

ADVOCACY

Children's Advocacy Days 2016

METHODS OF AFFECTING LEGISLATION

Influencing legislation can be done in a variety of ways. Who you are, what your style is, and what your issue is are all things that will determine how you approach your job. Common sense dictates that you will follow all the accepted rules for getting along with people: courteous, considerate, patient, a good listener, appreciative, and realistic. This does not rule out being firm, tough, persistent, and idealistic!

Establishing a Relationship With Your Legislator.

We cannot emphasize strongly enough the need to establish a relationship with your legislators for yourself and your organization. Previous contact with your legislators will assure your recognition when you approach them during the session.

Try to get your legislators interested and committed to your cause early in the game. You may wish to schedule an appointment with your legislators before the session begins to discuss the issues you want to influence.

If you wish to make personal contact in Nashville, you will need to know when a representative or senator is available. During the legislative session, it is often necessary to make an appointment through his/her office. The day is tightly scheduled with floor sessions, committees, and subcommittee hearings. If you have previously established a relationship with your legislator, you may be able to make a short contact between meetings or on the spur of the moment. However, you should not expect much of their time without prior planning.

Telephone Calls.

Secretaries or assistants in the office usually receive calls to legislators during the session. You may leave a message, usually the best course of action if you are calling to register your opinion on a bill. If you are calling for information, you may ask to have your call returned. Do not be surprised if you find it difficult to reach a legislator by phone. Find out if your legislators are in their home district any time during the week and call them at their local office.