



Organizing a Site Visit for a Policy Maker

Inviting policy makers and their staff to visit a NAEYC-Accredited center is a powerful way to help them understand the benefits NAEYC, accreditation and a high-quality early childhood program provides to the children, families and community. Below are suggested steps and a sample schedule to help you plan for your event.

Step 1 - Get Updated Information:

Find the home district address and phone number for your elected officials. Visit www.senate.gov or www.house.gov. Most senators and some representatives have more than one district office. Select the office closest to you. If you do not have access to the Internet, look in the blue government pages of your local phone book.

Step 2 - Identify Dates & Send an Invitation:

Identify a few dates when you could host a visit to your center and send a personalized invitation letter to your elected official(s) via mail and email. Feel free to include a center profile brochure or one-pager and background materials about your Affiliate and/or the center.

Step 3 - Call District Office:

Within a week of sending your invitation, call the office to follow up. Have a copy of the invitation on hand when you call, and tell the person who answers that you would like to follow-up on an invitation you extended to your elected official for him/her to visit your center. You may be connected with a legislative aide or a scheduler.

Make Your Case

Point out how this visit relates to the policy maker's interests (developing young minds, improving school readiness, helping families, supporting small businesses, strengthening communities, etc.). Ask if the legislator can visit during the date(s) you proposed. Make sure you have alternate dates and times available in case your first choices do not work. Be sure to mention that staff and parents will be on hand for the visit and are looking forward to connecting directly with the legislator. Feel free to express your willingness to work with staff members to invite media. Finally, offer to send more information about the program and who will be at the visit, as well as any other details they may need.

Be Flexible

If the legislator is not available, ask whether a senior staff person can visit instead. Even if the legislator agrees to come, keep in mind that elected officials' schedules can change with little notice. Several days before the visit, call to confirm the event and be prepared to make adjustments, if necessary.

Step 4 - Prepare For Visit:

Before the visit, identify parents, program staff, and community partners who would be convincing spokespeople for your center. Ask them to be available for the visit and give them background material on the policy maker so they will feel comfortable at the event. Share the basic schedule for the visit and clarify their roles. Make sure to



invite key partners, AEYC board members and center supporters. Send a media advisory to invite press and prepare a press release for the day of the event.

Step 5 - The visit:

On the day of the visit, have someone wait outside the building to greet and direct the visitors to the right location. Be sure to have center brochures or a program profile on hand. You may want to make copies of any articles, parent letters, awards or other documents that demonstrate community support for your center. Be sure the policy maker gets to hear from other invited guests: ask parents to share their perspectives; ask an educator to talk about the ways the program affects students; invite community members to comment on the value of the program within the community.

Often elected officials are interested in documenting their visit with a photo—think through some possible photo opportunities beforehand and suggest them to accompanying staff. If children will be in any pictures, be sure you have signed parental release forms.

Mostly, a site visit is an opportunity to build relationships and showcase your high-quality early childhood program. Depending on the political and policy context, you may also consider identifying an “ask” that you would like to make to the policymaker at some point during the visit.

Sample Schedule

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| 10:00 a.m. | Policy maker and staff arrive at the program and are greeted by the program director or other lead host. Make sure business cards are exchanged before the visit is over. |
| 10:05-10:15 a.m. | Lead the legislator and staff on a tour. Let them see the children in multiple classrooms and participating in diverse activities. |
| 10:15-10:30 a.m. | Engagement time! Let the policy maker read a book to children or enjoy a snack and talk with them about their favorite parts of their day. This would be a great photo opportunity! |
| 10:30-10:45 a.m. | After the book or snack, facilitate a discussion between parents and the policy maker. Ask the parents to explain how the center has helped and supported their families. |
| 10:45-11:00 a.m. | Ask other invited guest (staff members, AEYC board members, community partners, etc.) to talk about the benefits they see the center offering young children, their families and the community. |
| 11:00 a.m. | Thank the legislator for coming and present him/her with a |



token of appreciation from the children and center community. Take a group picture and goodbye!

Step 6 - Post Visit Follow Up:

Send a Thank You letter to the elected official and any staff members that participated in the visit. Within the letter, feel free to include any pictures that were taken, as well as any media coverage the event received. Don't forget to upload photos and messages to social media, including Twitter, Facebook and Instagram - and tag the policymaker to share the photos with them directly as well!