

Phone Number, Emails and Addresses

(Keep this brochure near your telephone)

This brochure belongs to: _____

My State Senator: _____

State House phone and Email:

My State Representative: _____

State House phone and Email:

For the above information, call:	Phone
Senate Clerk617 722-2376
House of Representatives Clerk617 722-2356

State House Leadership

Governor Deval Patrick617 727-6250
<http://www.mass.gov/contactus>

Senate President Therese Murray . . .617 722-1500
Therese.Murray@state.ma.us

Speaker of the House Sal DiMasi . . .617 722-2500
Rep.SalvatoreDiMasi@hou.state.ma.us

Chair, Sen. Ways & Means Comm . . .617 722-1481
Steven.Panagiotakos@state.ma.us

Chair, House Ways & Means Comm .617 722-2380
Robert.DeLeo@state.ma.us

Mail Address: State House, Boston, MA 02133

Information Sources...

...for schedules, bills, budgets, legislative matters:

The Arc of Massachusetts781 891-6270
 217 South Street, Waltham, MA 02453
www.arcmass.org
arcmass@arcmass.org

Department of Developmental Services 617 727-5608
 500 Harrison Avenue, Boston, MA 02118
Info@dmr.state.ma.us

Office of Citizen Leadership617 624-7755
 Legislative Affairs Office617 624-7706

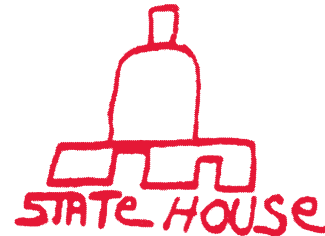
My Local Advocacy Group(s):



For Individuals, Families, and Advocates of persons with Disabilities...

COMMUNICATING

with State Legislators in Good Times...and Bad

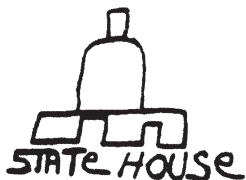


Here is a family-friendly guide on the importance and best ways of communicating with your State Legislators on issues vital to you or your family member with an intellectual or developmental disability (I/DD).



My motivation to communicate.

Prepared by parents associated with The Arc of Massachusetts, in cooperation with the Department of Developmental Services Citizen Boards and an advisory group of lawmakers. Illustrated by an artist with special needs.



WHAT THE LEGISLATORS SAY

- “Keep the letters, Emails and phone calls coming. They motivate and educate legislators to vote for your cause.”
- “Especially in times of shrinking resources for government services and competition for scarce public funds, it is a necessity for citizens to give the highest visibility to their personal issues. You are best qualified to keep your family member’s needs on the legislative front burner. Visit us, call us, write us and do it often. Urge other families to do likewise.”
- “You can help legislators put human faces on issues and statistics. Tell us your family’s stories. Come visit. Send us letters and pictures. Believe me, you’ll get our attention.”
- “Heartfelt letters from parents of the disabled are difficult to ignore. Large numbers of them are impossible to ignore.”
- “Whatever the budget crisis, our government must never neglect our most vulnerable citizens. Do not let us ever forget that!”
- “Tell us your needs. Also tell us how you or your loved one has benefited from services provided. That really lets us know that our efforts on your behalf are truly worth fighting for.”

“Every letter – every e-mail – every visit – every phone call counts. Yours may be the one that tips the vote.”

KEEP THEIR PHONES RINGING OFF THE HOOK

Phone calls from constituents are the lifeblood of the legislative process. They can be made quickly, easily and painlessly. Designed for short messages, they should be timed to influence votes on budgets or bills that will be important to your needs or those of your family member.

When you call- state your name, address, the fact that you are a constituent – and your message. Keep it brief and to the point. If you cannot reach your legislator, leave your message with an aide.

Don’t hesitate to ask your legislator (or an aide) how he or she plans to vote on any given issue. Thank your legislators when they support your requests. Always be courteous. Treat them as your allies.

To find the best times to call on issues of importance to you, use the Info Sources on the back cover.

On the most urgent issues, call the State House Leadership as well. (See back page)

All Legislators keep logs on phone calls. And they add them up. Even four or five calls on a given disability issue can have a big impact on the lawmaker!

JOIN OTHER PARENTS AND ADVOCATES – KEEP THE STATE HOUSE PHONES RINGING. RAISE YOUR VOICES CLEARLY, LOUDLY, AND IN UNISON.

(Please note, we use the name Department of Developmental Services – but the agency will not formally change its name from the Department of Mental Retardation until June 2009.)



LET THE GOVERNOR HEAR FROM YOU

While this folder focuses on communications with legislators, don't neglect to voice your concerns and opinions to the Governor. Here too a strong united voice from families can definitely make a difference.

BUDGET PRIORITIES AND BILLS

Priority issues in the Department of Developmental Services (DMR) budget that come before the Legislature every year include Salaries for Direct Care Workers, Family Support, Medicare, the Waiting List, Turning 22, and Transportation, among others. Communications from families can have a strong impact on the size of these appropriations and on legislation. An example put through by the powerful efforts of parents is the Family Support Bill enacted in 2002.

④ PUT IT IN WRITING

If you are not able to visit your legislators, you can always write letters or email. And make no mistake – legislators read mail from their constituents.

If you or your family member has a present or future need for state services, write each of your legislators several times a year, stating in your own words your loved one's problems and needs for services. Get them on record.

If you have no typewriter or computer, don't worry. A clearly written or printed letter is fine. Keep it short but tell it like it is.

Be sure to include your full name and address on your letter. Use this informal salutation:

(Sen.) (Rep.) John Smith
State House
Boston, MA 02133

Dear (Sen.) (Rep.) Smith:

Continually urge your legislators to vote for key bills and budgets affecting your family. Be specific. Explain exactly how they can help you or your family member.

Ask for a reply – and for your legislator's positions on your issues. You are entitled to know where they stand.

LETTERS FROM FAMILIES CAN REALLY ADD UP.
AND THEY DO GET ADDED UP. THEY CAN
DIRECTLY IMPACT VOTES AND ACTION.

WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR LEGISLATORS?

ECONOMIC TRENDS OF RECENT TIMES HAVE MADE IT ABUNDANTLY CLEAR THAT THE ADVOCACY EFFORTS OF INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES AND SUPPORTERS MUST BE STEPPED UP SIGNIFICANTLY IF WE ARE TO MAINTAIN A QUALITY SERVICE SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AND FAMILIES.

The lives of almost all persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities in our Commonwealth are affected by legislation and budgets passed by the State Legislature. Dozens of bills on disability issues are filed and voted on, and the entire budget of the Department of Developmental Services (formerly Mental Retardation) must be appropriated every year.

These procedures occur in good times and bad.

How your State Senator and State Representative vote on key bills and appropriations depends to a large degree on how many families they hear from on each given issue – and how strongly and clearly these voices are raised.

You are your best advocate. Nobody knows more about the need for services than you do. Nobody can describe them better than you can – in your own words. It's part of your empowerment to send your message to your legislators and urge them to pass laws and budgets that serve you or your family member and others with similar needs.

In good times we can enhance the necessary funding. In bad times we can protect what we have and maintain high visibility for our issues. Either way, it is absolutely essential for us to speak out in unison.

We must make our voices heard!

FOLLOW THESE STEPS TO MAINTAIN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS WITH YOUR LEGISLATORS

① ESTABLISH CONTACT AND KEEP IT GOING

If you do not know who your State Senator or State Rep is, you can find out by calling the State House:

Senate Clerk: 617-722-1276

House of Representatives Clerk: 617-722-2356

Get their full names, phone number, and Email address and write them down on the back cover of this folder.

Begin your communication by sending each of your legislators a short letter to establish contact. Identify yourself by name and address and state your needs or those of your family member. Ask them for their support and keep in touch with them.

② STAY ON TOP OF WHAT'S HAPPENING

Familiarize yourself with bills and budgets dealing with your issues so that you can communicate with them on a well-informed and timely basis.

You can access this information from the sources listed on the back cover of this folder. Check with your local advocacy group. Network with other individuals or parents on issues of mutual importance. Get on email lists and, if you don't have a computer, on mailing lists.

THE BETTER INFORMED YOU ARE, THE BETTER ADVOCATE YOU WILL BE FOR YOURSELF OR YOUR FAMILY MEMBER.

ADVOCACY YEAR-ROUND PRODUCES RESULTS

Normally the best times to write Legislators are the first few months of the year to comment on the Governor's budget (House 1), the House budget, and the Senate budget. We must accelerate these efforts and maintain visibility year-round When we work together we get results, as demonstrated by two State House rallies and a letter campaign of the past year which substantially restored huge budget cuts.

③ VISIT WHEN AND IF YOU CAN

The best way to connect with your legislators is face-to-face – especially if you or your son or daughter has an urgent or long-standing need for state services. Phone for an appointment in the State House or at the legislator's constituent meeting place in his or her home district, near you.

At your meeting, state the needs briefly but emphatically. Discuss with your legislator how he or she can help.

Even without an appointment, you can drop in to a legislator's State House office and speak with an aide, most of whom are well-informed and anxious to listen to constituents. They will be glad to pass on your message.

Bring to the meeting written material and photos that you can leave with the legislator. After the meeting, be sure to send a short thank-you note.

Try to visit the State House occasionally for rallies, receptions, public hearings, or other opportunities to meet lawmakers as well as other advocates. Many advocacy groups have legislative events in their own localities. These activities provide strength in numbers and generate new ideas. Access event schedules through the Info Sources on the back cover, or your local advocacy group.

TO GET ACTION BY YOUR LEGISLATORS, NOTHING BEATS PERSON-TO-PERSON MEETINGS.

RECORD OF LEGISLATIVE CONTACTS

(You may wish to keep a record of legislative communications, including name of lawmaker, means of contact, date, issues discussed, and results.)

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

6) _____

7) _____

8) _____

9) _____

10) _____

“The moral test of government is how it treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; and those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and the handicapped.”

– Hubert Humphrey
1977