



State Parent Leader Guide

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State Parent Leader Introduction

Congratulations on becoming a State Parent Leader and advocate for stronger child care policies. Parent Leaders are a key component needed to advance local and national child care policy. You are the eyes and ears in your community, working to make our children safer in child care. The National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies' (NACCRRA) parent engagement mission is to engage and support parents, grandparents, other family members, Child Care Resource and Referral agencies (CCR&Rs) and coalition partners to strengthen child care policy and quality across the United States.

What is a Parent Leader?

State Parent Leaders help paint the picture for policymakers and the general public about why strengthening child care policy is important. Today, there are more than 11 million children under the age of 5 in some type of child care arrangement every week while their parents work. On average, children of working parents spend 35 hours every week in child care. Parent leaders are the key stakeholders to give voice to strengthening the quality of child care.

By developing various leadership skills, you will help build a state and national movement, which will give parents a unified voice. Parent Leaders will engage in the following:

- **Personal Story Sharing.** Learn how to share your child care story as a tool to grow a team, empower new parents and build relationships with policymakers.
- **Policymaker Outreach.** Build relationships with state and federal policymakers using best practices for making calls, writing letters and visiting effectively.
- **Social Networking.** Share your story and gain public interest about child care issues through Facebook, Twitter and other forms of new media.
- **Rapid Response.** Legislation is a moving target. Parent Leaders will learn to respond to state legislative changes, news articles and other last-minute requests that may be helpful in the overall mission.
- **Expand Involvement.** Utilize tools like one-on-one meetings, canvassing local child care centers, strategy sessions and social media development to pull in other parents to join the cause.

Perfect Your Personal Story

As a parent leader, you will be in direct contact with policymakers, parents and the general public who look to you for leadership. A critical part of leadership is articulating for others who you are, where you are from and what challenges have shaped the life choices leading you to join the movement to strengthen child care policy.

When sharing your story, look at it in **three** easily digestible parts:

- 1) **Background:** Share the ‘who, what, where, why and how.’ Paint the picture of your experience with child care. Make sure it’s descriptive and personal.
- 2) **Challenges:** Describe how weak child care policies contributed to your problem.
- 3) **Next Steps:** Provide tangible action steps about how to solve the problem. Be sure to highlight where policies should change to improve the current system.

Background: Who, What, Where, Why, How?
Challenges: Problems with state and federal policies?
Next Steps: “Policymakers can do A, B and C to help...”

Practice telling your story to highlight the three parts. Your story should take no more than 3-5 minutes to share! (You can always expand details about the story should questions arise through discussion, but it is important to be able to state a concise “highlight/main take-away” as any opener to a meeting.)

Visiting Your Policymakers

Before Your Visit

1. As a State Parent Leader, we encourage you to schedule meetings with your local, state and federal policymakers (note: you will be more likely to have a meeting with a Member of Congress if you schedule this appointment during his or her Congressional recess). To request a meeting with any policymaker, email a letter, write or call listing the issues you would like to discuss. Follow up your letter by contacting the person who sets the policymaker's schedule. Do not be concerned if you are offered a meeting with a staff member instead. Policymakers rely heavily on their staff to keep them informed about issues. Meeting with a staff member is just as important as meeting with the policymaker.
2. Bring supporting materials, many of which are provided on the www.naccrra.org website under Public Policy. If you have any questions about these materials, or would like to review them in advance of the meeting, please contact NACCRRRA's Policy staff at info@CCAparentnetwork.org.
3. Use the worksheet on the previous page to outline why the issue is important to you. Do this in advance of the meeting so you can have a clear idea of how to tell your story and why this issue is important to you. Because most meetings last 15 to 20 minutes, it is important to prepare the key points you want to convey.

During Your Visit

1. Introduce yourself. Let whomever greets you know that you are a constituent and that you are there to express support for legislation (or policies) that protect children in child care. Make sure they record your name, address and the reason for your visit.
2. Share your story or the reason why your issue is important to you. This is not a debate, and you do not need to be an expert, just someone who knows firsthand why we urgently need to protect our children.
3. Ask for their support. Before you leave, ask if your policymaker will commit to support the policies that you recommended to help strengthen child care. Stay calm and positive. Your goal is to engage in meaningful, respectful discussion. Remaining calm, positive and polite while speaking to any staff member is the best way to be heard.
4. Thank them for their time and hard work.

After Your Visit

1. Share the details of your visit with NACCRRRA and your local CCR&R. It is important for everyone to hear where policymakers stand on this issue.
2. Send a thank you note. This is a great way to stay in contact and build a relationship with your policymakers, and to hold them accountable for what was discussed in your meeting.

Sample Thank You Notes for Policymakers

Date: _____

The Honorable **[insert policymaker name]**
[insert address]
[insert city, state, zip]

Dear **[insert policymaker or staffer name – please do not forget to address them as Representative, Senator],**

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me on **[Day, Month, Year]**.

[insert personal story or why the issue of background checks is important to you.]

At our meeting, we discussed some of the ways that **[insert name]** can help working families by ensuring child care is **[insert issue(s)]**.

Again, I appreciate your time and I look forward to working with your office in the months ahead. If you have any questions, please contact me at **[email, phone]**.

Sincerely,

[insert name]

Social Networking Sites

Social networking sites are a great way to reach out to other parents and educate them about the importance of quality child care. Parents are busy, but social networking sites allow access to information at a time that is convenient to your schedule. Information can be transferred immediately from one user to another and any time an action takes place it can be viewed by the rest of the user's network. These sites are designed to be user-friendly and require little, if any, prior knowledge or training to use successfully. Some examples of social networking sites are Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and MySpace.

Facebook is a great resource for parent advocates. Creating a user account or a page is fast and easy. Once an account has been established, it takes only a few seconds to upload pictures, videos, create event announcements or contact a friend. The average Facebook user has 130 'friends' so the potential to engage many people is exponential.

Popular Social Networking Sites:

Facebook: www.facebook.com

Facebook has more than 600 million active users worldwide. Users can create a personal profile and add other users as friends. All users must register before using the site. Users may create and join common-interest groups, such as a group based around a common interest in improving the quality of child care.

Twitter: www.twitter.com

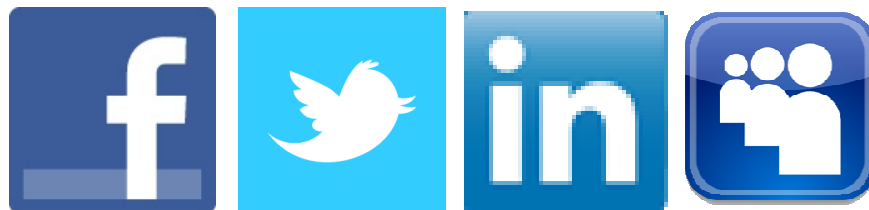
Twitter is a microblogging service with about 200 million users. A Twitter microblog allows registered users to "Tweet" information in 140 characters or less, as well as provide links to content on other websites.

LinkedIn: www.Linkedin.com

LinkedIn has more than 100 million registered users. It is known as a business-oriented social networking site and is primarily used for professional purposes.



MySpace: www.MySpace.com

MySpace has about 30 million registered users. Account users can create highly customizable personal profiles which feature bulletin board-style posts. MySpace specializes in being 'musician friendly' and allows musicians to upload entire music collections on their profiles.



How-to: Setting Up Your Facebook Page

Set up a Facebook page for your parent group to organize members and increase visibility.

- Log in at www.facebook.com
- On the left side choose the tab and select 
- Choose  "Cause or Community"
- Type in your name and agree to the terms
- Upload an image of your logo or a picture to represent your group.

At the top of the page select  Edit Info


 **Basic Information** This tab has three boxes to fill in:


- **About:** Give a quick, one-sentence description of what you want to accomplish with your parent group.
- **Description:** Fill in with more information about your goals and your background.
- **Website Links:** If you are affiliated with a local R&R or have your own website, add that here.ki


The Basic Information tab also has a 'Username' section. The username is used in your URL only, and you can only create a username once your page has 25 fans. Once your username has been created it cannot be changed. For example, NACCRRA's Facebook site is www.facebook.com/NACCRRA. The username is NACCRRA.

 **Your Settings** Facebook automatically selects these two settings:

- o The first setting ensures that whenever an administrator posts on the wall, the post comes from the page and not the administrator's personal Facebook account.
- o The second setting directs notifications to the email address registered with your personal Facebook account -- this is a good way to monitor the content being posted on your wall.






 **Manage Permissions** Facebook's automatic settings work well here, too. They make sure that your page is visible and that all users can view content and post on your wall. In the future, if people post spam or inappropriate content on your wall you can block them and they will be added to the blocked list. If profanity becomes a problem, you also have the option to filter profane words.

 **Edit Featured Likes** When you are viewing other organization's pages, the lower left-hand corner has the option of 'Add to My Page's Favorites.' Your favorite pages will be 'Featured Likes' on your page. It's a good idea to link your page to other parent groups in the area, local R&R pages, and NACCRRA's Facebook page. You can then interact with these pages and increase your visibility.

 **Add Featured Page Owners** If you would like to have your personal Facebook account affiliated with your page, you can add yourself as a Featured Page Owner. Your account will then be visible on the page and, based on your personal privacy settings, people viewing the page may be able to contact you through private messages.

 and begin posting!

Wall Most Recent ▾

Share:  Status  Photo  Link  Video  Question

Write something...

State Rapid Responders

Purpose:

The Rapid Response State Program is a network of State Leaders who are ready to react to proposed changes in policy (i.e., child care budget cuts) and respond by taking strategic action steps. The network is made up of leaders who can host events, respond to breaking news, recruit/mentor other parents and be active on social networking sites. Rapid response for specific legislation or a campaign is a moving target, so State Parent Leaders should stay as informed as possible by:

- Participating in trainings
- Building a parent chain
- Participating in coalitions
- Keeping up to date on current child care news

Rapid Response Skills:

Response Team. Round up helpers! Develop a group of parents that you can rely on to take action in response to proposed legislative changes, campaign kick-offs, town hall meetings, lobbying days and mentoring other parents who want to take action. Some key components of being an effective rapid responder are:

- **Social Media Presence.** Be active on the Web! When legislative changes are proposed, develop posts on Facebook, Twitter, email, blogs, etc., to help the information go viral. Using social media is the quickest way to share information about what is happening in your state.
- **Keep an Eye out for News.** Stay informed! Keep current on child care stories in your state by setting up a Google alert catcher (to follow policies that are related to child care and “day care”), watching local news and joining parent and child advocacy groups. Sending a Letter to the Editor is helpful to engage your community in the discussion around improving child care policy. Many times, parents are the eyes and ears on the ground that let us know of local news events.
- **Policymaker Outreach.** Research your local and federal policymakers’ positions on child care issues and stay tuned for any decisions they make to advance or inhibit child care policies. This way you can be a timely voice to current policy when writing, calling, visiting and attending town hall meetings.

Engaging Other Parents

Finding parents is essential to create a sustainable network to strengthen child care policy. One of the main challenges parents encounter is finding others who are committed to the cause. Here are some places you can find parents and enlist them to make a commitment to help strengthen child care.

1) **Personal Rolodex**

Make a list of friends, family and neighbors who have young children and would be passionate about quality child care. Call, write or email them, explaining why you are involved and invite them to join the cause.

2) **Social Media**

1. Post on Facebook and Twitter. Parents notice! Post upcoming webinars and action alerts. Get the conversation started by posting a status update that parents will notice. For example, *“Did you know there’s no national requirement for child care programs to check the sex offender registry before hiring? Parents, what do you think?”* Then you can provide them with an action step.
2. Start a Google or Yahoo group and send out weekly emails, highlights or a legislative update. Share resources received from a local CCR&R or NACCRRA.
3. Set up a parent blog about your experience to give parents a first-person understanding of the issues and inspire them to take action.

3) **Canvass Child Care Programs**

1. Hang up flyers and invite parents to get involved. You will build relationships with other parents and the provider.
2. Ask child care providers in your community to reach out to parents in their program who would like to become involved.
3. “Cold Canvass” and swing by local child care programs to drop off postcards or flyers.
4. If you have school-age children, join the Parent Teach Association (PTA) and enlist the support of the PTA parents.

4) **Coalition Group Outreach**

Are there other parent advocacy groups in your area? Use an Internet search engine to look for local child advocacy groups; you might be surprised how many parents are already advocating for children’s issues.

5) **“One-on-Ones”**

Take 20 minutes to have coffee or chat during a play-date. Share your story, listen to theirs and encourage them to get involved with your group.

Town Hall Meetings

How do I find a Town Hall Meeting in my area?

- Check your policymaker’s website, Facebook page and Twitter feed to find out the date and location of any upcoming town hall meetings. For Members of Congress, go to www.house.gov or www.senate.gov and enter your ZIP code to be directed to the appropriate website.
- If no meeting information is listed on the website, call the policymaker’s local office in your town/state. The phone number should be listed on their website.
- You can also check your local newspaper for announcements about upcoming town hall meetings, “office hours” or special events for constituents. Town hall meetings are often held on short notice and events are sometimes added to the schedule at the last minute. (Sometimes you can sign-up through a Member’s website to receive e-newsletters and notices about the policymaker’s meetings in your area.)
- Always register or RSVP (if instructed) and provide your name, address and phone number which will be used to verify that you are a constituent.

Be Prepared

- Visit your policymaker’s website, Facebook page or Twitter feed and read the latest press releases, speeches, newsletters, and Tweets to find out where they stand on the issues they are currently following.
- Know your material. Prepare yourself with talking points, state fact sheets and other material that will be useful to fully understand the issue. Bring printed copies for the policymaker. Many materials can be found on the www.naccrra.org website under Public Policy. If you have any questions about these materials, or would like to review them in advance of the meeting, please contact NACCRRRA’s Policy staff at info@CCAParentNetwork.org.
- Write down one or two brief questions that you would like to ask your policymaker. Focus on a specific subject (Federal background checks for child care providers) or piece of legislation (example: HR 81). Do not include long introductory statements in your questions. Just state your name and the town where you live.
- Practice asking your question(s) until you can ask it/them in 20 seconds or less.
- Get directions to the meeting and research nearby parking or public transportation options.

Day of the Town Hall Meeting

- Introduce yourself to the staff and offer your business card or other contact information (you may be asked to sign in).
- Ask if you need to sign up in advance to ask a question.
- Sit in the front of the audience. If microphones are set up in the aisle, sit as close to the aisle as possible so you can quickly get to the microphone when it is time to ask questions.

Follow Up

- Call, write or visit your policymaker to thank them for having the town hall meeting and schedule a follow up appointment to discuss next steps on your issue.