

# Think Babies Site Visit



## Tips for Hosting a Successful Site Visit

- **Find out when in your policymaker will be available.**
  - To find out the times federal lawmakers are on recess, visit [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) or [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) and click on the calendar feature.
  - To find out the session calendar for your state legislators, visit the National Conference of State Legislatures website at <http://www.ncsl.org/research/about-state-legislatures.aspx>
  - To find out the schedules of your local policymakers, visit your city or town's website.
- **Schedule the visit.** Following your written invitation, call your policymaker's office at least 4-6 weeks in advance and ask to set up a time for the visit. Offer several scheduling options.
- **Invite policymaker staff.** If you cannot arrange a time to have your policymaker visit your site, consider hosting their staff. They serve as advisors to policymakers and it is equally important that they understand your work with infants and toddlers in the communities they represent.
- **Confirm in advance of the visit.** Call your policymaker's office one week before the scheduled visit to confirm. Ask who will be attending along with the policymaker so you know how many to expect. Email them a copy of the schedule for the visit and directions to the site. Be sure to let them know if media will be in attendance.
- **Prepare your staff and families.** It is important to ensure that your staff and parents are comfortable with a policymaker visiting and observing the program. Give advance notice to anyone who will be involved in the site visit, so they have time to plan accordingly, and allow time for them to ask questions before the visit. Let them know that the purpose of the policymaker's visit is to learn more about your work, not to judge or watch, and that it could result in increased support for your program or project. Remind them that they do not need to prepare for the visit – they can dress and act as they would any other day.
- **Invite program supporters.** Consider inviting your supporters such as your Board of Directors, local funders and parents to participate in the day's activities. Having them present will send an effective message to the policymaker that your work impacts, and is supported by, the larger community.
- **Include family stories.** Consider creating an opportunity for parents to directly share the impact that your program has had on their family. If you do this, make sure that families feel prepared and supported. You can do this by helping them to practice their story, providing them with information about relevant policy issues, letting them know what to expect during the visit, and reassuring them that they are the experts on their story.

- **Consider inviting the media.** A visit from a policymaker is a great way to garner media attention for your priorities. See the sample press release included in this section. If media will be attending, ensure that children and parents know that they might be part of a news story and photographed.
- **Take photos.** Photos of the visit can be shared on social media and are great way to keep the momentum from your visit going. You will need to obtain a written photo release from each person who is photographed. For children under the age of 18, the release must be signed by the parent or guardian.
- **Give the policymaker something to take home.** Provide them a brochure or fact sheet about your program to refer to after the visit. Consider providing them your *State of Babies Yearbook* state profile: <https://stateofbabies.org/states/>.
- **Follow up.** Continue the momentum built during the site visit and follow-up with a thank you note to the policymaker immediately after the visit. Recap your main messages in the note, mention specific ways that the policymaker could support infants and toddlers in your community, and share the photographs from the visit. Offer to be a resource to them in the future.