






SPEAKING OUT: How to connect with your elected officials and advocate for happy childhoods

Iowans are known around the world for our civic engagement. *Did you know your legislator regularly makes time to talk to the people in your district?* These meetings are sometimes called coffees or legislative forums. Meeting your legislator in your community is a great way to let them know what's important to you!





What happens at a legislative forum?

Each legislator's forums are different. Some are formal, while some are very casual. Here are some tips:

-  **Prepare:** Arrive early if it's your first forum. Asking others what to expect will help you feel more confident, and also allows you to build community connections.
-  **Connect:** Sign in, if possible, and provide your contact info so you will receive communications from your legislator. *These are not campaign mailing lists!* They keep you informed of the work your elected official is doing.
-  **Focus:** Keep comments polite, brief, and to the point. It is best to concentrate on one issue per meeting.
-  **Facetime:** Be sure to introduce yourself to your legislator! You can tell them as you're shaking their hand that you hope they will support child abuse prevention efforts.
-  **Follow-up:** It's a great idea to follow up with a personal email thanking them for their time, and providing any additional information. They may reach out to you for advice or support on the issue in the future!

How do I find my legislator?

There are several ways to learn about your elected officials:

-  If you aren't sure who your elected officials are, click to [search by address](#).
-  Each legislator's profile page contains their contact info, as well as a link to sign up for their newsletter. The newsletter is a great way to get updates on where and when you will find them in the community.
-  Your legislator's profile page shows the committees and boards they serve on. This can give you valuable information about their expertise, interests, and relationships.
-  Each caucus maintains a list of upcoming public events. Click below to view:
 - [House Democrats](#)
 - [House Republicans](#)
 - [Senate Democrats](#)
 - *Senate Republicans do not publish a combined forum calendar at this time*

How do I talk about prevention?

THINK IN STRENGTHS. Instead of focusing on the problem of child abuse and neglect in your community, look for ways to talk about solutions and opportunities. The best solutions come from the people closest to the issue!

MAKE IT REAL. Legislators respond better to stories of lived experience than hard data, big ideas, or "shoulds." This does *not* mean you have to share painful experiences--it's simply about finding opportunities to create a personal connection to the issue.

THINK BEYOND COFFEE. Your legislator is only one of many people with the power to make change. Our message is stronger when the whole community is on board. Work to build relationships with other citizens, professionals, and local officials who share a common vision of happy childhoods for all.

Anyone can be an advocate!

Do not be intimidated by the process. You are part of the 1% of Iowans your state rep cares about most.

We all have a role to play in building safe, healthy, happy childhoods.

For support, resources, or questions about child abuse prevention advocacy, contact:



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