



## Advocating for Children in Your Community

Are you an advocate for your own children - and all the children in your community? Most parents are doing things for children and may not even realize it. If you participate in parent-teacher conferences, volunteer at school, help out with your children's fund-raising projects, attend PTA meetings or school board meetings, vote, or volunteer in your community, then you are an advocate for children. Being an advocate is acting to make your family, your community, the nation or the world better for children.

Advocates for children are vitally important because children are not able to speak out effectively for themselves. Where do you go to advocate? How do you become an advocate? Being an advocate for children can **begin within your own neighborhood**. Pushing for safer parks, school crosswalks, or slower speed limits for the safety of the children in the area is one way to be an advocate in your neighborhood. Within your own community you can campaign for a better school system or more after-school programs. Even supporting local teams, clubs, or fund-raisers are ways to advocate for children.

**Advocating for children starts in simple ways.** If you feel strongly about bettering the life of just one child in your community, you can make a difference. Don't expect change to happen overnight; change takes time. Let your ideas and feelings be known. Small efforts make a difference.

There are ways to increase the impact of your efforts. You can **team-up with other members in your community** who feel the same as you do about an issue. Two voices are always better than one. Play an active role in what you are seeking. Talk with your children's teachers. Go to city hall. Go to school board meetings. Visit local businesses and get them involved in your cause. Write your congressman, governor, etc. Speak with agencies that support your cause. Write letters to your local newspaper.

**One of the best ways to get involved and help out is to be a volunteer.** Children are glad to know that you care about what is happening for them and that you are willing to get personally involved.

**Advocacy also includes using existing services to make life better for children.** There are services and agencies available in your community to help you and your children. Visit your local community center, parks and recreation office, the school district's administrative offices, or church. Contact a nearby extension office, child welfare agency, teachers, or search the internet for services available in your community.

To make a difference in children's issues, get involved. Things do not happen on their own. Children need you to look out for their well-being. Not only does this help children out, but you will feel good knowing that you made a difference for children.

### Applications:

What are some things that you have done to advocate for children in your community?

Are there any issues within your own neighborhood dealing with children and their safety that you could work on improving? (Such as safe parks, crosswalks, crossing guards, etc.) Are there people with whom you can join in this effort? How might you start?

The last time you did something to help out a child, how did it make you feel?

What have you learned from previous efforts that can help you be more effective in future advocating?

The internet offers information about most children's issues. Some sites include:

- [The Coalition for Quality Children's Media](#)
- [The National PTA](#)
- [National Network of Child Care](#)
- [National Children's Coalition](#)
- [Children Now](#)
- [CYFERnet](#)

These sites provide more information on advocating for children.