

Advocacy 101

Become an advocate for the children of Texas! How, you might ask, can I advocate on behalf of higher wages for myself, and for more funding to early care and education?

First: Get the phone number or email address of your state representative. To find out who represents you, go to <http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/fyi/fyi.htm> and search by your zip code. Find out what their positions are on the issues facing the child care profession, and argue in support of your position if you don't agree.

Second: KNOW the issues facing our profession, our parents and our children. To receive regular updates of what is happening in Washington DC concerning children, log on to the Children's Defense Fund at <http://www.childrensdefense.org> and join the "Leave No Child Behind" Movement. For updates on state happenings, sign up for regular emails from the Texas Early Care and Education Coalition at www.tecec.org.

Third: Share personal stories with your representatives, illustrating your points. Share stories of your families who may be struggling to live on minimum wage. Share your own stories of trying to make ends meet. Write a letter to the editor or your local paper outlining the importance of high-quality child care. Speak to your local groups about the needs and advantages of providing that level of child care in your community.

Finally: the most important thing you must do is VOTE !!!! Your vote matters and your voice counts, and, when we join our voices together, the resulting roar will be clear and strong, impossible for the Capitol to ignore. To register to vote, call 1-800-252-VOTE (8683).

The 80th Texas Legislative Session runs through May 2007. Now is the time to SPEAK UP about issues related to children and families. To keep up with what is happening with new legislation, go to Texas Legislature Online <http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/> for what bills have been filed. To just get updates, please sign up for email updates from Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition <http://www.tecec.org> or Texans Care for Children <http://www.texanscareforchildren.org>.

To keep up with what is happening on the national level, sign up for emails from Children's Defense Fund <http://www.childrensdefense.org>, or the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) <http://www.naeyc.org>

For additional information on how you can better advocate for children's and family issues, please visit Results <http://www.results.org/>.

You can make a difference in the lives of children and families. Become an advocate. SPEAK UP!!

By Jackie Taylor, AAEYC Advocacy Committee Chair