

# **Making Legislative Change for Children**

## **Four Practical Tools.....**

**1. Preparing a Fact Sheet**

**2. Writing a Letter**

**3. Making a Phone Call**

**4. Meeting with Your Legislator**

**.....and how to use them!**



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## **Making Legislative Change for Children**

The Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy (OICA) is committed to improving the lives and life-chances of Oklahoma's children.

We know that no one knows their children, and understands their needs better, than their own parents, teachers, coaches and other caring adults who work directly with them. It is important, then, that policy makers hear from those who know and understand the issues facing our young ones.

Through "Four Practical Tools" OICA equips for you to be an effective citizen advocate. You don't have to be an expert – just a person who cares about kids! Inside, you will find Four Easy Steps to follow, plus practical examples and on-line resources where you can find additional information.

## **The Oklahoma Legislative Process**

The Oklahoma Legislative Process is easy to understand, and our policymakers readily accessible. There are a few things you should know before getting started:

The Oklahoma Legislature meets every year from February through May, which is the critical time to keep a look out in your local media for references to legislative activity. During this 4-month time period, the Legislature is in Session from Monday through Thursday. This allows legislators time in their home districts on Fridays to meet with constituents.

State legislators say it only takes about 5 letters or phone calls to get their attention on an issue. And, on average, you only need 5 to 10 legislators backing your issue to pass a bill out of committee or kill it. That means your single phone call or letter really can make a difference.

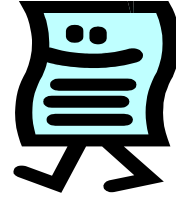
## **Four Practical Tools**

Here are four easy ways to advocate with your legislators:

- ✓ Prepare a Good Fact Sheet
- ✓ Write a letter
- ✓ Make a phone call
- ✓ Meet with your legislator

The Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy will provide weekly updates of children's legislation on our website ([www.oica.org](http://www.oica.org)), as well as background information on issues. We look forward to working with you and involving you in our efforts.

## Practical Tool # 1: Prepare a Good Fact Sheet



### What's a fact sheet?

Fact sheets introduce an issue in a format useful to busy people.

Good fact sheets recognize that busy people (like legislators) need something short and punchy to grab their attention. A good fact sheet says, "Read Me! I'm a painless way to get acquainted to an issue." Anything long and complicated may not simply be ignored; it can actually be counter-productive. Keep it short, accurate and interesting.

### The purpose of a fact sheet

- Set out the facts: key statistics, figures, or comparisons.
- Identify a group with a particular issue.
- Provide answers to common questions about the issue. (Fact sheets are often in a Q & A format)
- Show information using graphs, charts or pictures.
- Inform, persuade or educate.
- Make an argument for a particular course of action.

### A Good Fact Sheet:

- Is only one to two pages long.
- Doesn't use long sentences or wordy paragraphs.
- Is easy to read, with sub-heads, bullet points and often graphics.
- Includes only the most compelling, useful statistics.
- Arranges information to make an argument targeted to a particular audience.
- Uses stories, examples or other simple ways to convey complicated points.
- Reflects careful thought about the audience and facts important to them.
- Draws a conclusion and clearly states what you want the reader to do.
- Includes the name, address, telephone number, Web site address and/or e-mail address of the organizing group.
- Is honest and factual, and does not exaggerate.











