

# The ABC's of Child Advocacy

## A Guide to Making a Difference for Children



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# What Is Advocacy?



Advocacy means taking action on behalf of yourself or others. Public policy advocacy means taking action to influence big decisions that affect thousands of people – adults and children.

These decisions are often made by our elected officials and the people they choose to run our local and state government agencies. This includes mayors, local council members, state lawmakers, governors, members of Congress. It also includes the people who are appointed to manage state and local departments, like the Commissioner of the Department of Education or the director of your local Health Department.

When our elected officials make decisions, it often affects the lives of thousands. That's why it is so important they hear from the people who vote for them – their constituents. That's you.

Effective advocacy results in smart decisions that lead to policies that are good for you, your children, your neighbors and your community.

By writing letters, calling, e-mailing and working with the media, you can make your opinions known. Those opinions can influence the decisions our elected officials and others make every single day.

At Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ), our mission is to speak up for children, who have no vote and often no voice in debates over issues that affect them today -- and for years to come. Our goal is to ensure that every child, no matter where she lives, has the chance to grow up safe, healthy and educated.

## What is ACNJ?

ACNJ is the trusted, independent voice putting children's needs first for more than 30 years. Our work results in better laws and policies, more effective funding and stronger services for children and families. And it means that more children are given the chance to grow up safe, healthy and educated.

One of the ways individuals and organizations support ACNJ and its work is by joining in our advocacy efforts around specific issues. This raises the volume of voices speaking up for New Jersey's children. We invite you to join that effort. Visit us at [www.acnj.org](http://www.acnj.org) or email [advocates@acnj.org](mailto:advocates@acnj.org).

**Advocates for Children of New Jersey**  
**Giving Every Child A Chance**

# Types of Advocacy

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There are three basic types of public policy advocacy:

## **Legislative**

That's when you try to get a new law passed – or oppose a law that the state Legislature is considering.

## **Administrative**

This means influencing members of an elected official's cabinet or staff. This could be, for example, the Commissioner of the state Departments of Education or Children and Families, or a member of a mayor's staff.

## **Litigation**

Sometimes, organizations sue government to force change. This happened in New Jersey when a group called Children's Rights sued the state over its treatment of children living in foster care. The state entered into a federal court agreement to fix the child protection system.

ACNJ's Advocacy Toolkit draws on a variety of sources, as well as our three decades of experience advocating for New Jersey children. This guide is designed to help you understand the legislative process and government workings. It provides information on important issues facing New Jersey's children and families. And, it gives you concrete ways to make a difference for children in your own backyard, around the state and across the country.

We hope you find it useful in making a difference so that every child grows up safe, healthy and educated.

# 12 Steps to Advocacy

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## 1) **Make the Case for Change.**

Identify the problem. Support your case with data and examples. Be clear and concise. Do not rely on anecdotes alone.

## 2) **Identify the Solution.**

Develop and describe the solution to the problem. Discuss the anticipated impact. Estimate cost.

## 3) **Build a Base of Support.**

Engage supporters early. Involve them in developing solutions. Identify potential champions.

## 4) **Find New Partners.**

Identify other potential supporters. Think outside the box and consider unlikely allies who would be good spokespeople for your cause.

## 5) **Consider the Opposition.**

Identify opponents. Be open to discussion. Address the reasons for opposition, if possible.

## 6) **Choose the Right Forum.**

Can the issue be resolved by a policy change or is a regulatory or legislative change needed? Start at step one.

## 7) **Communicate Strategically.**

Identify the audience. Frame the message. Plan a communications strategy and stick to it.

## 8) **Activate Supporters.**

Develop quick response mechanism to inform supporters on progress of initiative, such as e-networks.

## 9) **Add Authentic Voices.**

Include those directly affected by the issue – parents, children, community programs - in advocacy efforts.

## 10) **Remember Implementation.**

Identify steps needed to implement change. Include some mechanism to monitor results.

## 11) **Be Open to Compromise.**

Consider whether a partial solution is possible. Think about good first steps for future follow up.

## 12) **Thank Your Supporters.**

Acknowledge and thank your supporters at each step of the campaign.

# An Advocacy Roadmap

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## Identify Your Issue

To be a successful advocate for children, you need to be an effective communicator. Effective communication begins by identifying and defining a problem in easily understandable language. You need to ask yourself what is at the heart of the issue, who it affects and what information is out there to help you better understand the problem. It is critical to examine relevant data at this beginning stage of the process to help define the scope of the problem, meaning how many children or families it affects, and other issues that will affect your advocacy goals and strategies.

## Target Your Solution

Once you understand the problem, you can start to figure out the solution. Often, solutions are not simple. They are complex and require public funding, which is often in short supply. When considering solutions, focus on small steps that can take you closer to your goal. Also consider solutions that are most likely to gain support.

## Organize Your Supporters

Now that you have identified the issue, you can build your support team. Think about the people who would most likely support your position. If, for example, you are advocating for health insurance for children, you might contact school nurses and pediatricians.

## Develop a Strategy

How will you advance your agenda? Who do you need to do what to achieve your goal? Do you need legislation passed? Or is your remedy at the local level? Your goal should drive your advocacy strategy.

## Deliver Your Message

To gain support and expand understanding of your issue, you will have to communicate it to the people you are trying to influence (local or state officials, for example). It is also likely that you will have to communicate with the media.

In developing a communication strategy, you should consider who is best to deliver your message – a “champion” who has the power to influence others. (A pediatrician is a credible source for advocating for health insurance, for example).

Along with finding a champion you should also find real people who illustrate the problem, who can talk about their experiences. They should be willing to talk to the media, meet with elected officials and speak at public hearings or meetings.

Once you have developed a message and messengers, you should think about the most effective avenues to use to deliver your message. This could be through letters, e-mail, phone calls, social media (i.e. Facebook) and/or speaking at meetings and hearings. (The “**Influencing Your State Legislators**” section of this guide provides more information about ways to deliver your message).

## Be Ready to Compromise

Change is slow and incremental. Don’t be discouraged. In life, you rarely get everything you want. The same is true in public policy advocacy. But if you can achieve one small change, then you can move on to the next. Every little bit of progress makes a difference.

# How to Use Data to Advocate

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## What is Kids Count?

New Jersey Kids Count, a project of Advocates for Children of New Jersey, is part of the national Kids Count network, a state-by-state effort funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation to track the status of children across the United States. The project's major goal is to provide policymakers, advocates and the public with meaningful, reliable and timely data about the well-being of New Jersey children.

## What data are available?

Kids Count tracks a variety of indicators in several categories related to child well-being, including income and poverty, health, child protection and education. ACNJ collects these data from a variety of sources, including the U.S. Bureau of the Census and government agencies.

## Where do I find the data?

Go to [www.acnj.org](http://www.acnj.org) and click the Kids Count button at the top of the home page. From the Kids Count page you can access online data and view ACNJ's KIDS COUNT reports. For hard copies of any of our reports, call (973) 643-3876.

## How can I use data to make my case?

By providing policymakers and the public with benchmarks of child well-being, Kids Count informs local, state and national discussions of ways to build better futures for all children. Measuring the extent of the problems facing children can guide the policy decision and help set goals on behalf of children.

## Statistics:

- Draw attention to the problem or issue.
- Make your case more persuasive.
- Highlight the success of an intervention or policy.
- Clarify misconceptions or misplaced concerns.

# The Structure of Government

There are three branches of state and federal government: administrative, legislative and judicial.

## Federal

The Executive Branch of federal government is headed by the President of the United States, who also acts as the head of state in diplomatic relations and as Commander-in-Chief of all U.S. branches of the armed forces. The President is responsible for implementing and enforcing the laws written by Congress and, to that end, appoints the heads of the federal agencies, including the Cabinet. The Vice President is also part of the Executive Branch and must remain ready to assume the presidency should the need arise. The executive branch of the United States government consists of the president, the vice president and 15 Cabinet-level executive departments.

## State

The Executive Branch of state government is headed by the Governor. The governor signs bills into law or vetoes them. He or she can also recommend laws and call the legislature into special session. The governor has the power to grant pardons and is the only person with the authority to call in the National Guard.

In addition to the Governor's Office, New Jersey has 16 executive departments and many boards and commissions. The executive departments carry out the policies set by the governor. The officials who lead these agencies are appointed by the governor and approved by the state Senate.

## The Legislative Branch

The legislative branch writes, debates and passes bills that are then sent to the governor or the president for approval.

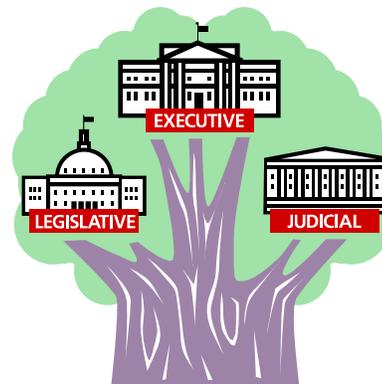
At the federal level, Congress is the legislative

branch. Congress is made up of two bodies: The U.S. House of Representatives, which has 435 members, and the U.S. Senate, which has 100 members. Like every state, New Jersey has two U.S. Senators. New Jersey has 13 Congressional districts and so has 13 representatives in the House.

The state Legislature is made up of the Senate and General Assembly. The Senate has 40 members. The Assembly has 80 members. One senator and two assembly representatives are elected from each of New Jersey's 40 legislative districts. New Jersey's state legislative elections are held in November of each odd-numbered year. Senators serve 4-year terms, except for the first term of a new decade, which is only two years. This "2-4-4" cycle allows for elections from new districts as soon as possible after each redistricting, which is done every 10 years based on new U.S. Census counts.

## Judicial Branch

The laws of the United States are complex and sometimes vague or confusing. Often, people challenge those laws in court. It is up to the judicial branch to interpret laws. This can lead to broad changes in public policy and practice.



# How a Bill Becomes a Law in New Jersey

## Developed

A legislator decides to sponsor a bill, often at the suggestion of a constituent, interest group, public official or the Governor. The legislator may ask other legislators in the same House to join as co-sponsors.

## Bill Drafted

At the legislator's direction, the Office of Legislative Services, a non-partisan agency of the Legislature, provides research and drafting assistance, and prepares the bill in proper technical form.

## Bill Introduced

During a session, the legislator gives the bill to the Senate Secretary or Assembly Clerk, who reads the bill's title aloud. This is known as the first reading. The bill is printed and released to the public.

## Committee Reference

The Senate President or Assembly Speaker usually refers the bill to a legislative committee, (i.e. Assembly Education Committee) for review, but may send the bill directly to the second reading in order to speed its consideration.

## Committee Action

When scheduled by the committee chair, the committee considers the bill at a meeting open to the public. This is when the public can comment on the bill. The committee may approve the bill as is or recommend amendments.

## Second Reading

When the bill is sent to one of the Houses for a vote, (or referred directly without committee review), its title is read aloud for the second reading. The bill is eligible for amendment on the floor. After the bill is given a third reading, the bill passes when approved by a majority of the authorized members (21 votes in the Senate, 41 in the Assembly) and is sent to the other

House. If a final vote is not taken, the bill may be considered at another time or may be returned to a committee by a vote of the House.

## Second House

The bill is delivered to the second House where it goes through the same process. If the second House amends the bill, it is returned to the first House for a vote on the changes. A bill receives final legislative approval when it passes both Houses in identical form.

## Governor's Action

After final passage, the bill is sent to the governor. The governor may sign it, conditionally veto it (returning it for changes) or veto it absolutely. The governor may veto single line items of appropriation (budget) bills. Bills passed in the last 10 days of a 2-year session may be "pocket vetoed," which is the only type of veto in which the Governor does not return the bill to the Legislature for a possible vote to override. This veto applies only to bills passed within the last 10 days of a 2-year legislative session. The Governor, in essence, "pockets" the bill.

## Becoming Law

A bill becomes law upon the governor's signature or after 45 days if no action is taken. If vetoed, a bill may become law if the Legislature overrides the veto by a 2/3 vote (27 in the Senate, 54 in the Assembly). A law takes effect on the day specified in its text or, if unspecified, the July 4th following its passage.

For more information about the legislative process or a specific bill, go to [www.njleg.state.nj.us](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us) or call 609-695-3481, extensions 112, 120 or 121, the OLS Legislative Information and Bill Room at (609) 292-4840 or toll-free in NJ: 1-800-792-8630. A TDD for the hearing impaired may be reached by calling (609) 777-2744 or toll-free in NJ: 1-800-257-7490.

*Source: New Jersey Office of Legislative Services.*

# Influencing Your State Legislators

Calling, writing, e-mailing and testifying at hearings are the most common ways that voters contact their state legislators. Following are tips for contacting your legislators in these ways.

## Phoning Your Elected Officials

Sometimes a phone call is more meaningful than an e-mail or a letter. That is why we encourage you to call your elected officials directly. Remember, your legislators work for you. As a constituent, you have the right to be heard. You may not speak directly to the legislator, but their aides keep them informed of the input they are getting from constituents – the people who elect them.

## Decide who you are calling.

To find contact information for your state and federal officials go to [projectvotesmart.org](http://projectvotesmart.org) or [Congress.org](http://Congress.org). You simply enter your zip code to get contact information for your state and federal elected officials.

## Be Prepared.

Before you call your elected official, make sure you have taken time to prepare for the call. Have you thought through what you are going to say? Do you need more information on the issue?

## Ask for the staff person who works on the issue that concerns you.

For example, if you are concerned about health insurance for children, you should try and talk to the person in the office who works on that issue. If there are no issue-specific staffers, just ask to speak to the official's legislative aide.

Some things you should be sure to do on the call are:

- Inform the staff member that you are a constituent and provide your name and phone number.
- State the bill number, name or policy issue that you are calling about.
- Briefly explain why the issue matters to you.
- State what you are asking the policymaker to do.
- Ask your elected official's position on the issue.
- Ask him or her to send you a response in writing.
- Thank the staff person for spending the time talking to you about this important issue. of your email.



# Tips for Writing a Successful Letter to a Legislator

Keep your letter to one page, if at all possible. Even though you may feel strongly about the issue, resist the urge to tell the “whole story” in a long letter. A short, concise letter is much more effective. If you have a long story to tell, close with, “If you need additional information, please let me know.”

If you are writing about a specific bill, include the bill number and a brief statement on the subject matter at the beginning of the letter. Because thousands of bills are introduced each session, it is impossible for individual legislators to track all of them.

Discuss only one bill or issue in your letter. This makes it far easier for legislators or staff to track. If you wish to comment on several issues, write separate letters. Your letter should be neat and your tone sincere and polite. Guard against complaining or being overly negative. Do not threaten or belittle.

Your letter should contain the following components:

- A brief statement (10 words or less) on the subject and the bill number if you are writing about a specific bill.
- An introduction of yourself that explains why you are interested in or concerned about an issue or bill.
- A short personal anecdote about how the bill will affect you, your family, your community, your business, your job, your school, etc.
- Some facts, including supporting information and data to support your position. (ACNJ’s Kids Count Data Center is a good source for finding relevant data, [www.acnj.org](http://www.acnj.org)).

- An invitation to contact you to discuss the bill.
- A request for a reply if you need one.
- A statement of appreciation for consideration of your position.
- Your full name, address, phone number and signature.

You may also opt to use e-mail to contact your legislator. In general, the letter writing rules apply for e-mail, but you might try to be even more concise. You should also remember to include your full name, home address and telephone number in the body of your email. Most legislators want to know who sent the email, especially where you live as they pay more attention to voters living in their home district.



# A Sample Letter to Legislators

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Dear (Legislator's name):

I know you are facing some very difficult choices in deciding which programs to fund as you work to pass a budget for the coming fiscal year.

As a resident of your legislative district, I am writing to urge you to support state investments in programs that have proven successful in ensuring that New Jersey children grow up safe, healthy and educated.

For example, we know that high-quality preschool helps prepare children for school and improves the chances for school success. It also saves the state money on special education and other remedial expenses.

We also know that children who have health insurance are more likely to get the preventative care they need to grow up healthy. This saves the state money by avoiding more expensive medical treatments after children get sick.

And programs that support low-income families are critical, especially as more and more parents have lost their jobs and often are forced to choose between paying the rent and feeding their children.

**(INSERT YOUR STORY OR ISSUE HERE IN ONE PARAGRAPH).**

Even though our state is faced with difficult fiscal times, it is critical that we continue to invest in successful programs that provide critical services to children and families. When children grow up safe, healthy and educated, they are more likely to become productive citizens and contribute to our economy. When New Jersey invests in successful programs, children and families benefit. And so do all the residents of our state.

Sincerely,

Your Name  
 Address  
 City, State, Zip Code  
 Phone number  
 Email (optional)



Giving Every Child A Chance

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# How to Testify at State Legislative Committee Hearings

The New Jersey Legislature typically meets on Mondays and Thursdays. On these days, committees often meet to discuss and consider a proposed piece of legislation. This is when you can have the most impact on a bill.

## Become Informed

All pending pieces of legislation are available at [www.njleg.state.nj.us](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us) or through the NJ Office of Legislative Services bill room at (609) 292-4840 or toll-free in New Jersey at 1-800-792-8630. You can track the status of proposed legislation and check the legislative calendar to see if the bill you are interested in is scheduled for a hearing. You can also do key word searches to see whether legislation is pending involving the issues you are interested in.

Committee schedules are typically posted the week before the hearing is scheduled, although bills can be added at the last minute, so it's important to check schedules the day before the hearing.

You can also find the names of committee chairs and aides, whom you can contact in support or opposition of a bill, to find out more information and to register to testify.

## Know the Issue

In addition to the original bill or resolution text, be aware of any subsequent amendments or proposed changes. You can track this on the Office of Legislative Services website. It is important to consider opposing viewpoints and other alternatives and be prepared to discuss the differences. Use data and facts to support your position whenever possible.

## Public Participation

The public may provide input during most committee meetings and public hearings. A committee meets at the call of the chair on a day and time set aside by the presiding officer.

The rules of both Houses require that official committee action be taken in meetings open to the general public and specify notification timelines. Voting to report a bill out of committee requires that quorum (majority) of committee members be present.

## Sign up to Testify

You must register prior to a public hearing or committee meeting to be scheduled to speak. Contact the committee aide to confirm registration procedures. (Again, these can be found on the legislative services website)

The committee chair establishes protocol for public testimony. Generally, all registered witnesses are given an opportunity to speak.

## Be Prepared

Arrive on time and familiarize yourself with the setting, participants and procedures as they relate to the committee. Be sure to confirm the committee agenda a day before the scheduled meeting. Alert the committee aide in advance concerning any special needs, displays or audiovisual equipment.

## Presenting Testimony

Provide the committee with written copies of the full text of your testimony. However, your oral presentation should be brief and summarize only key points. Listen to testimony given by others who share your views and try not to repeat their remarks. The most engaging public speakers do not read. Use notes if necessary, but try to maintain eye contact with the committee members. Avoid jargon.

Be respectful and courteous. Public hearings and committee meetings are official proceedings. Refrain from outbursts displaying your support or disapproval.

## Federal Advocacy: A Brief Introduction

To make the greatest impact possible in the lives of children, state advocates also play a role at the federal level. If you want to get involved at the federal level, many of the same techniques used at the state level can be used to advocate at the federal level.

For the most part, communication with representatives and senators in Washington, DC, is very similar to communicating with state government representatives.

### A Few Federal Advocacy Tips

**Join a coalition of state stakeholders.** A coalition shows elected officials how much support there is for your issue and shows them states are speaking with a unified voice.

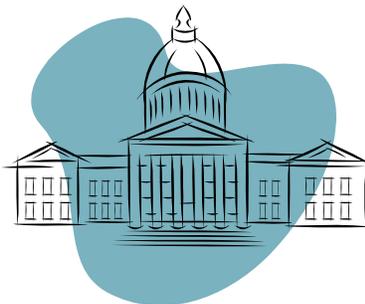
**Develop talking points** to prepare for a meeting or call. Know the purpose of the meeting. Is it a general introductory meeting? Are you informing the staffer about activities in the state or are you asking for specific legislative action? Develop talking points as a guide during the discussion.

**Request a meeting or conference call** with the Congressman or the highest level staff possible. In order of importance, speak with the Congressman himself or herself, then the Chief of Staff, then the Legislative Director and then a Legislative Assistant.

**Encourage your Congressman** to take a leadership role on your issue. Ask members of your congressional delegation to connect with other members of Congress who serve on or chair a committee that has authority over the issue you are advocating.

**Build relationships** with your Congressman's district and D.C. offices. Build relationships with staffers from both district and D.C. offices because some staffers are more influential than others.

**Provide staff with a personalized, specific message.** Consider using a story about a specific child or family (don't use last names for privacy reasons) in your state and include background data to help make a lasting impression. Better yet, bring that person with you to tell their own story. It helps to explain how the policy for which you are advocating will specifically affect the people in Congressman's district.



# Advocating In Your Own Backyard – Local Government

Often, the place where we can have the greatest impact is in our own backyards. By getting involved in your local government and school board, you can influence decisions that affect your child and the child who lives next door.

New Jersey has 566 municipalities. Each municipality has a governing body. These bodies can be organized in different ways – councils, committees, village, for example – but they all basically operate to run the affairs of a town. This includes police, fire, building and other issues. Most have elected mayors and councils or committees. Municipal elections are held in June.

The school board oversees the affairs of the school district. A district superintendent reports to the school board. School budgets are the only public spending in New Jersey that voters have a say in. School elections are held in April.

The school board's primary responsibilities are to:

- Set the vision and goals for the school districts.
- Adopt policies that give the district direction to set priorities and achieve its goals.
- Hire and evaluate the superintendent.
- Adopt and oversee the annual budget of the school district.
- Manage the collective bargaining (union) process for employees of the school district.

The superintendent and administrative staff manage the system's day-to-day operations.

In addition, most towns have a planning board, which hears applications for developments, and a Board of Adjustment or zoning board, which considers requests from residents to build structures outside of the normal ordinances (local laws).

## Public Meetings

All these public bodies have regular meetings. Your local clerk can tell when each body meets. These meetings have to be publicized in the newspaper or in some other way. They cannot be held in private, unless a body is considering personnel decisions. Residents are entitled to speak at these meetings. Residents can also request that certain topics be put on the agenda for a particular meeting.



# Communicating With the News Media

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Effective communication is the foundation of effective advocacy. This tip sheet provides useful information on how to effectively gain coverage of your issue in the local news media.

The news media can be an incredible asset in both raising awareness of an issue and influencing policymakers decisions. Legislators and policymakers tend to read the newspaper and watch the news, so hearing your message from those channels can be particularly persuasive. Getting coverage of an issue in the newspaper or on the airwaves can help move people to support a cause and take positive action.

Following are some tips for getting coverage of your issue.

## **Know the local media.**

Read the paper, listen to the radio station or watch the television program in which you want your story covered. Find out what kind of stories they usually cover, who covers them and what kind of angles they like on stories. Some have particular audiences or formats and you should tailor your message or approach to their formats.

## **Provide solid information.**

Reporters are looking for stories and need facts to write them. The more accurate information you can provide, the more likely it is to get covered. It's best if you have data that document the problem and real people who illustrate it.

## **Find a news peg.**

Because you care about an issue doesn't mean a reporter will. They care about covering the news and providing information that is interesting to their readers. So try to find an angle that makes your story newsworthy.

## **Express your opinion.**

Sometimes you don't have news but you want to express your opinion. The best way to do that is through a letter to the editor or op-ed. These appear opposite the newspapers' own editorials. The opinion pages of a newspaper provide great opportunities for advocates. See Tips for Writing a Letter to the Editor.

## **Write good news releases.**

If you decide to do a news release, it is important to produce a professional looking and quality document. Answer the five W's – who, what, where, when, and why. Try to make the "lead" (first sentence) short and newsy.

## **Don't rely solely on your news release.**

Even a well-crafted and perfectly executed release can easily get misdirected or misplaced in a newsroom. Follow-up with a phone call to the reporter or editor to be sure they received it.

## **Know your material and purpose.**

Remember your objective and that you are the expert on the topic. Let the interviewer or reporter rely on your expertise.

## **Don't be afraid to say you don't know.**

Although it helps to anticipate possible questions, you can't always be prepared to answer everything. Instead of replying with vague or incorrect information, simply state you need to verify your answer and that you would be glad to supply them with the information. You can also offer to put them in contact with another person. Your integrity and credibility are more important than a quick answer.

# The Power of the Vote

One of the most important actions that every citizen of a Democratic society can do is vote! Being an informed voter is equally important. This is the single greatest power you have as a citizen. Use it!

Do I qualify to vote in New Jersey?

To vote, you must be:

- A United States citizen
- At least 18 years old by the next election

A resident of New Jersey and a particular county for 30 days before the election.

## Where can I get a voter registration form?

Voter registration forms are available online from the New Jersey Department of State Division of Elections at <http://www.state.nj.us/state/elections/>.

Or you can register to vote at the following locations:

- Your municipal clerk
- Division of Motor Vehicle offices
- Medicaid
- WIC (Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infant & Children)
- Work First New Jersey programs
- Division of Developmental Disabilities
- Office of Disability Services, Department of Human Services
- Armed Forces of the United States Recruitment offices
- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

- Commission of the Blind & Visually Impaired
- County Welfare Agency or County Board of Social Services

## Where do I mail the form?

The form must be mailed to the NJ Division of Elections, P.O. Box 304, Trenton, NJ, 08625-0304, or contact your board of elections in your county.

## Where is my polling location?

The New Jersey Division of Elections also provides information on where to vote at <http://www.njelections.org> or you can call your local municipal offices.

*Source: NJ Division of Elections*



# Glossary of Terms

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**Coalition** - A group of people focused on advocating or opposing a particular issue

**Constituent** - A citizen residing within the district of an elected official

**Direct lobbying** - Contacting government officials or employees directly to influence their decisions

**Grassroot lobbying** - Appealing to the general public to contact the legislature about an issue.

**Legislative agenda** - A summary of issues concerning a particular group/organization that will be promoted during a legislative session.

**Lobbying** - The process of trying to influence policymakers in favor of a specific cause.

**Nonpartisan** - Not being affiliated with a political party

**Nonpartisan organizations** - Work across political parties

**Public policy** - The set of rules and laws that guide our daily lives. Public policies are created by local, state and federal governments through laws, regulations and budgets.

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# How to Get Involved!

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## Six Easy Ways to Make a Difference for Kids

1. **Stay informed.** Sign up to receive our **Advocate Alerts** at [www.acnj.org](http://www.acnj.org). We will send you occasional, informative e-mails about emerging issues and simple ways you can make a difference. Don't worry. We **won't** fill up your in-box and **we won't** share your e-mail with others.
2. **Be Our Friend.** "Like" us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/acnjforkids](http://www.facebook.com/acnjforkids). This will give you a direct line to other child advocates and keep you up-to-date with issues, events and conversations about New Jersey children.
3. **Tell your friends and colleagues.** Share our e-mails and Facebook posts with your friends, colleagues and others you know. Encourage them to get involved. We are also happy to provide free informational materials about our work, various children's issues and ways for others to get involved for kids. Simply contact our office via phone or e-mail (contact info below).
4. **Take action.** We will send some e-mails that ask you to contact your elected officials or other key decision-makers about critical issues affecting NJ children. Please take a few minutes to send a message. It does make a difference!
5. **Attend An Event.** Throughout the year, ACNJ sponsors informative events around key children's issues. Most are free or require only a nominal fee.
6. **Donate.** ACNJ accepts no government funding for our advocacy work. This enables us to be independent and non-political. Your support makes this possible. Please consider a tax-deductible, online donation today at [www.acnj.org](http://www.acnj.org).

Giving Every Child A Chance