

Strolling Thunder

Meetings with Policymakers



Tips for Holding a Day of Meetings with Policymakers

When planning for and holding a day of meetings with your local, state, or federal policymakers, whether in the state legislature or city council, or with federal policymakers when home and working in-district or virtually, we offer some suggestions to support your outreach to them and while participating in meetings.

- It's possible your policymaker's office will ask to hold the meeting on another day. We recommend that all legislative meetings occur on the same day for maximum exposure and concentration of your message.
- To encourage the policymaker to attend the meeting rather than a staff member, it's helpful to emphasize that a constituent family with a baby/toddler is traveling to meet with the policymaker. Share simple details, such as a baby's age and name, to reinforce that the baby is a constituent, too.
- Depending on your organization's capacity, it is ideal to have each family participate in legislative meetings with someone from your or a partner's organization. This way, the family can focus on sharing their story and their needs, while you can highlight the brain science and lead relevant policy discussions.
- These meetings will be short, and with policymakers having multiple priorities, your meeting may start late or need to end a little early. Encourage families to practice their story and be able to say the key points in two minutes.
- You can further prepare families by giving guidance on what to do if a legislator asks the family a question. For example, if a legislator asks what he/she can do to support families, the family can prepare an answer based on the focus of their individual story and needs. And be sure to tell families that if they don't have an answer to a legislator's question, that's ok! Your organization can provide an answer from your perspective and/or you/the family can follow up with more information at a later date.
- During meetings, we find it's helpful to ask the policymaker or staff if they are parents or grandparents to reinforce why this information is relevant to them as elected officials and in their personal life.
- It can be tricky to have a baby or toddler in a meeting with a policymaker. Embrace the chaos and use it as an opportunity to make links to what all children need to thrive! *(Example: [BABY] seems unsure of going to you and prefers to stay with her parents. That demonstrates how important it is for babies' development to be surrounded by their caring parents and other trusted caregivers. When babies don't have close, loving relationships with parents and caregivers, they are unsure of whether their needs will*

be met and live in an aroused state of fear and insecurity. This elevates stress for extended periods of time and interferes with healthy brain growth.)

- Share with the policymaker or staff relevant business cards and a leave behind (available at the end of this toolkit) towards the end of the meeting. It can also be helpful to share the leave behind ahead of the meeting as part of the meeting confirmation.
- Take a photo with the policymaker (or staff members if the policymaker cannot attend) and family together. These images will be important for social media and further promotions. For virtual meetings, we recommend asking for all participants to consent to their picture being taken using a screenshot at the beginning of the meeting.
- We realize that in some places policymakers may not have physical offices in which to meet. Consider arranging opportunities for families and policymakers to connect in a public place such as the grounds of your state legislature.