

Advocacy is Important!

The Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council believes it is critically important for individuals with developmental disabilities and their family members to understand the importance of their participation in the legislative process. Effective legislative advocacy is a vitally important part of educating our legislators and public officials about the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities. Few people advocate on behalf of people with disabilities except self-advocates and their families. Simply put, "If we don't do it, it won't get done."

Tips for Legislative Advocates:

- Make sure legislators know people with disabilities and their families
- Develop relationships with legislators when they are running for office if possible
- Personal visits with legislators in the Capitol or at their home offices are more effective, however if this is not possible letters, phone calls and emails contacts are effective as well.
- Contact your legislator immediately upon election to congratulate them and introduce yourself and your family members.
- If you are planning to visit your legislator in the capitol or at their home office, make an appointment
- Establish an ongoing relationship with your legislator and always be honest. If they ask a question and you don't know the answer say so. Offer to find the information they are seeking and always follow up.
- Treat your legislator as a friend and an intelligent citizen. Even if they disagree with your position, be respectful. They may be your strongest ally on the next issue that comes along.
- Always be clear, concise and specific regarding the issue.
- Use personal stories about how this issue will effect you or your family member.
- Leave a simple, one page summary.
- Always follow up with a thank you note following every visit or supportive action taken by your legislator.
- To locate contact information for your Senator or Representative go to: www.moga.state.mo.us click on legislator lookup

For more information regarding training opportunities for effective legislative advocacy please see the [Partners in Policymaking](#) information on this website.

- [Tips for Hosting Legislative Events](#)