Welcome to the MISSISSIPPI CHAPTER - American Academy of Pediatrics (MSAAP) Advocacy Guide. This guide was designed as a resource to make it easier for you to advocate on behalf of children and pediatricians. Advocacy is a priority for the MSAAP because it provides a way to move beyond individual solutions to create and be part of broader systemic change. In fact, advocacy is one of the top reasons that pediatricians join the MSAAP. Through advocacy, pediatricians and resident physicians such as you can help change community norms and public policy to protect children’s health and well-being. Whether you are just beginning or you are a seasoned advocate, this guide is designed for you.

ADVOCACY DEFINED

Advocacy can happen in many different ways, in various settings, and at multiple levels. By engaging in advocacy, you are joining a growing number of pediatricians and pediatric residents who are motivated to act on behalf of children’s health and well-being in the broader community and public policy arena.

INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY

Individual advocacy is the direct care and resources that you provide to your patients every day. Individual advocacy describes the work you are already doing to improve the health and well-being of individual patients. This could include calling an insurance company, school, another provider, or a social service agency on behalf of an individual patient. Individual advocacy easily translates to the community, state, and federal level of advocacy focused on in this guide because at its core, each level of advocacy is about speaking out on behalf of children’s health and well-being.

COMMUNITY ADVOCACY

Community advocacy builds on and reaches beyond individual advocacy in that it affects not only the children you see in your professional setting but, more broadly, the children within the community. A “community” can be defined geographically (as in a neighborhood, a school district, or a city) or culturally (as in an ethnic or racial group or religious cluster). Community advocacy takes into consideration the environmental and social factors influencing child health, such as exposure to violence, safe places to play, poverty, child abuse, and access to healthy foods, and addresses ways in which child advocates—including pediatricians—can work with community partners to address these issues.

STATE AND FEDERAL ADVOCACY

State and federal advocacy are about changing the public policies, laws, and rules that impact children’s health. Through state and federal advocacy, you as a pediatrician can use your voice and your credibility to advocate on behalf of public policies that impact your patients at the state or federal level.

STATE ADVOCACY

State advocacy includes children’s health and well-being issues, such as pediatricians working together to pass a state law that would ban smoking in public places to keep children from breathing secondhand smoke, or pediatric practice issues, such as increasing funding for Medicaid payment rates. While the most common form of state advocacy is legislative in nature, there are also opportunities for advocacy with the state executive branch through the governor’s office, state agencies and regulatory activities, and the budget process, as well as through the judicial branch. State advocacy work is most effectively accomplished by working with or through your American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) chapter.

FEDERAL ADVOCACY

Federal advocacy involves using your voice to advocate on behalf of national laws and legislation that affect children’s health. For example, the federal government appropriates funds for state-run programs, such as Medicaid and the Maternal and Child Health block grant. As a pediatrician, you can become involved in advocacy efforts that help expand Medicaid funding or require testing of pediatric drugs. Since the inception of the AAP, pediatricians have worked on the federal advocacy level to help create such things as poison prevention packaging and the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).
WHY ADVOCACY?

In much the same way that you affect the lives of your patients through individual advocacy, your advocacy at the community, state, or federal level can make a meaningful and lasting difference to children in your community and state, and nationwide. Community, state, and federal advocacy allows you to move from treating one patient at a time to being part of a broader network of advocates that works systemically to raise awareness, educate, and/or create policy that can help keep children safe and healthy.

To accomplish this type of systemic change, it will require pediatricians to use their voices to speak up on behalf of children at the community and legislative/policy levels. As more pediatricians become actively involved in advocacy, decision-makers and community leaders will become more aware that pediatricians have expertise in children’s health issues. This can lead to new community norms and public policies that work on behalf of your patients’ health and safety.

The MSAAP has a lobbyist who helps shape public policy on behalf of children’s health and well-being. However, the work of professional lobbying staff alone is not enough and cannot replace one or more passionate, informed, community-aware pediatricians. The MSAAP needs an engaged membership base that can advocate on behalf of children’s health. The unique perspective and credibility that you have as a pediatrician, and that you can bring to advocating for children’s health, propel the issues that you care about forward in a way that a lobbyist alone cannot. The pediatrician’s voice is critical in helping create social change.
WHY ADVOCACY? THE TOP 10 REASONS FOR PEDIATRICIANS TO ADVOCATE

As you begin to explore the “What and Whys of Advocacy,” you might find yourself asking why it is important for you as a pediatrician to get involved. Advocacy can reap multiple rewards for children’s health and the profession of pediatrics. Consider these ideas when exploring why advocacy can make a difference for children’s health.

1. **MAKES USE OF EXPERTISE**
   Pediatricians can contribute necessary expertise on children’s health and development issues to policy discussions and thereby influence the decision-making process. Moreover, pediatricians are trusted by families to speak on behalf of children’s needs.

2. **BUILDS LONG-TERM SUCCESS**
   Recruiting and engaging more pediatricians to become advocates ensures that you can keep fighting on children’s health issues until real and lasting change is achieved.

3. **FUELS A SENSE OF ENERGY AND COMMUNITY**
   Advocacy creates a sense of energy, excitement, and momentum that gives children’s health and pediatrics “buzz” and gets the attention of leaders and elected officials.

4. **INFLUENCES POLICY**
   Pediatricians can affect policy decisions by raising awareness and educating decision-makers who can change the rules to further support children’s health.

5. **IMPACTS ELECTIONS**
   Pediatricians can help persuade others in their community to vote with children’s health in mind.

6. **OFFERS AN ANTIDOTE TO CYNICISM**
   Advocacy taps into the hopes and inspiration of pediatricians’ personal experiences and translates them into concrete and meaningful change on a larger scale.

7. **SHOWS STRENGTH IN NUMBERS**
   Advocacy can help attract other pediatricians, child advocates, teachers, and parents who care about children’s health because they will be drawn to the energy, enthusiasm, and positive results that they see as you speak out.

8. **CREATES CHANGE**
   Advocacy has been proven to elevate children’s health and well-being in the community, state, and national consciousness and create systemic change.

9. **TRANSLATES EXPERIENCE**
   Compelling issues from people who are willing to tell their stories are the key components of effective advocacy. Pediatricians have the issues, stories, and expertise that decision-makers need to hear. Advocacy allows you to use these to good advantage.

10. **RENEWS COMMITMENT**
    Advocacy relies on the passion and experiences of pediatricians and thereby renews commitment to the improvement of child health and offers a powerful way to spread a message and influence a system.

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IDENTIFYING YOUR STORY

As you begin to explore a role for advocacy within your work, please take a few minutes to reflect on your own experience. Exploring your own story can help you identify the issues that you care about and further help put a human face on your advocacy efforts. Some questions to consider asking yourself include:

Why did you want to become a pediatrician? When did you first remember wanting to become a pediatrician?

What was it about the profession that excited you? Why did you choose pediatrics and not another medical specialty?

Who are some of the people that motivate you in your work? What are the real-life stories that inspire you to do what you do every day?

How is the health and safety of your patients personally affected by the larger systems that they are a part of? What could make these systems better? What do you want to see changed? How will these changes affect your patients?

What clinical issues or problems do you see among your patients that you didn’t see in the past?
PEDIATRICIANS ARE NATURAL ADVOCATES

As a pediatrician, you are a natural and powerful advocate on behalf of children’s health. Consider the following reasons why you are uniquely suited for advocacy:

YOU PUT A HUMAN FACE ON ADVOCACY: You care for children every day who are affected by greater health and social systems. When you tell your story, you make the issue of children’s health real to people in a way that fact sheets or statistics alone do not.

CREDIBILITY: By nature of your profession, education, and training, people in your community respect and trust you. When you speak on behalf of an issue, you bring credibility to the issue.

INFLUENCE: Because you instill trust and are credible, you can easily inspire others to get involved in children’s health issues. Others in your community will be influenced by what you have to say and will want to become part of your efforts.

YOUR PATIENTS ARE DEPENDING ON YOU: The children that you care for can’t vote, and many do not have the power to advocate for themselves. They need you to tell their story. Through advocacy, you can help ensure that decision-makers don’t just say children’s health is a good issue, but actually act on the issue.

PASSION: Advocacy allows you to dig deeper into your interests and touches on why you became a pediatrician in the first place. Through advocacy, you can channel your passion for children’s health into meaningful and lasting change.

SKILLS: Pediatricians already have the skill set of an advocate. The same skills you use every day to establish trust, develop relationships, and provide solutions to your patients can be applied in your advocacy work.

RESEARCH IS ON YOUR SIDE: The issues you care about are backed up by research. Through advocacy, you can convey both the personal and factual importance of your issue.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE: Through advocacy, you join other pediatricians who through the AAP, residency training, and community partnerships—are making children’s health a priority. This demonstrates strength in numbers.

PART OF THE PROFESSION: Pediatricians founded the AAP in part to ensure that patient advocacy received a higher priority. Advocacy allows you to help improve the lives of your patients and the strength of your profession at the same time.
OVERVIEW OF STATE AND FEDERAL LAWMAKING PROCESS

Regardless of whether you are working to change public policy at the state or federal level, the overall lawmaking process follows this general framework.

- A bill is introduced in one of the legislative branch’s chambers. The bill then goes to a committee where it is analyzed. The committee gathers information and often hears testimony from advocacy groups, constituents, and lobbyists. A committee hearing is an opportune time for you as a pediatrician, along with your chapter and the AAP, to submit oral or written testimony on behalf of a bill.
- Before a bill leaves a committee, it is often revised and is then voted on. If the bill passes, it goes to the full chamber for a floor debate and vote. All bills passed by one chamber must be introduced in the second chamber as well. If the bill passes out of both chambers, it goes to a conference committee. A conference committee is made up of members of both chambers who reconcile any differences between the 2 versions of the bill.
- Once a conference committee has met and reconciled differences, the bill goes back to both chambers for another vote. A bill must pass out of both chambers before it can be signed by the executive branch and become a law. The executive officer (either the governor at the state level or president at the federal level) can sign the entire bill into law or veto the bill entirely. In many states, the governor can also sign the bill but veto specific provisions (line-item veto). If the bill is vetoed, a two-thirds majority of both chambers must repass the bill to override the veto.
WHAT ARE THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAYS TO GET MY ELECTED OFFICIAL’S ATTENTION?

Elected officials are responsive to personal and repeated contact from their constituents. Regardless of whether you are reaching out to your elected official through an e-mail, letter, phone call, or meeting, consider the following:

STATE YOU ARE A CONSTITUENT

Let your elected official know that you are a constituent and a pediatrician in the area they represent. This will quickly capture your elected official’s attention, and they will be more apt to take the time to listen to what you have to say.

MAKE YOUR CONTACT PERSONAL

Put a human face on your issue through telling your story. Elected officials pay more attention to personal stories about how the issue affects their constituents than they do generic statistics. Let the elected official know why you care about the issue and why it impacts their constituents. When you do use statistics, use them sparingly and use the data for your specific district or community whenever possible.

INCLUDE A CONCRETE OR DIRECT “ASK” IN YOUR COMMUNICATION

Education alone will not convince an elected official to support your issue. Elected officials are usually very good communicators and are practiced at listening sympathetically without committing to specific actions. They need to be asked to take action.

MAKE REPEATED CONTACT

Ongoing communication can help you establish a relationship with your elected official and will remind them of the importance of your issue. For example, consider inviting your elected official to spend some time with you in your professional setting so they can see the issue firsthand or send them articles related to your issue.

I CAN’T SEEM TO EVER GET MY ELECTED OFFICIAL ON THE PHONE. WHAT DO I DO?

Just like pediatricians, many elected officials have busy schedules and competing priorities, and it can be a challenge to reach them personally. At times, you may need to leave messages with their staff or aides. Staff are often very influential messengers to the elected official. It is their job to let the elected official know what they are hearing from their constituents. Therefore, exercise the same guidelines when communicating through staff as you would with the elected official.

- Let them know that you are a constituent and a pediatrician.
- Share your story about why you care about the issue and how it will make a difference in the health and well-being of their constituents.
- Tell them that you would like the elected official’s support on the issue.
- Let them know how they can reach you for questions.
DO ELECTED OFFICIALS REALLY TAKE THE TIME TO READ THEIR E-MAIL?

Elected officials either read their own e-mail or have staff read their e-mails and keep a tally of the requests or issues brought to their attention. Either way, if you choose to communicate with your decision-maker by e-mail, use the subject line to state that you are a constituent and a pediatrician.

IS THERE ANYTHING IN PARTICULAR I NEED TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN MEETING WITH MY ELECTED OFFICIAL?

Meeting with your elected official gives you the chance to interact with him or her in a way that is not possible through a letter or e-mail. Meetings often allow you the opportunity to get to know your elected official better and begin to build a relationship with them. A meeting with your elected official can occur as part of our Day at the Capitol, a legislative or town hall meeting sponsored by your elected official that you attend, or through an appointment that you personally set up.

Elected officials may want to use the meeting as a chance to share more about themselves. For this reason, it is important to be prepared for your meeting and redirect the conversation back to the reason why you are meeting with them—your issue.

BEFORE THE MEETING

In preparing for your meeting, plan out what you are going to share with your elected official, including why you care about the issue and how it affects other people—including the many children and families—that they represent. Don’t forget to include a direct ask of your elected official. Be sure that they know precisely what you want them to do to support your issue.

DURING THE MEETING

Allow time during your meeting for dialogue and invite your elected official to ask questions. However, if your elected official asks you a question that you don’t know the answer to, that is OK. Simply state that you don’t know the answer offhand, but that you can get back to them with more information.

AFTER THE MEETING

Lastly, thank the elected official for their time. Let them know that you will be following up with them and also how they can reach you should they have questions. Make sure to follow up with a thank-you letter. Use the thank-you correspondence to reiterate what you discussed, remind them of your offer to provide ongoing consultation on child health and pediatric practice issues, and include any resources you promised to provide.

WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO CONTACT MY ELECTED OFFICIAL?

The best time to contact your elected official depends on what you are trying to get them to do. For example, if you want them to vote in favor of a specific piece of legislation that you support, then the best time to contact them on this precise bill is right before they are scheduled to vote on the issue.

However, many people wait to contact their elected official only when they are in session or when they want something from them. Many elected officials have more time to communicate when they are not in session. Consider communicating with your elected official on an ongoing basis, such as through periodic e-mails, letters, or phone calls; inviting your elected official to tour your professional setting; or attending town hall meetings and events sponsored by your elected official.

Regardless of how and when you choose to communicate, remember to do it as part of a broader effort to develop a relationship with your elected official on behalf of children’s health and well-being generally and your issue specifically.
CHILDREN’S HEALTH AND PEDIATRICS ARE IMPORTANT ISSUES. WHY WOULDN’T MY ELECTED OFFICIAL SUPPORT MY ISSUE?

Most people are in favor of children’s health. This is a cause that most elected officials will want to support. However, if you find that your elected official is not responsive, it may be because they are not hearing from people on behalf of the issue or they don’t understand the direct relationship between your issue and the people they represent.

To help convince your elected official, be prepared to demonstrate the personal connection between your issue and their constituents, as well as a sense of urgency. Conveying a sense of urgency will illustrate why their support is needed now.

Additionally, be sure to ask your elected official for an explicit response or commitment to your issue. Don’t let them off the hook by saying that they support children’s health in general; get them to agree to support your issue specifically.

Your elected official might also have competing priorities that affect their ability to support your issue. It is always helpful to ask what concerns they have about the bill to get a better understanding of your official’s position and how you might be able to find common ground.

Even if your elected official is not responsive or supportive initially, don’t give up. Keep working to persuade your elected official on the importance of your issue. Keep your communications respectful and professional, but don’t be afraid to be persistent. Remember, it’s your elected official’s job to listen to their constituents.

SHOULD I STILL MEET WITH MY DECISION-MAKER EVEN IF I KNOW THEY OPPOSE MY ISSUE?

Absolutely. Through ongoing communication, you can help your decision-maker understand how your issue will affect children and families in your community, state, or nationwide.

When working with a decision-maker who doesn’t support your issue, remember to separate the person from the problem. Just as you would within your professional setting, treat the decision-maker with professionalism and respect and they will do the same to you. Work with your decision-maker or community leader to understand why they oppose your issue. Seek common ground and a potential solution that they can support or agree to. Remember, in advocacy there are no permanent friends or permanent enemies. Your decision-maker may not support your specific issue this time around, but they may be a champion on another issue that affects children’s health.
TIPS FOR CALLING DECISION-MAKERS

Making a phone call to a decision-maker is quick and easy and can be done at a moment’s notice, making it an attractive method for making your voice heard. For these reasons, it is critical that the call be effective. You don’t need to be an expert on the process to be persuasive; you just need to give your personal perspective. Follow these steps for an effective call to a decision-maker.

**PLAN:** Before you make the call, plan what you are going to say. Your phone call will be very brief, so keep your message simple and to the point. You might even want to draft some notes to help your call go more smoothly.

**MESSAGE:** Be sure to tell your story, why you care about children’s health, and why you need their support. Think about the key point and how your story underscores your point of view.

**CALL:** Make the call. No matter who the decision-maker is, remember to tell them that you are a pediatrician and a resident of their legislative district and/or community. Consider calling them when they are at home in the district as well, when they may have more time and less distraction to discuss issues and concerns.

**STAFF OR MESSAGE:** If you are calling an elected official, community leader, or volunteer board member, you may not be able to reach them directly. Be prepared to talk to staff or to leave a message instead.

**PERSUADE:** Get to the point. State the reason for the call. Ask the decision-maker what their current position is on the issue and try to persuade them.

**THANK:** If the decision-maker agrees to support your issue, thank them. Regardless of their position, thank them for their time. Let them know that you will stay in touch.

**RECRUIT:** Recruit a like-minded colleague, parent, family member, or friend to make a call as well. Particularly with phone calls, quantity is critical. Leaders pay attention to an issue when they believe that many people care about that issue.

**CALL BACK:** Call more than once. Quantity is important in advocacy, because a high number of calls indicates to a decision-maker that many people care about an issue. As you monitor the issue, call back to ask for specific support or action as appropriate to the process.
TIPS FOR E-MAILING DECISION-MAKERS

E-mail has changed the way that we communicate, and in many ways has replaced other forms of communication, such as phone calls or handwritten letters. This technological tool is fast, cheap, and efficient. Given how easy it is to communicate via this method, you should make an effort to personalize your e-mail, so that it doesn’t appear “canned,” and be sure to be professional in your communication. You can also use e-mail to communicate with a decision-maker in the context of an ongoing relationship in which you use other methods as the foundation of your communication.

To craft an e-mail with impact, follow these steps.

IN THE SUBJECT LINE OF THE MESSAGE, STATE THAT YOU ARE A PEDIATRICIAN AND MEMBER OF THEIR COMMUNITY: This strategy will increase the likelihood that your message is read (eg, Subject: Message from a constituent and pediatrician).

IF THE E-MAIL IS MASS-PRODUCED, MODIFY IT: It doesn’t take much time to insert your personal story and perspective, and it makes a big difference in making your e-mail credible rather than canned.

STATE YOUR REQUEST CONCISELY: E-mail is less formal and much briefer than traditional written communication. Craft your message accordingly—keep it tight and short.

PROVIDE PERSONAL EXAMPLES AND LOCAL CONTEXT: Use similar principles as those in letter writing, but in a tighter format. Your story and request are the important things to hit.

INFORM: Consider including links to specific Web sites that might be good resources including the AAP, your AAP chapter, or a community organization that you are working with.

PERSUADE A LIKE-MINDED COLLEAGUE, PARENT, COMMUNITY MEMBER, OR FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER TO SEND AN E-MAIL AS WELL: Quantity is important. Decision-makers pay attention to issues when they believe that many of their fellow community members care about that issue. As a pediatrician and an advocate for children’s health, you have strength in numbers, and this is one way to use that strength.

FOLLOW UP: Again, because e-mail is a more casual and often mass-produced mode of communication, be sure that you are using other methods to persuade decision-makers. Follow your e-mail with a phone call, handwritten letter, or visit.

WHO ARE MY ELECTED OFFICIALS?
Click the link below and enter your residential address.

https://myreps.datamade.us/

WHERE TO WATCH:

https://www.youtube.com/c/mississippilegislature
HOW TO TRACK A BILL IN MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE

http://www.legislature.ms.gov/

1. Measure Number Search

Shortcut to do word search within the calendar.

2. Same process for Senate Bill.

Search for specific measure or general text. Here you can see the status of the bill (in committee, etc.)

3. House Calendar

If the bill goes to the House/Senate Floor, you can monitor progress on calendar.

4. After selecting bill, the word search will continue on the next page.

5. Senate Calendar

Mississippi Legislature
REGULAR SESSION 2021

6. To: Medicaid

House Bill 1008

7. house bill no. 1008

AN ACT TO AMEND SECTIONS 43-13-107, 43-13-117 AND 43-13-117.1, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, WHICH RELATE TO THE MEDICAID PROGRAM, TO MAKE SOME MINOR, NONSUBSTANTIVE CHANGES; TO...