

ADVOCACY TIPS

Learning to effectively engage elected officials and decision-makers can help strengthen your ability to raise awareness or push for change. This guide will help you:

- Identify opportunities for advocacy,
- Choose the right tool for your advocacy, and
- Communicate effectively with decision-makers.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVOCACY

You can use strategic opportunities to strengthen your advocacy, including:

Election Periods: During elections periods, political parties and local candidates are actively trying to win the support of prospective constituents – making them prime periods for direct advocacy and influence.

New Legislation: The introduction and study of new legislation is an opportunity for focused and timely advocacy. By speaking out about the strengths/weaknesses of a proposed bill, you can help to shape and inform emerging public policy.

Government Consultations: Consultations help governments gather expert and public opinion on an emerging or shifting policy issue. Sharing your voice and expertise during consultation periods can help to ensure the needs of children and youth are reflected in government decision-making.

Days of Action: Days of action (e.g., World Mental Health Day) can be opportunities for advocacy, as governments are more likely to make related announcements or funding commitments, and related stories and recommendations may be shared more widely on social media.

Your voice as a constituent is always powerful.

Contacting your federal, provincial or municipal representatives on issues that matter to you and your community is a great way to share your message and expertise with decision makers.



Visit [Be an Advocate](#) to join the Centre for Healthy Screen Use in advocating for children and youth's digital health, safety and well-being.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT TOOL

Choosing the most effective advocacy tool helps ensure your message reaches and resonates with your target audience. Common tools include:



Letters/emails: Deliver a clear call to action directly to decision-makers.



Digital/social posts: Short posts with visuals can reach a wide audience.



Phone calls: Powerful when advocacy is time sensitive or part of a coalition.



Presentations: Subject-matter experts and concerned citizens may be invited to present to government when new legislation or policies are under consideration.



Meetings: Share your knowledge and perspective with decision makers through an in-person or virtual meeting and encourage them to take your desired action.



Briefing notes: A 1- to 2-page document summarizing your key messages and recommendations.

Choosing the Right Tool: An Advocacy Starter Kit provides additional tips on effectively communicating with and connecting to your audience.



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Politicians and policy makers are busy people, so your message must be clear, relevant, and actionable. Remember to:

1. **Research your audience** to learn their background, portfolio, and likely views on your issue.
2. **Introduce yourself**, identify if you are a constituent, and share any relevant expertise you have.
3. **Be clear and concise** and avoid using jargon.
4. **Share stories** that personalize your issue and its real-world impacts.
5. **Align your message** and recommendations with other advocates to demonstrate broad support.
6. **Make a specific call to action** that clearly identifies what steps your audience can take.