

# Strolling Thunder

## Tips for Planning a Rally and/or Stroll




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Kick off your meetings with policymakers with a rally or add a stroll around your state capitol or other venue to bring together families, partners, elected officials, reporters, and others to raise awareness about what babies and families need to thrive and garner additional attention to your event.

- **Identify and invite speakers.** Reach out to potential speakers for your rally who can speak to the policy or issue(s) you're focused on. In addition to representatives of your organization, some ideas for speakers include:
  - State and local elected officials who are champions on these issues
  - Leaders of partner organizations
  - Direct service providers
  - Parents of babies and toddlers
  - Messengers who can speak to the long-term effects of investing in babies and toddlers, such as business leaders, law enforcement, military leaders, and/or educators

Please refer to template speaker invitation email.

- **Plan your program.** Develop a “run of show” or a schedule that times out the speaker presentations and provide each speaker with a general sense of what you would like them to address. Try to limit speaker times to two-minute remarks and no more than three to five speakers. Keep in mind that you'll have a young crowd and they may not be quiet during the remarks. The entire speaking program should ideally run less than 20 minutes.
- **Plan your location and check location permits.** Identify a location that will accommodate the number of people you want to gather—and potentially one that is symbolic of the message you want to send to your policymakers. If you're holding the event outside, make sure to have a rain plan! Moreover, many public venues will require permits if you're hosting a rally. Make sure you check what permits you need as early as possible in your planning and give yourself as much time as you can to allow for any unexpected steps in the permit process. You may also need a police presence, particularly if you are planning a stroll that requires crossing streets and traffic. Check with your permitting organization to learn if this is required.
- **Think about the audio and visual.** Coordinate with the venue staff or outside vendors to have AV equipment like microphones, speakers, a podium, and lighting (if needed) available for your rally. Think



about what the visuals of the rally will look like—is there a location where you can get a nice background shot of the capitol or city government building and position speakers?

- **Send out invitations.** Once you've secured your speakers and your location, send invitations out to your network to build a crowd. See template invitation language to your rally or stroll included in this toolkit.
- **Invite reporters to your event.** You'll want to raise awareness of your event beyond the people attending. Invite reporters to cover your event. If families will speak, pitch their stories to local reporters. Additional details are located in the Earned Media Materials section of this toolkit, including a template media advisory.
- **Make the event comfortable for families.** Families are an important group to include in your rally or stroll. After all, they're the ones bringing the babies! Keep them comfortable at the event – are there built in seats or places to let kids crawl or walk around in a shady place? Bring food and water supplies if you can, and some event entertainment for children (such as bubbles, balls, and even coloring materials) to keep them occupied as the program is going on.