



## Chapter 6:

# **COMMUNICATIONS**

### **For Effective Advocacy On Behalf of Early Education**

Effective communication makes change possible. Unlike huge corporations and large special interest groups, grassroots and nonprofit advocacy groups gain power not from wealth, but from well-informed members who recognize the value of encouraging the elected officials and others to support their issue. Nonprofit advocacy is based in the elected official's own back yard, and therefore, draws strength from the number of people it can impact and the number of contacts they can have with their elected officials.

Data will drive all your communication, so be sure that it is up-to-date and accurate. Misinformation or inaccurate data will discredit the organization and the issue. Keep data sources at your fingertips so you can find what you need quickly. Good sources are your local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency, your local Child Care Planning Council, Community Care Licensing, your city or county Child Care Coordinator, First 5, your county CalWORKs office, your local or county Office of Education or school district, and the U.S. Census.

You will need effective communication with

- your coalition partners and other stakeholders (fact sheets and calls to action);
- your elected officials (letters, fact sheets, phone calls, visits), and
- the media (press releases and interviews).

#### **Communicating with partners and stakeholders**

Make your call to action simple. People are more likely to respond if you provide a sample letter or email that they can sign and send or a script they can read when making a phone call.

#### **Communicating with elected officials**

Keep letters and emails short and to the point. State specifically what you want the elected official to do ("Please support AB 123"), and the reasons why.

Always provide your name, address, and either phone or email. Offer to provide further information, if needed.

## **Communicating with the media**

Elected officials pay attention to issues covered in the media, especially in their legislative districts. Learning how to attract media attention to your issue will pay large dividends because news articles and editorials rank very high as influential forces among elected officials.

Find out which reporters cover children's issues for your local media. Contact these people directly and provide a fact sheet on your issue. Use up-to-date statistics to make the issue timely. Include specific legislation you are supporting or opposing and the local impact. Ask reporters for the preferred way to contact them – phone or email. Provide a brief press release alerting reporters to any events or activities your coalition plans.

Writing an opinion piece or a letter to the editor is a good way to get coverage for your issue without contacting a reporter. Submissions that are timely (tied to a recent news story, such as release of the governor's state budget proposal, new regulations, or a controversy) are more likely to be accepted.

## **Here are some resources to strengthen your communication skills:**

[60 Second Guide for Working with the News Media](#)

[NAEYC Advocacy Toolkit](#) (See Chapter Seven, Actions That Increase Visibility and Advocacy, page 39 and Chapter Eight, Communicating with the Media, page 45)

[Letter Writing 101](#). The Sierra Club.

[Advocacy Letter Writing Tips](#). HCV Advocate.

[The Action Letter Portfolio: Advocacy Letters that Work](#). (1998). White, Thomson, & Nary. Research and Training Center on Independent Living, University of Kansas.

[How to Work with the Media](#). (August 14, 2008). Van Geest. Citizens for Public Justice.

[Advocacy Toolkit-Media and Publicity](#). Physicians for Human Rights.

[Advocacy Toolkit-Letter Writing](#). Physicians for Human Rights.

[Action Alerts: Best Practices](#). Groundwire. Seattle, WA.

[Moment Stories and Movement Stories: Four Rules for Effective Email Alerts](#). Groundwire. Seattle, WA.

[How to Write a One-page Brief](#). (August 14, 2008). Van Geest. Citizens for Public Justice.

[Sample One-page Brief](#). Citizens for Public Justice.