



10 TIPS FOR CHILD ADVOCATES

1. **Choose your issue.** Personal experiences, community issues, and data on system wide disparities are all sources of potential advocacy issues. Decide what it is you'd like to change.
2. **Identify solutions.** Prepare a list of possible ways to successfully resolve your issue.
3. **Identify supporters.** Chances are good that you're not the only person or group advocating for an issue. Talk to parents and parent groups. Use the Internet to find other people or organizations that are working on related issues and seek their assistance. Equally important is choosing a legislator or other government official who will sponsor and be a champion for your issue.
4. **Develop a strategy.** Will you advocate for change on the local, state, or federal level? Which of the three branches of government-executive, legislative, or judicial, is best positioned to help you achieve your desired outcome? Who will oppose your efforts and what can you do to neutralize the opposition?
5. **Frame your message.** Work with someone who has experience in public or media relations to help develop and disseminate a clear, concise, and consistent message to help advance your issue.
6. **Educate.** Attend community, state, and national organization meetings. Offer to be a speaker at a civic group or philanthropic organization, or professional society event. Meet with lawmakers and other government officials. Write letters to your newspaper.
7. **Mobilize supporters.** Democracy is not a spectator sport! Establish and activate e-mail alert systems and telephone trees to ensure that supporters make their lawmakers aware of the need and support for your initiative.
8. **Testify.** Offer to tell your story at a public hearing. The personal experiences of constituents are very powerful in convincing government officials to make changes.
9. **Don't give up.** Often times, it takes more than one attempt to enact a new law or implement changes in public policy. Take Thomas Jefferson's advice, "Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom."

10. **VOTE!** Pay attention to what candidates are proposing for children...and make your decisions accordingly. Remember, these are the people who will be making decisions about your issue. Take a child with you when you vote to teach them about this important civic duty!