

PORTLAND WORKS FOR KIDS ADVOCACY TOOLKIT



This advocacy toolkit was design for use by early child care and education advocates, both veterans and newcomers, who are working to make a difference in the lives of children, their families, and our community. It is intended to be an introduction to key advocacy skills, so that those who are new to the field can refer to it in their work. However, we hope that even experienced advocates will find the materials, talking points, data, and other resources helpful in their work.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INSIDE THIS TOOLKIT

About Portland Works for Kids and Its Policy Agenda... p. 2

Advocacy Overview... p. 3

Message Development... p. 4

Community-Based Advocacy... p. 5

Communicating with Elected Officials... p. 6-8

Media & Digital Advocacy... p. 9-10

Early Childhood Programs in Maine... p. 11

Links to Resources & Tools... p. 12



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PORTLAND WORKS FOR KIDS ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

ABOUT PORTLAND WORKS FOR KIDS

Portland Works for Kids is a community-wide effort comprised of dozens of partners working together to make high-quality early childhood care and education affordable and accessible to everyone. Concerned community members are aligning efforts across sectors.

In August 2020, Portland Works for Kids developed a policy agenda to address the short- and long-term aspects of the shortage, including advocating for support for providers and families. Short-term, increasing access will help the workforce get back up and running. Long-term, research has shown that quality child care yields better academic and social outcomes for children, safer and healthier communities, a better prepared future workforce, and less spending on social services.

Moving forward, this policy agenda will serve to guide our work with stakeholders to make quality child care a reality for our community's children and families. Organized into three phases, specific consideration was taken in order to address barriers of equity (access and affordability) and quality, as well as systems needs.

The policy agenda was developed to address the following:

- **RESPOND** to the immediate needs of families and childcare providers caused by COVID-19 (Timeframe: immediate)
- **REBUILD** crucial policies so we can move the needle on increasing access to high quality child care in Portland (Timeframe: 1-2 years)
- **RENEW** the early care and education system to ensure that high-quality early childhood care and education is valued and there are regulatory and governmental systems in place so that programs and providers are thriving with equitable access for all families (Timeframe: 3-5 years)



**LINKS TO
RESOURCES & TOOLS:**
> PORTLAND WORKS FOR
KIDS INFO SHEET & POLICY
PLATFORM

PORTLAND WORKS FOR KIDS ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

ADVOCACY OVERVIEW

WHY SHOULD YOU ADVOCATE?

Advocacy is defined as making the case for a cause that matters to you and building support for that issue among community members, elected officials, the media, and other key leaders. The goal of early childhood advocacy is to improve the lives of children and families by educating elected officials and policymakers about the importance of supporting our youngest children, from birth to age five.

You are an advocate if you have worked to secure the best care for a child, educated people about the importance of early childcare in a newsletter article, participated in a public meeting about an issue you care about, shared social media about a public health or education issue, or called or emailed an elected official. If you work with children, help families in your community, register voters, or speak up for a child in your life, you are already an advocate for children.

We all have a voice and the ability to advance positive change in our community. This toolkit is designed to prepare you to advocate successfully and with confidence for policies that benefit young children and their families, while helping our community thrive.

TYPES OF ADVOCACY

There are many ways to engage in advocacy, including educational outreach, mobilizing others around key issues, increasing awareness of the issues through media, and contacting policymakers. These efforts can be roughly grouped into three categories:

- **COMMUNITY-BASED ADVOCACY:** Building skills and knowledge among individuals and organizations about an issue.
- **ADVOCACY TO ELECTED OFFICIALS:** Education and outreach to elected officials and staff in positions of power to act on child policy issues, including local, state, and federal officials.
- **MEDIA AND DIGITAL ADVOCACY:** Use of various communications platforms, including the press and social media, to keep people (including policymakers and other influencers) updated and encourage them to take action.



PORTLAND WORKS FOR KIDS ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

MESSAGE DEVELOPMENT

FRAMING YOUR MESSAGE

Before you begin your advocacy work, it is critical to develop a succinct message about early childhood issues that will capture the audience's interest, clearly state the need for change, and call for action.

Message framing is one of the most important strategies for you to use, no matter what form of child advocacy you pursue. A “frame” is a cognitive model used by an audience to interpret and understand the information it receives. If you develop this skill and use it consistently in your work, you can garner support for the policies and programs you promote.

The following are some important guidelines to remember when framing your message in order to avoid negative default images or long-held stereotypes about the issue:

- Develop messages that are framed appropriately for all your audiences: policymakers, the media, your grassroots advocates, and the general public.
- Focus on the needs of the child and draw upon people's innate compassion for children. Use the needs of children to emphasize the importance of helping parents.
- Frame your issue in a way that avoids negative stereotypes.
- Show poignant cases of the issue you are addressing, focusing on children and highlighting cases in which the solution you wish to see implemented has resulted in concrete benefits.
- Support your messages with research and data.
- Show that the problem permeates racial, gender, and class lines to affect a variety of individuals and groups.
- Use “unexpected” allies to help reframe the message and become champions (ex. law enforcement, business leaders).

DEVELOPING A CONCISE MESSAGE: EPIC*

The **EPIC** format is a useful way to create a concise, powerful statement.

The message needs to:

ENGAGE the Audience—Identify your audience. Choose information that will resonate with and educate them on your issue.

State the **PROBLEM**—Clearly and briefly define the problem: What, Who, Why, Where, When, How.

INFORM others About the Problem—Be prepared to suggest and discuss possible solutions.

CALL to Action—Clearly define the “ask.” This should be specific and timely.

**The EPIC format is trademarked by the advocacy group RESULTS*



LINKS TO
RESOURCES & TOOLS:
> TALKING POINTS
> PORTLAND WORKS FOR KIDS
INFO SHEET

PORTLAND WORKS FOR KIDS ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

COMMUNITY-BASED ADVOCACY

Community-based, or grassroots advocacy helps build coalitions and/or a network of supporters around an issue. This type of advocacy helps educate community members and empowers champions for the issue who will assist with other types of advocacy, including outreach to elected officials and media and digital advocacy as outlined on the following pages.

CONNECT WITH OTHER ADVOCATES AND RESOURCES

Meaningful advocacy involves coalition building and collaborating with others who have an interest in your issue.

- Build relationships with local businesses and community institutions.
- Identify local coalitions or advocacy organizations that can support your advocacy efforts or events.
- Work to develop your own advocacy skills as well as those of fellow community members.
- Look for opportunities to host trainings, participate in webinars, and share helpful resources like this advocacy toolkit.

KNOW THE POLITICAL LAY OF THE LAND

Familiarize yourself with the local and state political landscape.

- Find out who represents you, when city and school council meetings occur.
- Look up the city council committees, legislative committees, and administrative agencies that deal with the policies related to your issue.
- Recognize what motivates key decision-makers. Assess their election platforms, past committee votes, and what issues they are passionate about.

ELEVATE THE CONVERSATION

Seek out opportunities to talk about your issue with key leaders and decision makers.

- Schedule meetings with elected officials, business leaders, and other community leaders, to talk about early care and education.
- Participate in letter-writing campaigns or phone banking events to connect with officials.
- Consider writing a letter-to-the-editor or opinion piece (op-ed) for the local newspaper.



LINKS TO RESOURCES & TOOLS:

- > PORTLAND WORKS FOR KIDS
FACT SHEET
- > WOMEN UNITED EARLY CARE
FACT SHEET
- > RADIO INTERVIEW WITH KATIE SOUCY
- > NEWSPAPER ARTICLE ABOUT
PORTLAND WORKS FOR KIDS

PORTLAND WORKS FOR KIDS ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

ADVOCACY TO ELECTED OFFICIALS

COMMUNICATING WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

Don't assume your city leaders or legislators are familiar with all the details that affect early childhood care and education. This is where your advocacy can make a big difference.

Begin by providing helpful information about the issue, list the other supporters for this change, and include the anticipated benefits to constituents and community. Providing real-life examples and personal stories about the issues that impact your life and your community can help demonstrate to elected officials and their staff why these issues deserve their attention. By providing helpful and authentic data and stories, as well as a well-framed message, you can gain trust and develop long-term relationships with elected officials and their staff.

There are several ways to communicate with elected officials:

- Write letters, email, and make phone calls
- Meet in person with elected officials and their staff to bring attention to your issue
- Invite policymakers to visit the relevant program in person
- Testify before committees

PHONE CALLS, LETTERS, AND EMAILS

Correspondence from constituents is how elected officials gauge which issues are important to people in their district, and are typically the preferred method of communication.

TIPS

- Identify yourself as a constituent
- Stay on track and include all of your talking points
- Try to keep written correspondence to one page, and phone calls to five minutes
- Refer to the bill number if you are referring to a particular piece of legislation
- Include examples if possible
- Include a call to action, specifying what you want the lawmaker to do
- Practice beforehand! This will ensure you feel more confident and will be less likely to forget to cover all your points

SITE VISITS

If you are a child care provider, invite elected officials and candidates to a program to see firsthand how the policies they make affect real children and providers in their districts.

TIPS

- Use this time to inform them about important issues affecting children and families in the district
- Showcase an activity, encouraging the official to participate
- Take photos
- Send a thank-you following the visit, including photos
- Consider a press release to highlight the visit and use social media with photos to help elevate awareness and thank the elected official or candidate

LINKS TO
RESOURCES & TOOLS:
> SAMPLE PHONE SCRIPT
& LETTER/EMAIL

PORTLAND WORKS FOR KIDS ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

TYPES OF POLICYMAKERS & ELECTED OFFICIALS

Your elected officials can be broken into three categories: federal, state, and local.

Federal elected officials in Maine consist of two Senators and two Representatives, who serve them in Washington, D.C.. State elected officials are comprised of Senators and Representatives, who serve in the Legislature in Augusta, Maine. Local elected officials include city/town council members, school board members, mayor, and city manager (see following page).

FEDERAL OFFICIALS

The U.S. Congress is comprised of the Senate and House. There are 100 members in the Senate (two per state) and 435 in the House (allocated per state by population). Senators and Representatives serve on specific committees, introduce and pass legislation, and are elected every six and two years respectively.

It can be hard to speak to your elected federal officials directly. You can either ask to speak to the legislative aide who handles your issue of interest, or can leave a message about your opinions on the legislation you are calling about. However, these officials are more available when they are home on recess. This is a good time to schedule meetings with them or invite them to site visits. They may also hold town hall meetings or appear in public where you can attend and ask questions.

STATE OFFICIALS

The Maine State Legislature also consists of the two chambers of the Senate and House. There are 35 Senators and 151 Representatives. State elected officials also serve on specific committees, introduce and pass legislation, and are up for election every two years. Maine has a part-time citizen Legislature that convenes in two sessions. The first session runs January to mid-June, and the second session January to mid-April.



HELPFUL LINKS

For more information on Maine's federal delegation—including committee assignments, voting record, and contact info—visit: www.govtrack.us.

To find your Senator and Representative by town, as well as their contact info, visit: legislature.maine.gov.

During the legislative session, MCA also maintains and updates a tracker for bills affecting Maine children and families, visit: mekids.org.

**LINKS TO
RESOURCES & TOOLS:**
> TESTIFYING TIPS
> HOW A BILL BECOMES
LAW

PORTLAND WORKS FOR KIDS ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

CITY OF PORTLAND GOVERNMENT

MAYOR: KATE SNYDER

Address: 389 Congress Street, Portland, ME 04101

Phone: 207-874-8941 | Email: ksnyder@portlandmaine.gov

Kate Snyder is the third popularly elected mayor for the City of Portland in more than nine decades. Mayor Snyder was elected November 6, 2019 and was inaugurated for a four-year term on December 2, 2019. Mayor Snyder is the third full-time mayor for the city following changes to the City Charter approved by the voters in November 2010. Prior to these changes, the city's mayor was elected by and chosen from among the nine-member City Council for a one-year term.

As the city's top elected official, the mayor provides community leadership and develops policies to guide the city by setting strategic goals and priorities for the city with the council. She also represents the city's interests in Augusta and Washington D.C., where she advocates for the city, its residents, and businesses.

TIP

For Scheduling Requests contact Deivy Periana

Phone: 207-874-8685

Email: deivyp@portlandmaine.gov

CITY MANAGER: JON JENNINGS

Phone: 207-874-8685 | Fax: 207-874-8669

Email: jjp@portlandmaine.gov



The city manager's position along with the City Clerk and city attorney, are appointed by the City Council. The city manager appoints and manages all other city department heads.

The city manager is part of the Executive Department and is the chief administrative officer of the city. The manager's primary responsibilities include providing and maintaining the essential city services through the efficient and effective management and operation of the city under the direction of the mayor and City Council. The city manager executes the policy direction set by the Mayor and City Council through the management of 13 city departments and approximately 1,400 employees.

CITY COUNCILORS

- Tae Chong
- Nicholas Mavodones, Jr.
- Spencer Thibodeau
- Pious Ali
- Belinda Ray
- Jill Duson (leaving post)
- Justin Costa (leaving post)
- Kimberly Cook (leaving post)

NEWLY-ELECTED CITY COUNCILORS

- April Fournier
- Mark Dion
- Andrew Zarro

The City of Portland operates under a Council-Manager form of government with a 9-member City Council, comprised of a popularly elected mayor, 5 district councilors and 3 at-large members. The mayor is elected by a majority of voters through ranked choice voting and serves a 4-year term. The city's 5 voting districts each elect 1 council member to represent their district and 3 at-large members are elected citywide. The 8 councilors serve 3-year staggered terms.

The council adopts an annual budget for both municipal and school operations and provides for an annual audit. The council appoints the city manager, corporation counsel, and city clerk.

**LINKS TO
RESOURCES & TOOLS:**
CLICK HERE FOR A LIST OF
COMMITTEES AND MEETING
MINUTES

PORTLAND WORKS FOR KIDS ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

MEDIA & DIGITAL ADVOCACY

'TRADITIONAL' MEDIA & PUBLIC RELATIONS

The press is a powerful tool for shaping public opinion. Coverage by newspapers, television outlets, and the radio are effective ways to educate and increase public awareness about early childhood care and education issues. Keeping your issue in the news creates public recognition and support, thereby increasing its political importance.

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE PUBLIC RELATIONS

- Offer your point of view through letters-to-the-editor (LTEs) or opinion pieces (op-eds)
- Identify reporters who have an interest in children's issues and invite them to visit a local program
- Develop a communications calendar to identify events when there is natural interest by the media in early child care and education topics (ex. Week of the Young Child)
- Stay aware of coverage on the topic by setting news alerts (ex. Google alerts) so you can respond to media opportunities

TIPS FOR LTEs

- Letters are most effective when they are in response to an article. Include the name and date in your letter. Send your letter within 24 hours of that date to have the best chance of yours getting published.
- Be clear concise! Shorter letters (under 200 words) are more likely to get printed.
- The first line should be a strong statement to draw the reader's attention.
- Avoid jargon and acronyms specific to your subject/program.
- Be accurate and avoid personal attacks.
- Close your letter with a strong line that you want to leave readers thinking about.
- Find the letter-writing guidelines, including word counts and how to submit your letter for your local paper on the editorial page or website.



**LINKS TO
RESOURCES & TOOLS:**
> WRITING LTEs & OP-EDS
> PUBLISHED LTE BY
TARA WILLIAMS

PORTLAND WORKS FOR KIDS ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

MEDIA & DIGITAL ADVOCACY

DIGITAL ADVOCACY

The best way to communicate with anyone is by using the channels that they most prefer. Do some research to understand which methods your audience prefers. For some, that's a phone call or text. Email updates and action alerts are popular tools, but they can often get lost due to sheer volume. Sharing information on Facebook may be the best for your audience, while for others a group text works well.

MOBILIZING VIA EMAIL

Current research indicates that most people use mobile phones to read at least a portion of their email. That means your emails need to be very short and concise in order to be effective.

TIPS

- Get to the point right away. If someone has to scroll down to find out what you want them to do, you have probably lost them.
- Keep sentences very short.
- Keep paragraphs to just one or two sentences.
- Keep your whole email to 20 lines of text or less.
- Use a clear, catchy subject line that makes it obvious what the email content will be.
- Sending a one-time email update will not result in increased issue awareness or action, so be sure to follow up.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media can be a great way to connect with public figures and legislators. If your legislator is active on social media, follow them and engage with the content they post. Using Facebook or Twitter to publicly thank an elected official can be a great way to show your appreciation for their work on your issue - or to let them know how you want them to vote on something important. However, social media engagement with elected officials is most effective in the context of a genuine relationship.

You do not need to have a presence on every social media platform. Instead, focus on posting consistent, high-quality content to the platform that your audience uses most. Just be sure to use eye-catching photos, because social media is image-driven.

SOCIAL MEDIA AUDIENCE RESEARCH

According to the Pew Research Center:

- Facebook and YouTube are the most popular sites among US adults, with users skewing older. Roughly 75% of Facebook users say they use the site daily.
- Snapchat and Instagram are especially popular among users 18-24 years old.
- Twitter is particularly popular with reporters, politicians, and politically-engaged younger people.

PORTLAND WORKS FOR KIDS ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION IN MAINE

TYPES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

The early years are a critical developmental period in a child's life – they lay the foundation for future cognitive, social, and emotional development. Portland Works for Kids advocates for all children to have the resources, opportunities, and support they need to reach their full potential and become our future leaders, workforce, and parents. This starts with early access to affordable, high-quality early childhood programs that nurture and stimulate the developing brain in these crucial years. There are several types of childhood programs outlined below.

CHILD CARE

Maine has many different child care options to meet the various needs of families, including child care centers, family child care homes, and family, friend and neighbor (FFN) care. Child care is expensive and it can be a huge part of a family's budget. The Child Care Subsidy Program helps eligible families to pay for child care so they can work, go to school or participate in a job training program.

PUBLIC PRESCHOOL

Public preschool in Maine is designed for children who are four years old by October 15th of a school year calendar. Decisions to implement public preschool programs are made by local school units, dependent upon local school board approval. Portland has expanded its pre-K program to include classrooms at East End Community School, Rowe School, Presumpscot Elementary School, Portland Arts and Technology High School, Gerald E. Talbot Community School, Peaks Island Elementary School, Youth and Family Outreach, and Catherine Morrill Day Nursery.

HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START

These programs serve families with children from birth to 5-years-old. Head Start provides comprehensive services that promote the health, social, emotional, and intellectual development of children in Maine's lowest income families. Enrollment is prioritized for children with special needs, children living in poverty, and children who are homeless, in foster care, or live in areas defined as medically underserved. In addition, the program helps parents make progress toward their own educational and employment goals.



PORTLAND WORKS FOR KIDS ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

TOOLS & RESOURCES

LINKS TO TOOLS & RESOURCES

[Portland Works for Kids Webpage](#)

[Portland Works for Kids Info Sheet](#)

[Women United Childcare Fact Sheet](#)

[Portland Works for Kids Talking Points & Data](#)

[How a Bill Becomes a Law / How a Bill Dies](#)

[Testifying Tips](#)

[Writing LTEs](#)

[Sample Phone Script & Letter/Email](#)

[WGAN Interview with Katie Soucy about Portland Works for Kids](#)

[Portland Forecaster article about Portland Works for Kids](#)

[LTE from Tara Williams, Maine AEYC](#)

DOCUMENT SOURCES

Maine Association for the Education of Young Children, Advocacy Toolkit, <https://talleyo-design-9nc9.squarespace.com/s/earlychildhoodadvocacytoolkit-f6zx.pdf>

NC Child, Advocacy Toolkit, <https://www.ncchild.org/publication/advocacy-toolkit/>

Bolder Advocacy, <https://www.bolderadvocacy.org/advocacy-defined/>

Pew Research Center, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/04/10/share-of-u-s-adults-using-social-media-including-facebook-is-mostly-unchanged-since-2018/ft_19-04-10_socialmedia2019_useofdifferent/

Frameworks Institute, Talking Children's Issues: A Frameworks Toolkit, https://frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/ECD/telling_the_science_story.pdf

