

PARENT ADVOCACY GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

Your story is powerful. Your voice is stronger than you know. It can help other first-time parents get the help they need to be successful. This is why we need you to share your story. You can help Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) serve more families.

This document is designed to serve as a guide to empower you and help you learn how to use the power of your voice. It will guide you to understand how you and NFP can be a vehicle to move forward legislation that benefits families.



ADVOCACY 101

What is advocacy? Advocacy means publicly discussing a topic that is important to you and making a recommendation about a cause. Advocating for NFP provides you with an opportunity to educate those around you on the importance of NFP and how it has affected your life and your child's life. Educating your audience is raising awareness about how NFP impacts your community, showing or explaining how the program works, and how it has affected your life.



WE NEED YOUR HELP

You may be wondering why we are asking you to share your story with decision-makers. There are many reasons why you were chosen:

- This is YOUR story and you are the best person to tell it
- You have a great personality
- You are open-minded
- Giving back to your community is important to you
- You are incredibly strong

ADVOCACY IN ACTION

Here are some ways you can advocate for NFP:

MEET WITH A LEGISLATOR/ ADVOCACY DAY - You may go to a legislator's office and meet with the legislator or their staffer with your nurse or NFP staff. The NFP staff will explain the NFP program and you will talk about your story and how NFP has impacted your life. (Check below for more details on this type of event.)

TESTIFY IN CONGRESS – Congress allows citizens to attend briefings to share their perspective on certain topics. NFP staff members will provide preparation to help you write your story on paper. The day of the event, you will read your prepared testimony to the Congressional committee(s).

WRITE A LETTER / MAKE A PHONE CALL – Letters, e-mails and calls can be particularly effective in influencing legislators' views.. Letters are helpful and are tangible items that policymakers can store and refer back to and as always, NFP can help you draft your story

JOIN YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD (CAB) – A CAB is a group of community members who are supporters of the local NFP program. They meet to discuss various topics such as program needs, client engagement, and community resources. CAB's need moms who have graduated from the program to provide a unique perspective.

Even though you are just one person, you can make a difference. When decision-makers meet NFP moms like you, they are blown away by the success that you have been able to achieve and struggles that you have overcome. Therefore, when it is time to vote for

funding towards Home Visiting programs, legislators will remember the conversation they had with you which will help influence their vote in favor of programs like NFP!

Advocacy Day is a designated time when nurses, parents and NFP supporters visit the state or national Capitol to meet with their elected officials. Your participation involves sharing your story and NFP experience with key decision makers who can support the needs of other NFP moms, babies and families!

Tips to consider for the big day:

- What to wear
 - Business casual clothing, comfortable shoes, nice hairstyle
 - Dress according to the weather
- What to say (See “Perspective of an NFP Mom” section below)
 - Write out your story beforehand
 - Talk with your nurse about your story and what you want to share
 - Don't be afraid to practice, practice, and practice
- What to expect
 - You will not be alone
 - An agenda that will outline the day will be provided
 - You will be partnered with an NFP staff person who will go to all scheduled events with you



Don't be afraid to ask questions – we want you to feel prepared and comfortable with sharing your story. Get excited! NFP staff will ensure that everything runs as smoothly as possible. Remember that you are the STAR in the room!

COST AND THOUGHTS

To attend an advocacy day, you may be asked to travel out of town for a day or two. Speak with your nurse about costs that NFP will provide such as transportation, lodging, and meals for your travels. There are a few things to think about when participating in an advocacy event. Check out the Frequently Asked Questions (“FAQs”) section below for commonly asked questions.

HERE ARE SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS CONCERNING ADVOCACY DAY:

- **Can I bring the baby?**
Ask your NFP nurse if this is the best time and event to bring your baby. If you bring your baby, be prepared to carry or push them in a stroller to and from the meetings. Also consider weather!
- **Can I get off work/school?**
Advocacy days can last 1 to 3 days. Ask NFP staff how much time you will need to block off. Be sure to include travel days in your planning and preparation, if necessary. If you need to take off for school or work, we can help draft a letter stating why you need off and provide materials about the event. Please note – NFP is not responsible for lost wages or late assignments; therefore, please plan accordingly.
- **Am I comfortable flying on a plane?**
You may be required to fly if the advocacy day is not in your hometown. Be prepared to travel by airplane. If you are bringing your baby along, look at the airline's policies on flying with children. Also, discuss with your NFP nurse about who is responsible for paying for your child's airplane ticket if they are over 2 years old.
- **Do I want to navigate in an unfamiliar city?**
Navigating an unfamiliar city can be a little intimidating. NFP staff will provide a schedule that will show your lodging and travel accommodations. NFP can also assist in planning your transportation to and from the airport and hotel. A detailed schedule should eliminate any concerns from getting to one place and another.

NFP Moms are our most powerful voices! Our hope is that you can think about these questions and work everything out to be able to attend this event. We have had dozens of moms tell their stories in unfamiliar cities to policymakers. You can do it too! Consider advocacy as an opportunity to invest and take pride in your achievements as an individual and mom!

PERSPECTIVE OF AN NFP MOM

During the day, you will be asked to share your NFP story. Here are a few questions to get you thinking about what you may want to talk about:

- How did you hear about NFP?
- Why did you decide to enroll in NFP?
- How has your Nurse Home Visitor helped you? Can you give a few examples?
- How would your life have been different if you had never participated in NFP?
- Can you share a little bit about where you were at in life when you first found out you were pregnant?
- Talk a little bit about what was most challenging for you while you were in the NFP program.
- How do you think the program has impacted your child's life?
- What is the most ambitious goal you set for yourself while you were in the program? And what was it like when you reached that goal?



FOLLOW-UP

After you participate in an advocacy event, NFP will want to hear from you! Our goal is to help more moms tell their story about how NFP has impacted their life. You are a critical part of helping us make advocacy events bigger and better. Be sure to write down the highs and lows of the trip right after you are done so your feedback can be authentic since the event is still fresh on your mind. A follow-up survey will be sent to your email for feedback on the event you attended.

Do you want to stay connected? You can fill out an online form to stay connected at www.nursefamilypartnership.org/stay-connected. Also, be sure to check out the ways you can stay involved and connected in any one of these activities below:

Community Advisory Board (CAB) – You can be a CAB member and provide useful input from the perspective of a client of the program through this community coalition board. You can reach out to your NFP agency for more information.

Alumni Group – [Stay connected](#) with other NFP moms, access to other resources, participate in events in your community, and across the nation!

Parent Ambassador Program – Participate in local, state and national advocacy efforts by sharing your story in front of different audiences.

Social Media – [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#). Be a part of the NFP buzz and help us spread the word.

If you have a question that is not answered here or would like additional information, contact Ashlei Watson.

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