

Legislative Awareness Day

Tips for Families: Talking with Legislators



Come prepared.

- Know the issues you will be discussing and anticipate any questions or concerns the legislator might have.
- Bring materials for the legislator. Keep the materials brief.
- Have a designated leader for the meeting to facilitate the conversation.

Be aware of time constraints.

- Know how much time you have.
- Introduce your organization and what population the organization represents.
- Introduce everyone in the room so the legislator knows who you represent.
- Keep the legislator focused, and don't let him or her divert attention from the issue or take control of the meeting.
- Don't get angry.

Tell your story.

Like all people, legislators respond to personal stories. Help them to understand how the shortfalls of the current system are hurting families and children. They won't know this unless you help to educate them. Don't go over all the details. Relate your story to broad policy issues and the prepared speaking points.

Tell what you know about the issue. Be concise.

If you don't know the answer to a question, offer to provide the information later.

Ask for a commitment.

Be direct and clear. Are you asking the legislator to sponsor a bill? Vote a certain way?

Follow up and follow through.

If the legislator was supportive: Send a thank you note and remind them of what they agreed to do. Call a few weeks later to see if the legislator followed through with their commitment.

If the legislator was not supportive: Thank them for the meeting and remind them why this is an important issue. Call a few weeks later to see if they will meet again. Ask them what is needed to change their mind.

Don't give up. Join us in advocating for change!

Coordinate your efforts with others across the state. Families must provide support to each other in their advocacy efforts. Change takes a long time, but persistence pays off.

Families Together in New York State

737 Madison Avenue ♦ Albany, NY 12208 ♦ 518.432.0333 ♦ 888.326.8644 ♦ www.ftnys.org