



Families for Families House Meeting Tool Kit

Setting Up A Successful Meeting:

1. Ask other parents and families if they would be interested in attending a meeting at your home to discuss DDS concerns with your local representative/senator.

The number of families you choose to invite is up to you. You can have as few as 3 families or as many as 30 families, there are benefits to both. In a smaller meeting each individual family will have the opportunity to share their personal story with legislators. In a larger meeting few people get to speak but it does help a legislator understand that these issues impact many families in their community and that those families are united.

Once you have families committed, you can reach out to legislator(s).

2. Contact your representative and/or senator to ask if he/she would be available to attend a house meeting to discuss families' concerns about DDS. Ask for a date they would be available but you should suggest some options that will work for families. We found that a Saturday morning meeting was convenient for most families to attend. Set a specific time for the meeting to begin and end; about 1.5-2 hours works well.

You should contact them by phone, and in writing by email. You will most likely be making arrangements with a legislative assistant. Keep in mind that state representatives have over 20,000 constituents, senators over 90,000-200,000. Legislators and their assistants are accustomed to people contacting them multiple times with a request. Do not take it personally if it takes some time to get a meeting scheduled. Always be polite but don't be afraid to be persistent.

To find your legislators and their contact information click here:

<http://cga.ct.gov/asp/menu/cgafindleg.asp>

Sample Script for phone calls and emails

"We would like to invite you to our house for informal meeting with parents and self-advocates in insert your town. Our goal is to create a Connecticut Department of Developmental Services support system that works for all individuals and families. We are committed to working as partners with you and other legislators and to providing you with the information you will need to make good decisions for our children and our families. We would like to schedule a meeting with you to tell our stories.

If you call calling an incumbent: Last year through The I/DD Caucus, legislators listened to our families were instrumental in giving us a real voice at the Capitol. We are so appreciative. We thank the legislature for helping us "find" money for residential placement for those families with parents over the

age of 70. As parents of children with special needs, we now have hope that our children will be cared for during our lifetime.

We would like the opportunity to meet with you to share our thoughts and to strategize for this year's legislative session."

3. Contact families with the date and time of the meeting to see if they will be able to attend. Ask if they would like to bring their family member with I/DD to the meeting.
4. Ask families to come prepared to briefly summarize their situation and their concerns/fears/frustrations about DDS now and in the future. Each family can also provide a written summary of their situation that can be handed to the legislator at the end of the meeting.

Please note, the idea of speaking and preparing a written statement might feel overwhelming or like too much work for some families – they should attend anyway. These are not rules, they are guidelines. Ultimately, you should run your meeting in a way that feels most comfortable to you and the other families you are inviting. The most important thing is to connect and build a deeper understanding with legislators. Do what feels right to you.

Keep in mind that you have a 1.5-2 hour time frame. Each family should try to limit themselves to 3 minutes. You will want to leave for the legislators to express their thoughts. Ideally, you will also want to encourage discussion.

Preparing for your Meeting:

1. Contact the families and legislator(s) at least two days prior to the scheduled house meeting to confirm he/she is still available and will be coming.
2. Hold the meeting in a large enough room so that everyone can have a seat, even if this means bringing in chairs from other rooms in your home or having families bring folding chairs. You do not need to have a large fancy house to have a successful meeting. Keep in mind that most legislators like being with "regular people" from their own district.
3. Some families like to provide light refreshments such as coffee, tea, juices, water bottles, donuts, cookies, etc... This is optional and entirely up to you.

Conducting Your House Meeting:

1. Ask each family to briefly summarize their situation and their concerns/fears/frustrations about DDS now and in the future. Have each family also provide a written summary of their situation that can be handed to the legislator(s) at the end of the meeting.
2. While it is perfectly understandable for you to express your frustration about the state's failures in caring for the needs of your loved ones, DO NOT direct it personally at the legislator(s). By meeting with

you they are showing that they want to be part of the solution.). Our goal in these meetings is to develop a positive working relationship moving forward, making them feel like they are part of the problem, regardless of their support for us in the past will not help us ot achieve that goal.

3. After all families have had the opportunity to speak, ask the legislator for his/her thoughts and/or reactions to what has been shared.
4. If the meeting has gone well and the legislator(s) seems genuinely connected and supportive ask them to join the I/DD Caucus.
5. Ask the legislator(s) for permission to take a picture of him/her with the families attending the meeting.
6. When the legislator(s) leaves, provide him/her with a list of the contact information for each family attending the meeting (name, address, phone, email) and the summary each family has provided.

Follow Up:

1. Contact Shannon Jacovino from The Arc Connecticut to give information about the outcome of your meeting and whether the legislator(s) should be/will be a member(s) of the I/DD Caucus.
2. A few days after the meeting, send an email to the legislator(s) thanking him/her for attending and include the picture taken of the group at the meeting.
3. Stay tuned for *Families for Families* updates, alerts and events. Keep in regular touch with your legislators by email, phone and in person throughout the session. It is important for you to continue to communicate your thoughts & ideas. Especially on legislation and decisions that will impact your and your family.