

University of Michigan  
C.S. Mott Children's Hospital  
Children's Advocacy Initiative

# Toolkit for Easy Advocacy



## Advocacy: Speaking Up For A Cause

This toolkit provides you with  
**what you need** to tell legislators  
about the issues  
that are **important to you!**

## 1) Writing a Letter



Letters are an important way to influence legislation. Legislative staff members have estimated that for every letter they receive on an issue, there are 200 other people who feel the same way, but don't write. You can mail, fax, or e-mail your letter (see page 4 for a special note on e-mail).

Letters to your own senator or representative are especially important. You have two state legislators: one senator and one representative. If you don't know who your legislators are, try the following:

- ✓ Visit [www.vote-smart.org/](http://www.vote-smart.org/) and type in your zip code to find your legislators and their contact information.
- ✓ Become an advocate with the University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children's Hospital, and we will send you a personalized contact sheet with the names, addresses, and phone numbers of your state and federal legislators.

Here are a few guidelines:

- ✓ Introduce yourself as a constituent - a voter in the elected official's district (if you are one).
- ✓ Mention if you are part of a group or coalition along with how many people your group represents.
- ✓ Write about one issue at a time and keep it short (one-page if possible).
- ✓ Refer to bills or policies by name or number.
- ✓ Make your position clear and say exactly what you want your legislator to do.
- ✓ Tell how the legislation will affect you and others like you.
- ✓ Don't threaten or get mean.
- ✓ Ask for the legislator's view on the issue.
- ✓ When a legislator does what you asked (such as vote for a bill), send a thank you note.

## Addressing Your Letter

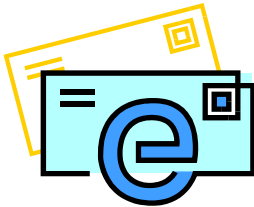
You can send letters directly to the Michigan Capitol, addressed like this:

The Honorable (Full Name) Michigan House of Representatives P.O. Box 30014 Lansing, MI 48909-7514	<b>or</b>	The Honorable (full Name) Michigan Senate P.O. Box 30036 Lansing, MI 48909-7536
Dear Representative/ Senator Smith:		

## A Word About E-mail

Thinking about e-mailing your legislator? First, consider two things:

- 1) E-mail is received differently by individual legislators. It's a good idea to call your legislator's office first and simply ask, "Does Senator Smith read e-mail? Would that be a good way to send information to him?"
- 2) If you do send an e-mail, always include your **full** name and your **home** address at the end. This helps the legislator know that you are a real, live, voting person in his or her district.



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## What's so great about this letter?

Says up front what Jane wants Rep. Smith to do

Identifies Jane as a constituent, someone Rep. Smith is interested in hearing from.

States what Jane does for a living, where she works, and that she is part of a larger group

Explains a little about the issue in a short, easy-to-read format

Tells a quick personal story that shows how this issue affects Jane

Asks for a response explaining Rep. Smith's views

Says what Jane wants Rep. Smith to do again, in slightly different words

Includes Jane's contact information

August 15, 2006  
The Honorable John Smith  
Michigan House of Representatives  
P.O. Box 30014  
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Dear Representative Smith:

As a constituent in your district, I am writing today to urge your support for expanding the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) by voting for H.R. 1234. I am deeply concerned about making sure that all of our children have health insurance and can get medical care when they need it. I am Pediatric Nurse Practitioner who works at the University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children's Hospital and a member of the Michigan Chapter of the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners - which has over 1,000 members.

- Today, one in seven children is without health insurance, 262,000 in our state alone (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2000).
- Of those, 16 percent live in families where parents work (Kids Count Data, 2001).
- Expanding Medicaid to include uninsured children will help thousands of families provide the care their children need.

Both my husband and I work hard to support our two boys. My younger son suffers from severe asthma and without proper health insurance, we would not be able to seek treatment for him.

I look forward to learning about your position on this issue and hope that you can help expand health care coverage for children. Please call me if I can answer any questions for you.

Sincerely,

*Jane Q. Public*

Jane Q. Public, Degree  
Jane's Title  
Jane's Home Street Address  
Ann Arbor, MI 48109  
(734) 555-1234

It's just one page long!

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## 2) Making a Phone Call

Visit [www.vote-smart.org](http://www.vote-smart.org) to find your legislator's contact information.

### Tips for calling your legislator



- ✓ Identify yourself by name and address and the bill or issue you wish to talk about by name and number.
- ✓ Briefly state your position and how you'd like your legislator to vote.
- ✓ Ask for your legislator's stance on the bill/issue and for a commitment to vote for your position.
- ✓ Don't argue if the legislator has an opposing view or hasn't yet decided.
- ✓ Don't guess at answers to questions. If you don't know, say so, and then **get back** to them with correct information.
- ✓ Follow up your call with a note restating your position and thanking them for their time.

**Note:** Legislators are often away from the office, so you may speak with a staff person instead. Use the same rules. Staff are very reliable and will pass along your message.

### Tips for using voice mail

- ✓ State your name and address.
- ✓ Identify the specific bill you're calling about.
- ✓ Briefly state your position and keep the message simple.

*For example:* "Hello, this is Jane Q. Public at 314 Main Street in Ann Arbor. I'm calling to let you know that I fully support H.R. 1234, which would expand health care for children in Michigan. I urge you to vote yes. Thank you."

Legislators and their staff are very busy. Before you make your call, review the information that you want to discuss, list your points, and determine what action you want your legislator to take.

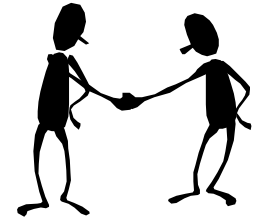
## 3) Visiting Your Legislator

Personal visits are a very effective way to help legislators understand your position on an issue. Legislators welcome visits from their constituents (voters in their districts). They want you to be involved. However, they are busy people, and their time is extremely valuable. Plan ahead and use their time well.

If you make an appointment when Congress or the state legislature is in session, there is **no guarantee** that the legislator will be able to keep it. Legislative schedules change at a moment's notice.

### Before The Meeting

- ✓ Make an appointment in advance and expect to get about 15 minutes. Visit [www.vote-smart.org](http://www.vote-smart.org) to find your legislator's contact information.
- ✓ Make it easy for your legislator to meet with you.
- ✓ Prepare a fact sheet about your issue and bring copies (see pg. 8).
- ✓ Try to learn in advance where your legislator stands on your issue.
- ✓ Be prepared to explain how the bill or issue will affect you and other voters.



### During The Meeting

- ✓ Be on time, prepared, polite, and brief.
- ✓ Start with your 90-second speech (see next page).
- ✓ Give the legislator the fact sheet on your issue.
- ✓ Be firm, but friendly. Once your legislator is aware of the issue and your position, it isn't too soon to ask for a commitment.
- ✓ Attack the issue, not the person. You may be asking for this person's support on a completely different issue in the future.
- ✓ Don't use technical terms or acronyms (unless you are sure that you will be understood).
- ✓ If you don't know the answer to a question, say so, and then **get back to them** with the information.

- ✓ Recognize opposing viewpoints to your issue and refute their arguments.
- ✓ Before leaving, ask how you can be of help to them (Get more information? Talk with others about this issue?).
- ✓ Thank them for their time and/or for anything they've done recently with which you agree.

## After The Meeting

Follow up with a thank you note and any information that was requested.



### The Crucial 90-second speech...

Memorize a little speech before your meeting. It's not only handy for talking to legislators, but it will serve you well when explaining your issue to anyone.

Your speech should include:

- ✓ Who you are and any group or coalition you belong to
- ✓ The topic you want to talk about
- ✓ What you want them to do
- ✓ Reference to the fact sheet you've brought along (see pg. 8). This is critical – if your meeting is interrupted, you'll still have gotten your point across, and the legislator will know how to find you or your group if s/he has any questions.

For example: "Hi, I'm Jane Q. Public. I'm a nurse at the University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children's Hospital, which in the year 2006, admitted 10,690 children and cared for 41,000 on an inpatient basis. I'd like to talk to you about health care coverage for children. I'm hoping you'll vote yes on H.R. 1234, which expands the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to cover families making up to 200% of the federal poverty level. This will help insure many more additional needy children in our state. Here's a sheet with some more information – my phone number is there if you have any questions."

## 4) Preparing a Good Fact Sheet

Good fact sheets recognize that busy people (like legislators) need something short and punchy to grab their attention. Anything long and complicated may simply be ignored or actually counter-productive. Keep it short, accurate, and interesting.

### Fact sheets can...

- ✓ Identify a group with a particular issue.
- ✓ Set out the facts — key statistics, figures, or comparisons.
- ✓ Provide answers to common questions about the issue.
- ✓ Show information using graphs, charts, or pictures.
- ✓ Inform, persuade, or educate.
- ✓ Make an argument for a particular course of action.

### Good fact sheets:

- ✓ Are only one or two pages long.
- ✓ Don't use long sentences or wordy paragraphs.
- ✓ Are easy to read, with subheadings, bullet points, and graphics.
- ✓ Include only the most compelling, useful statistics.
- ✓ Use stories, examples or other simple ways to convey complicated points.
- ✓ Reflect careful thought about the audience and facts important to them.
- ✓ Draw a conclusion or suggest something the reader can do.
- ✓ Include the name, address, telephone number, Web site address, and/or e-mail address of the organizing group.
- ✓ Are honest, factual, and do not exaggerate.



## Useful Web Sites for Advocates\*

### State-wide

**University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital:**

[www.mottchildrenshospital.org](http://www.mottchildrenshospital.org)

**Michigan Legislature:** [www.legislature.mi.gov](http://www.legislature.mi.gov)

Searchable database of legislative information that permits users to search state legislation by bill number, title, or topic area.

**Publius:** [www.publius.org](http://www.publius.org)

Central resource for information on Michigan politics. Provides information on local polling places.

**Michigan’s Children:** [www.michiganschildren.org](http://www.michiganschildren.org)

Nonprofit organization that works with legislators and other policymakers as it forwards its agenda for children and families.

**Michigan Council for Maternal & Child Health:** [www.mcmch.org/](http://www.mcmch.org/)

A powerful voice for pregnant women, children, and their families throughout Michigan.

### National

**Project Vote Smart:** [www.vote-smart.org](http://www.vote-smart.org)

Find out who your elected officials are at the state and federal levels.

**National Association of Children’s Hospitals:**

[www.childrenshospitals.net](http://www.childrenshospitals.net)

University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital is a member of this national group, which is devoted to the well-being of America’s 70 million children and their families.

**Thomas:** [www.thomas.loc.gov](http://www.thomas.loc.gov)

Searchable database of legislative information that permits users to search federal legislation by bill number, title, or topic area.

**Children’s Defense Fund:** [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)

National nonprofit organization that provides a strong, effective voice for all the children of America who cannot vote, lobby, or speak for themselves.

**Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation:** [www.kff.org](http://www.kff.org)

The Foundation is an independent voice and source of facts and analysis for policymakers, the media, the health care community, and the general public.

\*A listing here does not indicate the University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital’s endorsement of, review of, or agreement with any Web site or content contained therein.

## Does contact with a policy-maker really make a difference?

Based on a survey of 350 congressional staff in 202 offices, contact with legislators does have influence:

	A Lot of Influence	Some Influence
In-person visits from constituents	60%	39%
Individualized postal letters	44%	52%
Contact from a person representing many constituents (e.g. organization leader, large business owner)	47%	49%
Individualized e-mail messages	34%	60%
Phone calls	20%	68%
Form e-mails with no personal content	3%	60%
Form postal letters	3%	62%

(Source: Congressional Management Foundation, Communicating with Congress, 2005)

## Interested in helping kids in our community?

### Children's Advocacy Initiative

There is an easy way for you to help the University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children's Hospital and the children we serve. Join our Children's Advocacy Initiative and **give children a voice!**

The Children's Advocacy Initiative was created to make it easy for you to speak up for children regarding children's health issues and to keep you informed of issues affecting children in our community and at a state and national level.

If you are interested in getting involved, sign up by calling us at 734-615-5379 or visiting <http://www.mottchildrenshospital.org/help/speak.html>. This will allow us to contact you when your voice is needed.

### Making a Difference Is Easy

Advocacy can be both fun and easy. Though the issues we deal with are serious, we do our best to make your job as advocates as simple as possible.

Children's advocates are invited to several special events throughout the year, including advocacy workshops and brown bag presentations. When an issue comes up for which your voice is needed, we'll notify you by fax, e-mail, or mail. We'll give you clear, brief background information and tell you how you can help. You will also receive a quarterly newsletter to keep you up to date with children's health in our community.

Here are some examples of what advocates can do:

- \*Stay informed and VOTE
- \*Wear a button
- \*Write or call your elected official
- \*Attend a rally

**\*Get involved with the Children's Advocacy Initiative!**

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**Mission** As part of the University of Michigan Hospitals and Health Centers, C.S. Mott Children's Hospital integrates clinical care, education, advocacy and research to advance the health status of children, their families and communities statewide. Mott maintains a leadership role in providing a full range of state-of-the-art, family-centered children's care and specialty services.

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