

Meeting with Your Legislator: Planning Workbook

EARLY CHILDHOOD DAY AT THE LEGISLATURE

Thursday, February 15,
2018



Congratulations and thank you for participating in one of the most important activities of an ECE professional: advocacy! Some people feel intimidated or nervous to meet with their legislators, so this workbook is a tool to help you feel as prepared as possible.

The workbook will provide information on what to do before your visit, during your visit, and after your visit. Much of the information in this workbook is adapted from the Coalition for Adult Education website (<https://www.coabe.org/how-to-arrange-a-visit/>).

To learn more, please continue reading!

Before

1. Set up a visit

To set up a visit, you will need to call your legislator's office and set up an appointment. Call at least 10-15 days before the day of the visit. Be sure to request the appointment between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. so that you have time to return to the bus by 12 p.m. Usually about 15-20 minutes is a good timeframe to request. You may want to confirm the office number so you know where you are going for the meeting.

- If you don't know who your legislator is or need the contact information, you can visit the Arizona State Legislature website at this link: <https://www.azleg.gov/alisStaticPages/HowToContactMember.asp>
- Here is a suggested script to use when you call:

"Hello, my name is _____ from [your organization or group] and I am a constituent. I would like to set up an appointment to speak with Senator/Representative _____ on February 15 to discuss how we can work together on [ECE, home visitation, etc.] policies."

My legislator's name _____

Phone number _____

Office number _____

Date of appointment: Thursday, February 15, 2018

Time of appointment _____

- **If you leave a message and don't hear back within 24 hours, be sure to call back!**

2. Prepare and plan for the visit

Research:

Take some time to learn about your lawmaker if you can. Each legislator has his/her own page, which you can find at the following link: <https://www.azleg.gov/memberroster/?body=H>

When you are reading about your legislator, take a few notes about him/her to use when you prepare for the visit. There is a template for taking notes at the end of this workbook if you wish to use it.

- For example, what are his/her interests, what does he/she care about?
- What is his/her background, previous experience?
 - *Tip: Use this to make a connection with the lawmaker. For example, I learned that my Representative worked for Tucson Unified School District, and I did, too. When I meet with her, I will remember and use that to make a connection by saying "I read that you worked at TUSD. I did as well! What a small world! Tell me a little about your work."*

Decide on what you want to talk about:

You can either plan to talk in general about the importance of early childhood education and why it is important to you, or about specific legislation. You can also talk about both.

Make a brief "agenda"

An agenda may include the following:

- make a connection
- tell a personal story about how ECE has made a positive impact for you
- ask the lawmaker about his/her relationship to early childhood education
- ask whether you might be able to help him/her by sharing your expertise in the future. An idea to offer is a visit to your program.

- provide information about the specific legislation you want him/her to act upon (if applicable)
- ask for a commitment from him/her regarding your requested action (or other action)
- close the meeting by summarizing a few of the main points and the next steps
- thank your legislator for his/her time

Remember, preparing for the meeting can help you feel more comfortable and will make the visit more effective. There is an agenda template at the end of this workbook on page 4 and a story template on page 5 to help you with your planning. There are also talking points on page 6 if you want to keep things brief and simple.

What to bring and what to wear

- **Contact information:** If you have business cards, it is a good idea to bring them, often at the beginning of meetings people will exchange cards. If not, it is okay- you can offer your contact information in writing.
- **Written materials:** If you have written materials about your program, such as a flyer or brochure, you can bring that as well. Keeping the written materials to a page or two is best. Written materials will be provided to you on the day of the event by the event organizers, Arizona Early Childhood Alliance.
- **Camera:** be sure to get a picture of you and your lawmaker to capture the memory of your visit and to share on social media.
- **What to wear:** Men should wear dress pants, dress shirt, and tie, and women should wear a suit or professional dress. Dress professionally while keeping in mind comfort.

During the visit:

Arrive about 10 minutes early. Use your agenda as a starting point, but don't be surprised if your legislator wants to lead the meeting. Remember: the most important thing is that you have time to communicate why early childhood is important to you and try to get a commitment from your lawmaker to support ECE.

Enjoy the chance to connect and build a relationship. Don't get upset don't threaten him/her with losing votes if your legislator doesn't agree with you.

If you are asked a question you can't or don't feel comfortable asking, feel free to respond by saying "I don't know but I can get someone from AZECA to follow up with you". Use the follow up cards provided to submit the question/request to the AZECA team.

At the end of the visit, summarize the key points and be sure to get a picture. Keep in mind that the legislator may need to change the time of the visit or send a staff person in his/her place.

After the visit:

Send a follow up email thanking your lawmaker for their time and summarizing the key points- especially if there were next steps identified. Follow up regularly (every 2-3 months) to say hello, keep him/her informed about important issues facing ECE, and even consider inviting him/her to visit your program.



Congratulations! You have just been an advocate and leader for ECE in Arizona!

Meeting Agenda Template

- Arrival
- Welcome
- Thank you for making time to meet with me.
 - I am a [describe your role in early childhood] and a constituent.
 - I have learned a little about your experience, your interests, and your work, and am excited to learn more.
 - I know you're a busy person, so I'll only be taking about 20 minutes of your time.
- The reason I set up this meeting is...
 - To get to know you better, and to share about myself and early childhood education
 - To see if there are ways we can work together in the future.
 - I have some questions for you, and I'd like to share about myself too.
 - First, I would like to share a story about why early childhood is important to me.
- Personal Story: share your story, why is early childhood important to you or the children or families you work with. You can use the story template to help write your story
- Relationship Question: does your legislator have a connection to ECE?
- Information Question: what other information can you provide for him/her? Or, provide information about your specific legislation
- Commitment Question: ask, "Can I count on you to support ECE by..." and state any specific action, for example visiting your program or supporting your legislation
- Close the Meeting
 - Summarize main points of the meeting
 - Summarize next steps.....and thank you!
 - Get a picture



Adapted from the Coalition on Adult Basic Education "How To Arrange and Conduct a Visit with a Legislator"
(<https://www.coabe.org/how-to-arrange-a-visit/>)

Personal Story Template

- Tell a little about who you are and your background.

- Why is early childhood important to you personally (or use an example of a child or family that you have worked with- omit last names for confidentiality)? What important changes have happened as a result of your parent education/home visitation/high quality early education/access to child care?

- What is the continued need? (or talk about the specific policy)

- Who else is impacted by the need? Who else do you represent (e.g. 50 staff at my child care center, 150 families in our home visitation program)?

- Call to action- what do you want your lawmaker to do next (e.g. vote to support the legislation, visit your program, etc.)

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AZECA EC Day at the Legislature

Talking Points

- Hi, my name is _____, I live/work in your district and I am a voter. I’m here with the Arizona Early Childhood Alliance today to talk to you about the importance of Early Childhood.
- Across the state, the importance of early childhood is gaining recognition. Expect More Arizona included access to high quality learning environments to its Arizona Education Progress Meter.
- Learning to read doesn’t begin in kindergarten, a child’s brain begins developing language and literacy skills at birth.
- Children from vulnerable families hear 30 million words LESS than more fortunate children. If a child enters Kindergarten ready to learn, they are more likely to read at grade level by third grade.
- Investments in early childhood aren’t just great for kids and schools; they’re great for the state’s bottom line. For every \$1 spent on early childhood up to \$16 are saved through decreased special education/remediation, social welfare costs, and crime related costs and incarceration rates AND increased high school graduation, college matriculation, and economic development.
- I work at _____ agency, this is what we do, this is how it impacts your community.
- Please support HB 2449 which will increase access to quality early learning for Arizona’s working families. (See fact sheet)

www.azeca.org

