Your Experiences to Change Lives in Your Community

It can feel a little scary to use our experiences as a springboard to help others in our community, but there are lots of different places to start. Consider your areas of interest and expertise – do you like to organize events? Work with others? Are you a writer or a speaker? Whatever your skill set, there is a place for you to use your unique experiences and skills to benefit other families. Here are a few ideas:

- **Write a letter to the editor or an Op-Ed Article.** If there is an event or article that makes you think about an issue that's important to you, consider writing a letter to the editor of a local newspaper or magazine. Letters to the editor are typically 150 to 200 words and address a single idea about a recent news story. Op-eds are usually prose published by a newspaper or magazine which expresses the opinion of a named author not affiliated with the newspaper's editorial board. Op-eds are best when they are aligned with an event in the news, are limited to under 750 words, make a single point, communicate why readers should care, offer specific recommendations, and use short sentences and paragraphs.
- **Volunteer.** Volunteer to work with other families or to help with events like Children's Mental Health Awareness Day or a conference.
- **Speak.** Submit proposals to speak at conferences and to share your experiences with conference attendees.
- **Review Proposals.** Reach out to organizations, funders, and agencies and offer to assist in reviewing documents, signage, policies, proposals, or budgets to ensure they align with what is important to families.
- **Host Activities.** If you are associated with an organization, offer to coordinate an event to welcome families and talk about the services, supports, and resources available. Establish a planning group and design, develop, and host a family resource fair.
- **Create a Community Family Council.** Reach out to other families in your community and together, create a Family Council that can help connect families to resources, provide feedback to providers, and make recommendations to local and state policymakers about family needs.

- **Inform, educate, and advocate through social media!** Use YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and more to build an audience to talk about mental health issues. Write blogs, share informative articles, host livestream events. Using the technology and social media available today, you can host your own web-based talk show or news channel.

## Use Your Experiences to Change the Policies and Rules of State Agencies

Your lived experience and your work with other families can result in positive, meaningful change that can benefit children and families across the state. You can use your voice to influence policy and rules at state agencies as well as potential legislation at state and federal levels.

*It can be intimidating but when you speak from the heart, your passion replaces the fear.*

LYNNE FRIESE  
NEW BRAUNFELS

### Influencing and Impacting State Agencies

You don't have to be a state employee to make a difference in state policy. Your lived experience provides you with a level of expertise that will enable you to create positive change. In this section, we will discuss ways to review and provide input on rules and policies, attend public meetings or hearings, request information, and apply for appointments to boards, commissions, or workgroups.

### Providing Input on Rules and Policies

**Texas Administrative Code.** Some laws passed by the Texas Legislature require state agencies and commissions to create rules to administer and carry out the law. These rules are compiled and organized by subject matter by the Texas Secretary of State and are grouped together and called the Texas Administrative Code. The current Texas Administrative Code is available at [texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac\\$ext.viewtac](http://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac$ext.viewtac).

**Texas Register.** Before any changes can be made to the Texas Administrative Code (TAC), proposed changes are first published in the Texas Register, which serves as the journal of state agency rulemaking in Texas. The Texas Register is updated every Friday by 5:00 pm and is available online at [sos.state.tx.us/texreg/index.shtml](http://sos.state.tx.us/texreg/index.shtml).

The current issue and up to 12 months of previous issues are posted on the secretary of state's website. Issues older than 12 months are available in the archive link through the University of North Texas at [texashistory.unt.edu/explore/collections/TR](http://texashistory.unt.edu/explore/collections/TR).

The information published in the Texas Register includes “proposed, adopted, withdrawn and emergency rule actions, notices of state agency review of agency rules, governor’s appointments, attorney general opinions, and miscellaneous documents such as requests for proposals.”

You may scan current or former issues of the Texas Register, or you use the *Search the Texas Register* option on the Texas Register homepage ([sos.state.tx.us/texreg/index.shtml](https://sos.state.tx.us/texreg/index.shtml)).

## **KEYS TO SUCCESS WHEN SEARCHING THE TEXAS REGISTER**

When, you use the search function on the *Texas Register*, keep in mind the following recommendations:

- Be as specific as possible when entering your search criteria.
- Search document text: Use this search box to search only the text in the body of the rule. You may use the % sign as a “wildcard” in this field.
- Search preamble text: Use this search box to search the preamble text only. You may use the % sign as a “wildcard” in this field.
- Document type: Choose the “Rule” option to search emergency, proposed, withdrawn and adopted rule text. Choose the “non-rule” option to search other documents included in the Texas Register that are not rules, such as governor’s appointments or attorney general opinions.
- Agency name: Use the agency name search feature or enter the name of the agency in the field.
- Statutory authority text: This option allows you to search the text of the rule’s statutory authority.

To learn about proposed, adopted, or withdrawn rules, navigate to the current issue of the Texas Register and click on the category you would like to review. The rules are typically organized by the agency responsible.

See the example of a proposed rule and an accompanying explanation below:

<b>EXAMPLE</b>	
Proposed Rule in Texas Register and Explanation	
Example of Proposed Rule	Explanation
SUBCHAPTER C. ELIGIBILITY FOR CHILD CARE SERVICES	
<b>40 TAC §809.55</b>	This proposed rule is found in Chapter 40 of the Texas Administrative Code, Section 809.55
The rule is proposed under Texas Labor Code §301.0015 and §302.002(d), which provide TWC [Texas Workforce Commission] with the authority to adopt, amend, or repeal such rules as it deems necessary for the effective administration of TWC services and activities, and Texas Human Resources Code §44.002, regarding Administrative Rules.	This section provides the authority and location of the agency’s rule-making authority.
The proposed rule affects Texas Labor Code, Title 4, particularly Chapters 301 and 302, as well as Texas Government Code, Chapter 2308.	This section provides the reader with the parts of statute that will be affected.
<p><i>§809.55. Waiting Period for Reapplication.</i></p> <p><i>(a) A parent is ineligible to reapply for child care services or to be placed on the waiting list for services for 60 calendar days if the parent's eligibility or the child's enrollment is terminated due to:</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>(1) excessive unexplained absences under §809.78(a);</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>or</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>(2) nonpayment of parent share of cost pursuant to a Board's established policy under §809.19(d).</i></p> <p><i>(b) To ensure full alignment between Child Care Services rules and the Choices program requirements, the provisions of subsection (a) of this section will not apply to individuals who, during the 60-calendar day waiting period:</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>(1) become Choices participants who require child care to participate in Choices; or</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>(2) are on Choices sanction status and require child care to demonstrate participation in Choices.</i></p>	<p><i>Italicized language is new language that is being proposed.</i></p> <p>Language with <del>strikethrough</del> (not pictured in this example) would indicate that the language is proposed for deletion.</p>
The agency certifies that legal counsel has reviewed the proposal and found it to be within the state agency's legal authority to adopt.	This verifies that the state agency is within its authority to adopt the rule.
Filed with the Office of the Secretary of State on February 14, 2018.	This is the date the agency filed the proposed rule with the Secretary of State.
TRD-201800617	TRD-201800617 is the Texas Register Docket Number and is a unique number assigned to each submission by the Texas Register staff.
Jason Vaden Director, Workforce Program Policy Texas Workforce Commission Earliest possible date of adoption: April 1, 2018 For further information, please call: (512) 689-9855	This is the name and contact information for this rule.

## Providing Input or Feedback on a Rule

Once you have reviewed the proposed rule, you may want to provide the agency with your thoughts related to what changes you might like to see in the proposed rule.

Each agency's proposed rules typically provide information related to the purpose, background and authority of the proposed rule, an explanation of the individual provisions, impact statements, and coordination activities. The last paragraph of the rule (or set of proposed rules) is titled, "Part IV, Coordination Activities" and provides an explanation how interested stakeholders can provide input.

### EXAMPLE EXAMPLE EXAMPLE

#### PART IV. COORDINATION ACTIVITIES

In the development of these rules for publication and public comment, the Commission sought the involvement of Texas' 28 Boards. TWC provided the concept paper regarding these rule amendments to the Boards for consideration and review on May 23, 2017. TWC also conducted a conference call with Board executive directors and Board staff on May 26, 2017, to discuss the concept paper. During the rulemaking process, TWC considered all information gathered in order to develop rules that provide clear and concise direction to all parties involved.

*Comments on the proposed rules may be submitted to TWC Policy Comments, Workforce Policy and Service Delivery, Attn: Workforce Editing, 101 East 15th Street, Room 440T, Austin, Texas 78778; faxed to (512) 475-3577; or e-mailed to [TWCPolicyComments@twc.state.tx.us](mailto:TWCPolicyComments@twc.state.tx.us).*

*Comments must be received or postmarked no later than 30 days from the date this proposal is published in the Texas Register.*

The textbox above provides an example of agency's submission process for comments.

If you want to provide input on a proposed rule:

- Be sure to submit your comments by the deadline;
- Pay close attention to the way comments should be submitted (emailed, faxed, or mailed);
- Provide your comments in an easy to understand format;
- Try to provide specific examples of the impact of the proposed rule;

- Always provide suggestions for what could improve the rule. Avoid feedback that focuses only on the problem.
- Always include your contact information in case the agency has questions.

## Providing Written Input or Feedback

To provide input or feedback on a proposed rule, you may provide written feedback describing your specific issues with a proposed rule, being sure to clear, specific, and brief. An example of two possible ways of providing feedback – either through a letter which outlines your concerns or a table which details the language from the specific proposed rule and your recommendations for improving the proposed rule - is provided in the appendix.

## Attending an Agency Public Hearing and Providing Testimony

Sometimes a proposed rule offers an opportunity to provide your opinions through testimony at a public hearing. Public hearings are formal meetings that are open to the public and are designed to give interested people the opportunity to provide comment on the rules. They are usually held before a final decision is made about rules or recommendations and offer members of the public the opportunity to provide comments and to have those comments included in the official public record. Here are some tips to consider when providing testimony at a public hearing.

*I was really nervous speaking in front of the Sunset committee, but after the experience people in the room complimented me on what I said about my family member. I felt that I may have had an impact, making the experience well worth dealing with my anxiousness. I would highly recommend families speak up because we all have a story to tell.*

EILEENE CHAPPELL  
HOUSTON

## PROVIDING TESTIMONY AT AN AGENCY PUBLIC HEARING

- To make the best impression, dress appropriately and conservatively.
- Turn your phone to silent mode before entering the meeting room.
- Sign in. Most sign in sheets or cards would like you to put your name, contact information, and whom you represent. If you are representing a group of which you are a member, you can put the name of the group. It is also okay to write “Self and child” if you are there representing you and your child.
- The number of minutes you may speak may be limited because of the time available or the expected number of people testifying. If your time is limited, you may only have 2 or 3 minutes.
- Be prepared. Know the proposed rule or policy. Briefly describe what the impact would be to you and your family and the changes you are proposing.
- Whenever possible, provide more facts than opinions and more solutions than complaints.
- Consider offering your testimony in a one-page document to leave with the panel.
- Do not read your testimony.
- Be open, authentic, and brief.
- If someone else has already said what you wanted to say, you can reference back to their testimony and add your opinion. For example, “As you heard from Ms. Smith, requiring only 24-hour notice of an ARD meeting places an undue burden on working parents. I would encourage you to instead consider a minimum of three-day notice to parents.”
- While many public hearings offer a “come and go” structure, staying for the entire hearing may provide you with additional information and opportunities to effect change. During breaks, introduce yourself to other people testifying and identify ways to capitalize on people’s interests.
- After the hearing is over, introduce yourself to the panel members, shake their hands, look them in the eye, and thank them for their time. Even if the decisions don’t go your way, those simple interactions will provide a positive foundation for the next hearing.

## Texas Public Information Act: Requesting Information

The Public Information Act in Chapter 552 of the Texas Government Code gives you the right to access government records. There are some exceptions that apply to disclosing information, but all government information is presumed to be available to the public. Governmental agencies and boards are required by law to promptly release requested information that is not confidential or information that they have not requested an exception to

disclosure. The Texas State Library and Archives Commission offers an overview of the Public Information Act, including the rights of requesters, on their website. See [tsl.texas.gov/agency/customer/pia.html](https://tsl.texas.gov/agency/customer/pia.html) for more information.

## **TEXAS PUBLIC INFORMATION ACT**

### Rights of Requestors

You have the right to:

- Prompt access to information that is not confidential or otherwise protected;
- Receive treatment equal to all other requestors, including accommodation in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA requirements);
- Receive certain kinds of information without exceptions, like the voting record of public officials, and other information;
- Receive a written statement of estimated charges, when charges will exceed \$40, in advance of work being started and opportunity to modify the request in response to the itemized statement;
- Choose whether to inspect the requested information (most often at no charge), receive copies of the information or both;
- A waiver or reduction of charges if the governmental body determines that access to the information primarily benefits the general public;
- Receive a copy of the communication from the governmental body asking the Office of the Attorney General for a ruling on whether the information can be withheld under one of the accepted exceptions, or if the communication discloses the requested information, a redacted copy;
- Lodge a written complaint about overcharges for public information with the Office of the Attorney General.

*Excerpted from [tsl.texas.gov/agency/customer/pia.html](https://tsl.texas.gov/agency/customer/pia.html)*

Based on the idea of governmental transparency and informed citizens, we all have the right to request information from governmental bodies under the Public Information Act. Governmental bodies are typically viewed as all Texas public entities at state and local levels. This includes state agencies and state boards as well as local bodies of government, like juvenile justice boards or boards for local mental health authorities and school districts.

## Requesting Information

To request information from a governmental body (all Texas public entities at state and local levels), submit a request by mail, fax, email or in person according to each governmental body's procedures. Make sure you include a description and enough detail about the information you are requesting to enable the governmental body to identify and locate the information requested. (An example information request is available in the appendix.) Within 10 days, you should receive the information you requested or an estimate of the date it will be available.

There may be a cost to produce the records that you are requesting. According to the Public Information Act handbook by the Office of the Attorney General ([texasattorneygeneral.gov/files/og/PIA\\_handbook\\_2018.pdf](https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/files/og/PIA_handbook_2018.pdf)), "a request for copies that results in more than fifty pages may be assessed charges for labor, overhead (which is calculated as a percentage of the total labor), and materials. Other charges may be assessed, depending on the type and amount of data being requested.

Examples of public information requests include requests such as:

- Scoring documents for requests for proposals;
- Salary records for state and municipal employees in Texas;
- Email communications between staff about a specific topic;
- Budgets and financial reports;
- Presentations, memoranda, reports, documents and other work products of state agencies;
- And almost any document or data created by an employee of a state or local governmental body.

That said, a government body may refuse to disclose requested information if other laws exist that identify the information as confidential or protected. Examples of exempt records include certain education or treatment records, state employee's personal information, certain settlement negotiations, documents protected by attorney-client privilege, audit working papers, trade secrets, military discharge records, credit card numbers, crime victim information, and the like.

## Meetings with Decision Makers

Sometimes scheduling a meeting with agency decision-makers can provide the time and opportunity for you to ask questions, provide additional input or feedback, or to share with them your experiences and recommendations. To do so, send them an email which requests a meeting with them. Let them know the topic of the meeting, who will be attending, and about how long you expect the meeting to take. If you have specific documents you will be referencing, it would be helpful if you provided those as well. An example email is provided in the appendix.

If you are requesting a meeting with an agency head, you will likely need to communicate with his or her executive assistant for scheduling. The executive assistant will probably ask you about the meeting topic, the length of time you would like to meet, and maybe other questions like who else you have met with or what you hope to accomplish. You may be asked to meet with a different designated agency leader instead of the agency head. This is still positive, as the designated leader will be authorized to speak on behalf of the agency head and will communicate your thoughts and recommendations back to the agency director.

## Appointments to Committees

Many state agencies have workgroups or committees that include stakeholders external to the agency. Depending on the workgroup or committee, becoming a member may be as simple as asking the chairperson if you can participate. Other committees require people to apply for membership. Announcements of and applications for open workgroup positions are typically posted on the agency website. The application will describe the workgroup, outline member responsibilities, and ask you questions about experiences you have had that will help you contribute effectively to the work of the group. They may ask you about potential conflicts of interest and about any past criminal history. Most applications also ask for the names and contact information of people who could tell them about your interest and involvement in the area of focus for the workgroup.

## Governor's Appointments

The Governor's Office appoints about 3,000 people each year to serve on official boards and committees. The Governor's website at [gov.texas.gov/organization/appointments/positions](https://gov.texas.gov/organization/appointments/positions) provides a list of all appointment positions.

If you would like to be considered by the Governor's Office for a special appointment, you can obtain application materials and information at

*I wanted my voice to be heard, in order to help make change for all families. Speaking out made me feel my voice mattered.*

JULIE BOURNE  
HOUSTON

[gov.texas.gov/organization/appointments/application](http://gov.texas.gov/organization/appointments/application). The application will ask you to provide your name and contact information, a photograph, the names of your elected senator and representative, the Board, Commission, or Task Force in which you are interested, and specific information about your personal and professional experiences, including your work and volunteer history, education, training, professional memberships, and military service. The application also asks for information about your social media use, tax history, lobbying experience, licensing, and criminal history. Print, complete, sign, and send the application with a resume and photograph to the Governor’s Appointment Office. Your name and information will be entered into the appointments system. Some applicants may be asked to come to Austin for a personal interview with the Director of Appointments or an Appointments Manager. Letters of recommendation are accepted, but are not required.

When it is time for the Governor to make an appointment to the body in which you have expressed interest, the Appointments Office reviews the background and qualifications of all applicants, comparing those qualifications to the statutory requirements for that appointment. For a majority of appointments, a potential nominee must be approved by his or her State Senator prior to formal appointment by the Governor. Recommendations are made to the Governor, who makes the final decision. More information is available at [gov.texas.gov/organization/appointments/process](http://gov.texas.gov/organization/appointments/process).

## Using Your Experiences to Make Changes in State Laws

You can make a powerful impact and improve the lives of children and families by sharing your experiences and recommendations with legislators. Legislators are more likely to listen and take action on a bill if they hear from their constituents that it is important. Your voice matters.

### Texas Legislature 101

- The Texas Legislature meets for 140 days from January through May every other year in odd-numbered years. The Governor can also call Special Sessions of the legislature – these last 30 days or until the legislature decides to adjourn.
- There are two main bodies, or chambers, in the Legislature – the Texas House of Representatives and the Texas Senate.

*Hearing from real people about the potential impacts of bills on their lives is important when we are discussing bills and budgets. Your voice makes a difference.*

REP. RICHARD PEÑA RAYMOND  
TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

- The House has 150 members, elected to two-year terms. The presiding officer is the Speaker of the House, who is elected by a vote of the members.
- The Senate has 31 members, elected to four-year terms. The presiding officer is the Lieutenant Governor.

## How a Bill Becomes a Law

Source: [house.texas.gov/about-us/bill](http://house.texas.gov/about-us/bill)

- A representative or senator gets an idea for a bill by listening to the people he or she represents and through recommendations from legislative committees working between legislative sessions.
- The idea is researched to see what specific changes need to happen. A bill is drafted that reflects the changes that need to happen in the law.
- Once a bill has been written, it is introduced by the representative or the senator in his or her chamber. Representatives introduce their bills in the House; Senators introduce their bills in the Senate. (Any bill about increasing taxes or raising money for use by the state must start in the Texas House of Representatives.) There are certain time limits that restrict when bills can be introduced. Generally speaking, bills on any subject can be introduced from mid-November of even-numbered years until about mid-March of odd-numbered years.
- After a bill has been introduced, a short description of the bill, called a caption, is read aloud while the chamber is in session so that all of the members are aware of the bill and its subject. This is called the first reading. It is usually at this point of the process that the presiding officer of the chamber assigns the bill to a committee.
- The bill must be heard in its appointed committee. Public testimony is almost always solicited on bills, allowing citizens the opportunity to speak or to provide written testimony on different sides of an issue.
- After considering a bill, a committee may choose to take no action or may issue a recommendation regarding action on a bill.
- Committee reports may recommend passage of the bill without amendments, recommend amendments to the bill, or substitute a new bill for the original document.

- When the bill comes up for consideration by the full house or full senate, it receives its second reading. The bill is read, again by caption only, and then debated by the full membership of the chamber. Any member may offer amendments, but each amendment is voted on. The members then vote on whether to pass the bill.
- The bill is then considered by the full body again on third reading and final passage. Amendments may be considered, but each amendment is voted on. Amendments at this stage require a two-thirds majority for adoption.
- If a bill receives a majority vote on third reading, it is considered passed. When a bill is passed in the chamber where it originated, the bill is considered to be “engrossed.”
- After passing in the originating chamber, the bill is sent to the opposite chamber for consideration. In the second chamber, the bill follows basically the same steps it followed in the first chamber. It is read, assigned and considered in committee, then returned to the chamber for further consideration.
- When the bill is passed in the opposite chamber, it is returned to the originating chamber with any amendments that have been adopted simply attached to the bill. If amendments have been added, the originating chamber can either agree to the amendments or request a conference committee to work out the differences. If the amendments are agreed to, the bill is signed by the presiding officers and sent to the governor.
- If the two chambers do not agree on the added amendments, a conference committee is requested. Five members from each chamber are appointed by the chamber’s presiding officers. Once the committee reaches agreement, a conference committee report is prepared and voted on in each house. If approved by both houses, the bill is signed by the presiding officers and sent to the governor.
- The governor has 10 days to sign the bill or veto it. (If it is within 10 days of the end of the session, the governor has until 20 days after final adjournment). If he or she does neither, the bill becomes law without a signature. If the legislature is still in session, the bill can be returned to the originating house with an explanation of the governor’s objections. A two-thirds majority in each house is required to override the veto.

## You Can Make A Difference!

You can use your experiences to inform and educate Texas legislators on bills they are considering. To do that, you need to know who your legislators are and build a relationship with them. You also need to know the bills that are being considered, when the legislative committees are considering them, and how to provide effective testimony.

## Who Represents Me?

Building a positive working relationship your elected official is an important part of being an effective change-maker. If you are unsure who represents you, go to [fyi.capitol.texas.gov/Home.aspx](http://fyi.capitol.texas.gov/Home.aspx) to enter your address and find the names and contact information for your elected officials. There are several ways to build positive relationships with your elected officials, including contacting their offices, scheduling in-person visits, inviting them to a group meeting, attending town hall meetings, or testifying at committee hearings.

Emailing your elected official's office is a good first step, but don't let that be the only way you communicate with them. Build a relationship with them and their staff members through ongoing communication with them. During a busy legislative session, staff members are the key players for legislators. Make sure you treat each staff member with the same courtesy and respect as you treat the legislators. Actively engage the staff members who are interested in discussing your issues.

Let the legislators know of exciting events happening in their district. Invite them to participate in events or to speak to your group meeting. Schedule meetings with the legislator and his or her staff in the district office. Be specific. Do you want them to support a bill? Author legislation? File an amendment to an existing bill? This is your time to let the member know what you need. Consider providing them with a small, unique "leave behind" – a creative way to remind them of your issue and your main points.

If your legislator holds a town hall meeting, make sure to attend, even if the issue is not directly related to your cause. Sign in, say hello and shake his/her hand, and thank them for holding the event and giving their constituents an opportunity to express their opinions.

Providing testimony at a legislative hearing is another way to share information with your local legislators. It takes a bit more preparation, but it's a great way to build relationships. We will discuss how to provide testimony in a later section of this document.

*Legislators hear from a lot of people during the legislative process – lobbyists, trade associations, people from all over the state. I have always tried to reach out to constituents and provide forums through which they can let me know how they feel about various issues. But with over 800,000 people in each state senate district, it's not always easy to reach everyone. So I encourage you to reach out to your representatives in the federal, state, and local governments. Let them know what's important to you. Government is better when more people participate!*

SENATOR ROYCE WEST  
TEXAS SENATE

## Who Represents My Issues?

Our elected officials may not always be the primary legislators for our specific issues. If you are not sure who the primary legislators are for your specific issue (such as children’s mental health services, child welfare, foster children, or juvenile justice), you can start by looking at existing committee members and authors of past bills.

Texas Legislature Online ([capitol.texas.gov](http://capitol.texas.gov)) provides an abundance of information on the Texas Legislature and its processes. Selecting “Committees” under either the House or the Senate will provide you with a list of legislative committees for each chamber by each designated session. Specific issues may fall under two or three committees in each of the House and the Senate. For example, for committees that might discuss topics related to children’s mental health services, you might want to look at House Human Services, House Appropriations – Subcommittee on Article II, House Committee on Juvenile Justice and Family Issues, and the Senate Health and Human Services, Senate Finance, and possibly Senate Education and/or Criminal Justice. Once you identify the relevant committees, you can use [capitol.texas.gov](http://capitol.texas.gov) to see the legislative members assigned to that committee. The members of the committee, especially the chair and vice-chair, will be great contacts on issues specific to those committees.

A second method of identifying who represents your issues might be to look at bills filed in previous sessions and identifying the authors of those bills. Use [capitol.texas.gov](http://capitol.texas.gov) to design a search to identify those authors.

After you have identified the legislators who represent your issues, begin building relationships with them in the same way that you did your elected officials. Reach out to them and their staff members, share information, invite them to attend meetings, and schedule meetings with them. Of course, one of the primary ways to build relationships with legislators is by providing testimony on bills that come before their committees. The first step to providing testimony, however, is tracking bills.

## Tracking Bills

All bills filed in the Texas Legislature are available online. The website, [capitol.texas.gov](http://capitol.texas.gov), provides substantial information to anyone interested in learning more about the legislative process. Using this website enables you to track topic-specific legislation, view the text of a bill, create bill lists, and receive bill and meeting alerts specific to the topics you choose.

To see bills, go to [capitol.texas.gov](http://capitol.texas.gov) and select the legislative session in which you are interested. You can then search by a descriptive word or phrase (for example, children or youth) or a bill number (if you are looking for a specific bill). If you want to see all bills filed for a particular session, go to [capitol.texas.gov/Reports/General.aspx](http://capitol.texas.gov/Reports/General.aspx). There, you can see daily activities or see bills organized by certain categories (filed House Bills, filed Senate bills, Bills Signed by the Governor, etc.).

Once you have identified the bill numbers for the bills you want to track, go to My TLO ([capitol.texas.gov/MnuMyTLO.aspx](http://capitol.texas.gov/MnuMyTLO.aspx)) to create bill lists and alerts. Once you have constructed your lists, TLO will notify you as your selected bills progress through the legislative process.

The Texas House of Representatives and the Texas Senate broadcast and archive almost all of their committee hearings and full House/Senate sessions online public viewing.

- Go to [house.texas.gov/video-audio/](http://house.texas.gov/video-audio/) or [senate.texas.gov/av-live.php](http://senate.texas.gov/av-live.php) to watch live broadcasts.
- Access archived broadcasts at [house.texas.gov/video-audio/committee-broadcasts/](http://house.texas.gov/video-audio/committee-broadcasts/) or [senate.texas.gov/av-archive.php](http://senate.texas.gov/av-archive.php).

## I just learned that the bill I am interested in is being heard in committee... What do I do?

Providing testimony at a legislative committee is a great way to share your experiences and expertise with policymakers. Your opinion about the potential positive or negative impact of a bill can help make the difference in whether the committee decides to move the bill forward. For the most effective testimony, keep the following in mind (excerpted from Representative Donna Howard's document [cg4tx.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/How-to-Testify-Before-the-Lege.pdf](http://cg4tx.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/How-to-Testify-Before-the-Lege.pdf)).

- Confirm that the Committee is allowing public comment. Many committee hearings allow public testimony, but some only allow invited witnesses. Check the hearing notice at

[capitol.texas.gov/Home.aspx](https://capitol.texas.gov/Home.aspx) to make sure the Committee will be hearing from the public.

- Prepare two to three minutes of comments. Focus on the impact the bill will have. Illustrate your message points with data, statistics, or a brief anecdote. In your testimony, be very specific in your opening remarks. Open meetings laws require all speakers to provide their names, who they are representing and what bill/topic they are testifying about. “My name is [name]. I am representing [Name of organization or myself]. I am here today to speak [for or against] [specific bill number].”
- Be as accurate as possible in your testimony. Do not exaggerate. Give credit to the sources of information you use.
- Most people speak for or against a bill. You may also hear some people speaking “on” a bill or as a resource witness. These are typically people who work for a state agency and are at the Capitol in an official capacity. They are usually there to provide background, answer questions, or speak to the facts of the bill, and do not offer opinions as to the merits of a bill.
- Consider providing written copies of your testimony to the Committee members, but make sure you do not read it to the Committee members.
- To make the best impression, dress appropriately and conservatively. Try to look as professional as possible. Avoid clothing that is revealing, provocative, ripped or dirty.
- Pack for a long day. Committee hearings might begin early, recess for a couple of hours, and then go late into the night. You might pack some snacks, reading materials, bottled water, and a light sweater in the event the meeting room is cool.
- Find your way. Allow extra time for parking, walking to the meeting room, and getting lost. If you are attending a meeting at the Texas Capitol, there is a Visitors’ Parking Garage at 12<sup>th</sup> and Trinity. There are also metered street parking spots, but make sure to bring quarters.
- Each Capitol entrance has a security check-in. Make sure any [prohibited objects](#) (for example, unauthorized firearms, pepper spray, glass bottles, tasers, etc.) are left at home or in your vehicle.
- Find your Committee meeting room. Room numbers that begin with a G, 1, 2, or 3 are in the *main* Capitol building. Room numbers indicate the floor (Ground, 1, 2, 3, and 4) and wing (North, South, East, and West) of the room location. The letter after the number

indicates the direction of the room. For example, 1.N.9 indicates that the room is in the north wing of the first floor of the main Capitol building.

- Room numbers that begin with an E are in the Extension, with rooms beginning with E.1. on the first floor underground in the extension and E.2. is the second (or lower) floor underground. All of the room numbers in the Extension end in even numbers.
- Before you provide testimony, you will need to register at a witness registration kiosk located near the entrances to the Committee Rooms or on a personal iPad. It is a quick and simple, five-step process. You can even create your public profile in advance at [mytxlegis.capitol.texas.gov/HWRSPublic/default.aspx](http://mytxlegis.capitol.texas.gov/HWRSPublic/default.aspx). You will be asked to create an account by inserting your email address, creating a password, entering your name, address, and phone number.
- After you have a public profile, just select the time, location, Committee, and bill numbers for which you will be providing testimony. You will also be asked to indicate whether you are testifying for, against, or on a bill and acknowledge that you are testifying under oath. A two-minute video explaining the process is available at [mytxlegis.capitol.texas.gov/HWRSPublic/Video/HouseWitnessReg.mp4](http://mytxlegis.capitol.texas.gov/HWRSPublic/Video/HouseWitnessReg.mp4).
- Registering at the kiosk as a witness gives you the option to testify on a bill, but does not require that you speak. You can also use the kiosks to indicate whether you are for or against the bill, without having to speak to the Committee.



## What Happens During a Committee Hearing

- When the hearing begins, the committee chair will announce the bill number being considered. If it is the first time being introduced, the bill's author may be there to present the bill and explain it to the members of the committee. The chair may then call witnesses who have registered to provide testimony about the bill.
- When you are called to testify, if you have written copies of your testimony, give those to the committee clerk. Due to the often unpredictable length of the hearings, legislators may come and go during a scheduled hearing. They may need to step out to present a bill in a different committee, eat lunch, or have a quick meeting with other legislators or constituents on a bill. If they are not in the room, be assured that they usually have a staff member in the room taking notes and will be briefed on the witnesses they missed. When you are called by the chair to testify, you may proceed with

your testimony, even if the chairperson is the only legislator on the dais.

- Begin your comments by thanking the committee. If you are testifying for a specific group, or coalition, tell them the name of the organization or group, briefly describe the group's mission, and how many members it has. For example, "Chairman Smith and members of the committee, I am Leslie Yep from Pawnee, Texas and I represent Families for Texas Parks, a 40-member group of parents of young children with mental health challenges, working to increase accessibility to Texas parks for all families."
- Build rapport by keeping good eye contact and speaking directly to the members. Speak directly into the microphone and limit your comments to three to five minutes (or the time limit directed by the chair). At the conclusion of your remarks, indicate your willingness to answer questions by saying, "That concludes my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you may have."
- Avoid repetition. Legislators hear hours and hours of testimony, so make yours memorable. Be open, honest, sincere, and brief. If other people have already covered your topic, shorten your testimony to just the parts that are unique. You might say, "I'd like to echo some of the descriptions of previous speakers. I, too, feel that ..."
- If you are asked a question, try to provide a short, factual response. If asked a yes or no question, provide a yes or no response before providing additional information. If you do not know the answer, let them know. If you have the capacity to find out the answer, offer to do that. For example, "I'm sorry, Representative (or Senator), I don't have that information available, but I would be happy to find out and communicate that back to your office."
- If a member of the committee asks a hostile question, remain polite, respectful, and poised. Do not argue with committee members. Even if the committee seems opposed to your perspective, your testimony may earn their respect, educate those attending the hearing, and demonstrate that opposition exists.
- Close your presentation by thanking the committee for their time and state carefully and specifically what you would like the committee members to do. For example, "Thank you for the time you have devoted to this topic. I urge you to vote for HB 2222 and increase funding for mental health services in schools. That concludes my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you have."

- After your testimony, you are welcome to observe the rest of the hearing or you can leave the hearing room after you testify. You may want to send a very brief thank you letter to the committee members and their staff thanking them for considering the bill and offering interested people the opportunity to participate. Offer to meet with them to answer any questions or concerns they may have regarding your testimony. Volunteer to be their resource on your particular area of interest.

## Tips on Preparing Your Written Testimony

*Note: An example is provided in the Appendix.*

- Clearly identify yourself and any organization or coalition you are representing during your testimony. In one or two sentences, describe the organization's mission, the number of members, and the geographical area represented.
- Clearly state your position as "for" or "against" the specific bill. For example, "I am testifying for House Bill 2222."
- Use your experience to tell the committee how the bill will affect you, your children, your family, or your community. Include a personal story that provides examples of your main points.
- Provide facts and citations. It is extremely important that your testimony is as accurate as possible.
- When preparing your testimony, consider making it double-spaced, one-sided, and include your name and contact information. Do not write in all capital letters. Avoid the overuse of exclamation points. Number the pages and add your name and the hearing date in the footer. Thousands of bills are filed every legislative session. To increase the likelihood that your testimony is read, try to keep your comments to one or two pages of the most important information.

# Using Your Experiences to Change Lives Across the Country

## Changing Laws

Much of the work done to track bills and change state laws is very similar to the work needed to change federal laws.

- To learn about your elected officials and to track bills, see [govtrack.us](https://govtrack.us). Register and log in to GovTrack to create a bill tracking docket that will provide you with the latest information on the bills you are tracking.
- Go to [govtrack.us/congress/bills](https://govtrack.us/congress/bills) to find specific bills.
- Go to [govtrack.us/congress/members](https://govtrack.us/congress/members) to find out who represents you in Congress and what bills they have sponsored.
- Reach out to your elected officials and let them know your thoughts and opinions about the bills and issues that matter to you. Schedule a meeting with them or their staff members when they are in the district. Attend any town hall hearings they hold. Invite them to events that may be useful to their work or that will help them and their staff get to know you and your organization.
- Witnesses for Congressional hearings must be invited by a congressional committee to appear and provide testimony at a hearing. However, you may offer to appear or be invited as a witness by contacting a committee holding a relevant hearing. In the end, it is the committee that will determine who will be invited to provide testimony.

## As a Grant Application Reviewer

The federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) chooses peer reviewers based on their knowledge, education, and experience. If you have program experience, education, and the skills and abilities to analyze grant applications, you may qualify to become a Peer Reviewer.

Peer Reviewers review and score grant applications to SAMHSA for federal funding for substance use treatment, mental health treatment, or recovery services and supports. Time commitments vary, but usually require a concentrated focus over a fairly short period of time. Reviewers usually receive taxable compensation for their services. SAMHSA's website at

[samhsa.gov/grants/review/grant-review-opportunities](https://www.samhsa.gov/grants/review/grant-review-opportunities) provides additional information.

## **As a Public Speaker**

You can also use your voice as a means of sharing your experience, strength, and hope with others through becoming a speaker at conferences. You might start speaking at conferences in your local area, refining your presentation and speaking skills. Study effective presenters for how to be dynamic and engaging. Consider asking someone to record your presentation and post it on YouTube.

Many conferences send out a “Call for Papers” or a “Call for Presenters” with specific requests for presenters to submit an application to present. If you notice a conference which would be a good fit for your presentation, contact the planners and ask if they are accepting applications to present. Often, conferences schedule speakers who may cancel at the last minute. Be willing to be an “if needed” presenter to fill in if someone cancels.

## **Amplify YOUR Voice!**

Whether you choose to use your voice to influence policies and opinions at local levels by attending local board meetings or whether you provide testimony at legislative committee hearings, your voice matters. Harness your passion and energy and use your voice to change policies, laws, and rules to benefit children and families.

## EXAMPLE OF FEEDBACK ON A PROPOSED RULE

### Letter

<Date>

<Primary contact> (often found in Part IV of Texas Register announcements)

<Name of State Agency>

<Address>

<City, State Zip Code>

Dear <name of contact>:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed rule recently published in <40 TAC §809.55, *Waiting Period for Reapplication*.>

As a parent of a child with mental health needs, I am writing to express my concerns with the proposed changes related to <the 60 calendar day period proposed in 809.55 (a). Sixty calendar days would place an undue burden on most parents and would not increase a parent's ability to attend or to provide the parent share of the cost. Please consider modifying the 60 day requirement to 30 days.

Also, given that children with mental health needs may have more than five consecutive absences in a month as described in Section 809.78 (a), please consider eliminating this trigger for parental ineligibility. >

Thank you for this opportunity to share my recommendations. If you have questions, I can be reached at <phone number> or by email at <email address>

Sincerely,

<Name>

<Address>

**EXAMPLE OF FEEDBACK ON A PROPOSED RULE**

Table Format

<Date>

<Primary contact> (often found in Part IV of Texas Register announcements)

<Name of State Agency>

<Address>

<City, State Zip Code>

Dear <name of contact>:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed rule recently published in <40 TAC §809.55, Waiting Period for Reapplication.>

As a parent of a child with mental health needs, I am writing to express my concerns with the proposed changes related to <the 60 calendar day period proposed in 809.55 (a).>

<b>EXAMPLE OF TABLE FORMAT</b>	
<b>Section in Administrative Code</b>	<b>Feedback and Recommended Changes</b>
<i>(a) A parent is ineligible to reapply for child care services or to be placed on the waiting list for services for 60 calendar days if the parent's eligibility or the child's enrollment is terminated due to:</i>	Please consider changing 60 calendar days to 30 calendar days to reduce undue burden on parents of children with special needs.
<i>(1) excessive unexplained absences under §809.78(a); or</i>	Please eliminate this as a possible trigger for parental ineligibility. Due to their special needs, children with mental health needs may have more than five consecutive absences in a month.
<i>2) nonpayment of parent share of cost pursuant to a Board's established policy under §809.19(d).</i>	No change recommended.

If you have questions about my recommendations, please contact me at <phone number> or by email at <email address>

Sincerely,

<Name>

<Address>

## EXAMPLE PUBLIC INFORMATION REQUEST

[Your Name]

[Your Street Address]

[City, State, Zip Code]

[Date]

[Name of Custodian of Records]

[Title]

[Agency Name]

[Street Address]

[City, State, Zip Code]

Dear [Custodian of Records]:

Under the Texas Public Information Act 6252-17 et seq., I am requesting copies of public records that **[Describe the records or information sought with enough detail for the agency to respond. Be as specific as your knowledge of the records will allow. Describe the information you are seeking.]**

If there are any fees for searching or copying these records, please inform me if the cost will exceed \$\_\_\_\_. However, I would also like to request a waiver of all fees in that the disclosure of the requested information is in the public interest and will contribute significantly to the public's understanding of \_\_\_\_\_. This information is not being sought for commercial purposes.

If you anticipate a delay of more than 10 days in responding to this request, please contact me with information about when I might expect copies or the ability to inspect the requested records.

If you deny any or all of this request, please cite each specific exemption you feel justifies the refusal to release the information and notify me of the appeal procedures available to me.

Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Phone number]

Adapted from the Texas Sample FOIA Request provided by the National Freedom of Information Coalition. <https://www.nfoic.org/texas-sample-foia-request>

## EXAMPLE EMAIL TO AGENCY STAFF TO REQUEST A MEETING

From: **[Your Name]**  
Date: **[Date of Email]**  
To: **[Name of Agency Staff]**  
Subject: **[Request for Meeting to Discuss \*\*\*\*\*]**

**Dear [Name of Agency Staff]:**

Thank you for your work on [policy or topic issue]. Your efforts to include stakeholders in the design and discussion of this issue is greatly appreciated.

I am writing to request a **[30 minute]** meeting with you to talk about \*\*\*\*\*. I am available at your convenience. I have provided a copy of the recommendations I would like to discuss. Please let me know what time and date might be best for your schedule. I can be reached by email or by telephone at **[your phone number here]**. I have included some background information for your review.

Thank you.

**[Your name]**

## **EXAMPLE SCRIPT FOR TELEPHONE CALL TO ELECTED OFFICIAL**

Good afternoon. My name is Leslie Yep. I am a constituent in Representative Trager's district.

I am calling to provide information on House Bill # 322 and to urge Representative Trager to vote against the bill. This version of the bill would make it more difficult for families to access mental health care for their children. As a parent of a young person with a mental health challenge, I can tell you how critical it is that mental health care be available and easily accessible for young people.

I would be happy to provide testimony or input on improving HB 322.

Thank you for your time. Again, I'm asking Representative Trager to vote NO on HB 322.

## EXAMPLE TESTIMONY FOR A COMMITTEE HEARING

Testimony for <Name of Committee>

<Date of Hearing>

Your Full Name

Street Address

City or Town, State Zip Code

Good Afternoon Chairman Smith and Members of the Committee.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ (first name, last name) and I am \_\_\_\_\_ (title/role).

I am here to testify (for/against) <House Bill/Senate Bill #####>.

I would like you to support/oppose this legislation.

If passed, this bill would \_\_\_\_\_ (description of the bill from your point of view). The outcome of this bill would be \_\_\_\_\_ (describe the bill's impact on children, families, etc. ).

My family will also be affected because \_\_\_\_\_ (provide a personal example of the impact).

Thank you for your careful consideration of this issue. I urge you to please vote for/against HB/SB #####. That concludes my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

**EXAMPLE OF ACTUAL TESTIMONY**

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**MACKENZIE GRAYSON  
NORMANDY SCHOOLS COLLABORATIVE,  
PARENTS AS TEACHERS AFFILIATE**

**TESTIMONY  
TO THE  
MISSOURI SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2018**

Senator Brown, members of the committee, my name is MacKenzie Grayson, and I am the Program Coordinator for the Normandy Schools Collaborative Parents as Teachers affiliate. I am also a former parent in the PAT program.

My first encounter with home visiting was at our WIC office ten years ago when my son Braylon was two. At the time, we were struggling financially. I had just finished my Masters of Arts in Teaching degree and was substitute teaching. My husband Beronte had just started working as a correctional officer at the juvenile detention center.

I noticed that my son was not speaking the way other children his age were. I was nervous about Braylon being labeled and the stigma of having to have special education services that could follow him (and other children) as he continues to grow. That was a huge barrier to me admitting aloud what I knew in my heart: that we needed help. After expressing our concerns to the WIC nurse, she immediately referred us to Parents as Teachers.

My parent educator, Ms. Nell, called me within the next few days and we connected right away. She made me feel comfortable and reassured me about how getting the help Braylon needed early will help him along the way socially, emotionally, and academically. The stigma about asking for help that I was so worried about just disappeared. She screened Braylon and determined he needed additional services for speech.

At age three, Braylon started speech therapy. I am so grateful that Parents as Teachers screened Braylon early. Otherwise, we might have waited until he got to Kindergarten. At that point, it probably would have been too late to get him on track with his peers.

Ms. Nell worked with Beronte and I on ways to complement the speech therapy and help him further with language development. For example, she gave us strategies for reading with toddlers, face-to-face talking, rhyming and singing songs. I was excited and fulfilled to be able to focus more intentionally with my son during learning activities.

The activities that Ms. Nell gave us for Braylon were definitely a blessing. We knew how to love him and care for him but did not have the knowledge that something may be wrong with his speech, or what to look for.

Our home visitor really helped us be the best parents we could be with Braylon. We put everything we had into his success. When his kindergarten teacher didn't think he could go on to first grade because of his speech or him not

being able to “inference” well, we worked with Braylon even more and, and felt comfortable enough in ourselves to advocate for him to move up to keep him with his peers. Braylon graduated from speech therapy last year, and he entered the 6th grade in the fall without any special education services. He is doing really well. He plays the trombone, is involved in sports, loves to read, and is an honor roll student.

Five years ago, I became a parent educator and began providing direct services to families in the Normandy Schools Collaborative PAT program. I have since risen to the level of supervisor and manage 12 home visitors in addition to a small caseload of my own. I applied for the job primarily because I love working with families. Beyond that, I know that Parents as Teachers is an evidence-based model that works. Having been a parent in the program, I knew that I would be able to relate to the families I serve, and that they would feel comfortable with me.

I grew up fast because I was the oldest child and my mother was away from home a lot working, and I was responsible for my brothers. I find that common trait with the families I work with now. They did not have the modeling from their own parents to be the best parents they could be for their children. We tend to parent the way we were parented. Parent educators can disrupt negative cycles by providing concrete tools for helping our children flourish.

My personal story with a home visitor is about getting the services I needed to help my son with speech. Nevertheless, many of the families we work with have profound needs and their children are in serious danger. One of the parent educators I supervise is currently working with a family whose situation I would like to share: Mom had a set of twins later in life, after not realizing she was pregnant until well into her pregnancy. She was not prepared to be a mother, and their father was out of the picture because he was incarcerated. She lives in a distressed part of town, and during a home visit, there were shots fired outside. On another visit, my home visitor observed bullet holes on the exterior of the home. The twins, not surprisingly, were very underdeveloped in social and emotional skills. At the insistence of her home visitor, mom has started having her home visits at our center. One of the great things about home visiting is that it is flexible enough to happen anywhere that is safe and comfortable for a family—so it can happen in places beyond the home, including libraries and schools, even the McDonalds. Our PAT home visitor has been seeing this family for more than a year now and has seen some incredible improvements in the mother as well as the development of the children. Dad just got out of jail, and is now coming to home visits as well. My experience with Parents as Teachers has been amazing. Seeing the model work from both, the perspective of a parent and a parent educator has given me an even greater appreciation for the impact we can make with families together. Beronte and I continue to thrive as parents. Braylon now has two younger sisters; one is 9 years old and our youngest is 5. All of our children are doing really well in school, love to read, being involved in the community through different organizations and in our church home.

I also continue on my own quest. I have gone on to earn a Master’s in Education Administration and ultimately I would like to be an early childhood center director. Parenting is a journey that never ends and there is always room for improvement. I fundamentally believe in the power of home visiting to elevate children and their families together. My family is a product of its success, and I am honored every day to be able to turn around and contribute to the success of other families. I thank you sincerely for the support you have shown Parents as Teachers and ask that you support our continued success through this budget. Thank you.

Source: Parents As Teachers. *Building A Relationship With Your Elected Officials*. Available at [parentsasteachers.org/advocacy-tools](https://parentsasteachers.org/advocacy-tools). August 27, 2018.

## Resources

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. *State Advocacy Toolkit*. Available at [https://www.aacap.org/aacap/Advocacy/How\\_to\\_Be\\_an\\_Advocate/State\\_Advocacy\\_Toolkit.aspx](https://www.aacap.org/aacap/Advocacy/How_to_Be_an_Advocate/State_Advocacy_Toolkit.aspx). August 27, 2018.

Autistic Self Advocacy Network. *Civic Engagement Toolbox for Self-Advocates*. Available at <http://autisticadvocacy.org/policy/toolkits/civic/>. August 27, 2018.

Community Tool Box. *Influencing Policy Development*. Available at <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/influencing-policy-development>. August 27, 2018.

National Association of Social Workers. *Lobby Day Toolkit*. Available at <https://www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=--pBgNuwBVg%3D&portalid=0>. August 27, 2018.

National Parents and Teachers Association. *Advocacy Toolkit*. Available at <https://www.pta.org/home/advocacy/advocacy-resources/Advocacy-Toolkit> . August 27, 2018.

Parents As Teachers. *Building A Relationship With Your Elected Officials*. Available at <https://parentsasteachers.org/advocacy-tools/>. August 27, 2018.