

# Family Listening Session



## Tips for Holding a Successful Family Listening Session

Note: In the context of COVID-19 pandemic, some partners have held parent listening sessions virtually. For tips on how to hold a virtual event, please visit ZERO TO THREE's *Think Babies*™ [Virtual Event Guide](#).

- Make the event family friendly by holding the session at a time and location convenient for families, providing child care, or making the event itself child friendly, and providing a meal. You could also consider working with a local partner organization to provide books or another giveaway for families.
- Be clear with families about how the information they provide will be used – make clear if policymakers will be in attendance.
- If you will take pictures of parents and/or children, you will need to have families sign a waiver.
- Supportive facilitation is important for helping families to feel comfortable. Beginning with a meal so that families have an opportunity to mingle first can also help.
- Build your capacity to provide interpretation, including for information in your outreach to families.
- Be clear in your invitation to families that you are looking for parents and primary caregivers who currently have children ages 0-3. A broadly worded invitation to a listening session on issues related to ages 0-3 often results in a large number of service providers attending, which can yield great information, but is a different event.
- If you anticipate a large group and multiple policymakers, consider breaking into smaller groups for discussion so that all families have the opportunity to participate.
- Follow up with policymakers both before and after the event. Follow up on your written invitation before the event to confirm their attendance. Follow up after the event to thank them for attending and offer yourself as a resource in the future.
- Give the policymaker something to take home. Provide them a brochure or fact sheet about your organization to refer to after the visit. Consider providing them your *State of Babies Yearbook*: state profile: <https://stateofbabies.org/states/> and the *Think Babies* Leave Behind for Elected Officials: <https://www.thinkbabies.org/take-action/toolkit/leave-behind-for-elected-officials/>
- Follow up with families. Listening sessions are a great way to build relationships with families who can be engaged in future advocacy opportunities.