

Think Babies Virtual Events



Overview

*Think Babies*TM events place babies front and center in the policy process by elevating family stories and connecting the families of infants and toddlers directly with their policymakers. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the lives of families with infants and toddlers and changed the ways in which advocacy happens. Educating policymakers about what babies need to thrive has never been more important. Virtual events have made it possible to continue impactful advocacy despite the public health crisis and revealed new opportunities to effectively engage families. Virtual or hybrid events are a creative and timely way to highlight the current and long-term needs of infants, toddlers and their families. Examples include hosting a virtual *Strolling Thunder* event, an infant-toddler policy forum, family listening session, or advocacy training. These events can be a powerful way to advocate for the issues that ensure all babies have the resources and opportunities that support good health, strong families, and positive early learning experiences.

Key Elements

- **Elevate the lived experience of families**

Family stories are the heart and soul of *Think Babies* events. Whatever format your virtual *Think Babies* event takes, the goal is to get the stories of families with children 0-3 in front of policymakers in order to advance policies and investments that babies and families need to thrive.

- **Engage policymakers**

Educating policymakers about the needs of babies through personal connections is a key component of successful *Think Babies* events. Policymakers are inundated with competing demands and priorities. ZERO TO THREE's experience with *Think Babies* has consistently demonstrated that personal stories and connections are one of the most impactful strategies we have available to lift the needs of babies up above the noise.

- **Make the link to policy**

As with in-person events, effective *Think Babies* virtual events draw the line that connects the individual experiences of families to the policies that shape those experiences. The newly released [State of Babies Yearbook: 2022](#) provides data that can be used to demonstrate that even before COVID-19 crisis, our threadbare systems for children and families meant that too many faced persistent hardship. Recovery from the pandemic presents an opportunity to rebuild with stronger policies.

Ways to Structure *Think Babies* Virtual Events

Think Babies virtual events can be structured in many different ways. Keep in mind that it is especially important that virtual events be succinct and relevant. Have a clear idea in mind what you want to achieve with your event and what type of event will best advance that goal.

- Hold individual meetings with key policymakers and families via video conference (or phone if video is not an option). As with in-person meetings, you can facilitate the meeting to support the family and provide additional information.
- Convene a group video meeting with a panel of families and a group of policymakers. This can be a good way to reach a larger number of policymakers.
- Host a livestream event featuring parents and policymakers that is open to the public.
- Dedicate a day on social media to focus on the stories of families with young children. Collect family stories and photos that you can share on social media and invite others to share as well. Make sure that policymakers know about your event.

While the primary focus is on family stories, integrating the voices of providers in *Think Babies* virtual events can also provide helpful context for the experiences of families with infants and toddlers.

Maximize Impact

Get the most out of your virtual event through strong lead-up, amplification, and follow-up. Examples include:

- Promote your event in advance using your email lists, social media, coordination with partners, and any other opportunities available.
- Tag policymakers on Twitter.
- Pitch earned media.
- Send follow-up materials to policymakers electronically.
- Take screen shots and record events so that you can post them on social media after the event and amplify your message.
- Encourage your partners and supporters to share your content on social media.
- Create a custom frame for people to use on social media on the day of your virtual event.
- Record videos of family stories that can be edited together and shared.