

Lobbying & Advocacy

Guidance for Program Directors



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS, ADVOCACY TACTICS & ROLES

Frequently Asked Questions

Question: What is the difference between advocacy and lobbying?

Answer: **Advocacy** is the act of supporting a cause or proposal.

Lobbying is attempting to influence a legislator about specific legislation or funding requests.

Example	Advocacy	Lobbying
“Head Start is awesome we need more money.”	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
“Head Start is awesome. We need you to vote yes on Senator Johnson’s proposal.” (A specific piece of legislation]		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
“We need more money for Early Head Start.”	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
“We need \$1.3B for Head Start. (A specific amount of funding.)”		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Question: Is lobbying allowed with Head Start funds?

Answer: No. You cannot use Head Start funds to lobby for state or federal legislation, grants, or contracts. But you can talk about anything else.

Question: Is lobbying allowed with private donations?

Answer: Yes. You can use fundraising dollars to pay for lobbying activity.

Question: Is advocacy is allowed with Head Start funds?

Answer: Yes.

Question: What can I do on the clock?

Answer: You can:

- Educate legislators—tell the Head Start story.
- Connect with leaders’ hearts and minds.
- Focus on or speak to the big picture

Question: When I am off the clock, can I do what I want?

Answer: Yes, but be careful. Make sure your time is not charged to Federal funds. Be sure you’re on own time. Use your personal email rather than work email.

Question: Can Head Start funds be used for voter registration, to drive voters to the polls, or for other candidate activities related to elections?

Answer: No. This is prohibited by 42 U.S.C. Sec. 9851 (b).

Question: Can a Head Start program allow other nonprofits to use Head Start facilities for nonpartisan voter registration?

Answer: Yes. This is specifically permitted in 42 U.S.C. Sec. 9851 (b)(2).

Question: Is giving testimony at legislative hearings allowed with Head Start funds?

Answer: Yes. This is specifically permitted in 42 U.S.C. Sec. 75.450 (c)(2)(iv)(C). Contact the committee and ask for the invitation.



Advocacy Tactics

Tactic #1: Site visits

- Have legislators meet with parents.
- Explain what you need: e.g. “We need more resources to hire additional teachers so we can serve more kids. We need air conditioning to serve kids in the summer.” (This is not lobbying, it’s educating.)
- Photo opportunities are good for both parties.
- Post on social media – share it with the community. Twitter is great!
- Send thank you notes from kids with pictures of legislator with kids. (Get photo releases for every child and parent.)



Tactic #2: Invite officials to your events

- Invite officials to open houses, awards ceremonies (let them present the awards) and service days.

Tactic #3: Send them news stories that celebrate or highlight your program

Tactic #4: Meet officials wherever you can

- Town halls – show up, ask questions.
- District offices – you may get more time with an official in the district office than at a lobby day.
- Capitol offices.
- Virtually – set up a Zoom call or conference call (this is increasingly becoming the new normal).

Tactic #5: Engage alumni

- Gather stories about Head Start alumni from your program who went on to college and beyond.

Advocacy Roles

Center Directors

- Share information with staff and parents
- Initiate site visits
- Reach out to government officials and teachers
- Lobby or fund raise for lobbying, if possible

Teachers

- Share information with legislators
- Include officials in programmed communication lists
- Tell their stories

Parents/Policy Council

- Call, write and post on social media to inform officials about their lives
- Set up a volunteer advocacy committee (But do not solicit lobbying at Policy Council meetings)