

Advocacy Tips for Families

A guide to finding your voice, standing strong, and making change.

What is advocacy?

Advocacy means speaking up for your child, your family, and/or your community. Whether you're working with a school, medical provider, or government office, your voice matters!

How to Tell Your Story:

1. Start with your "why".

Why are you sharing this story? Is it to get support, improve care, raise awareness, or inspire action?

2. Include both the struggles and the strength.

Yes, talk about the hard moments, but also share what helped, what you've learned and what gives you hope.

3. Make it personal and specific.

Numbers matter, but stories move hearts. Describe what a better day looks like. Name the barriers and the breakthroughs.

4. Keep your audience in mind.

Adjust how you tell your story depending on who's listening: a school member, doctor/provider, another parent, or a policy maker.

5. Use your story as a springboard for change.

Finish with a clear ask or next step:

"We need better Medicaid waitlist policies."

"I'd like a follow-up meeting to continue this conversation."

"How can we make this process easier for the next family?"

**Use the practice space on the next pages to begin telling your story.*

Your Story, Your Strength:

Use this space to shape the story only you can tell.

Step 1: Your “Why”

Why do you want to share your story? What change are you hoping to see?

Example: “I want teachers to understand how my child learns best.”

Example: “I want lawmakers to see why home care support is critical.”

My “why”:

Step 2: What You’ve Experienced

What are some of the biggest challenges you’ve experienced?

Tip: Be specific and include medical, emotional, financial, or logistical struggles.

Our challenges:

Step 3: What Helped You Cope

What gave you strength? What resources, people, or strategies made a difference?

What helped us:

Step 4: Your Turning Point or Message

What do you want others to understand, change, or do?

Tip: Think about one takeaway you want your listener to remember.

If I could tell someone one thing, it would be:

Step 5: Who Needs to Hear This

Select one or more audiences for your story:

- Doctor/medical team
- School/IEP Team
- Legislator or policymaker
- Local media or community
- Peer support group
- Family/friends

I want to share my story with:

Step 6: Your Call to Action

What would you like the listener to do after hearing your story?

Examples:

"Meet with other families"

"Support a policy"

"Change a process"

"Fund a program"

My call to action is:
