



Head Start Town Hall Toolkit

Town halls are a great opportunity to engage with your members of Congress. Likewise, they can be a chance to promote what your program is doing on behalf of the children and families in your community. Above all, town halls are a forum to have a constructive, honest discussion about how to improve your community. As a Head Start leader, you can attest to the importance of early childhood education and the lifelong impact it has on our nation’s children and families.

 **Tip: Town halls can become heated.** No matter how justified frustrations may be, it is important to remember that you are not only representing the staff, parents, and children from your program, but Head Start communities across the nation.

Things to Remember When Attending

Tele-Town Hall	In-Person Town Hall
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ In the age of virtual meetings, many members of Congress now host “call-in” town hall meetings. Find out when the next town hall is happening in your home state/town by entering your zip code here. ✓ RSVP ahead of time! You may be required to RSVP by either completing an online form or calling the Member’s office. ✓ Check to see if you can send a question ahead of time. This will help to ensure you get a chance to speak or have your questions answered. <p> Tip: Limit yourself to one question. Asking more questions may generate a less thorough response from the member of Congress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Leave a message. Most tele-town halls give listeners the opportunity to leave a message at the end of the tele-town hall. Use this to your advantage! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Find out if there are requirements for attending, such as proof of vaccination or a negative COVID test. ✓ Arrive early to make sure you have the opportunity to speak up. ✓ Wear any Head Start apparel (t-shirts, buttons, hats, etc.) you may have! ✓ Speak in a direct and respectful tone. It is important to exemplify why Head Start continues to have bipartisan support despite any disagreements between your member of Congress and other constituents. ✓ The main goal of your time speaking should be to invite your member of Congress to come visit your program.

Talking Points for Directors & Staff

- My name is **[your name]** and I am a Head Start **[director/teacher/staff member]** in **[your town]**.
- In **[your town]** we serve **[number]** children and their families every year. This includes home visiting, in class programs, and pregnant women.
- Not only are we meeting the high bar of Head Start quality requirements, but we are involving parents in the program and are working with our community partners to ensure the best possible outcomes for the most vulnerable children in our community.
- Research continues to show that children are leaving Head Start ready to be successful in school and throughout their lives.
- I hope you **[or name the member of Congress if addressing staff]** will come visit our program and see the impact for yourself.

Example Questions

- How familiar are you with Head Start?
- What conversations are you hearing in Washington, D.C., about Head Start?
- What are you doing in Washington, D.C., to support Head Start's children and families?
- What else can we do to improve our collaboration with your office?

Early Head Start Talking Points for Directors and Staff

Here are a few ways you can highlight the impact and need for more funding for Early Head Start. For additional messages, facts, and figures on Early Head Start, please see NHTA's [Early Head Start Advocacy Toolkit](#).

- My name is **[your name]** and I am an Early Head Start **[director/teacher/staff member]** in **[your town]**.
- Early Head Start is the extension of Head Start's child and family services and supports to pregnant women, infants, and toddlers. The Early Head Start program has been around nationally for over 25 years and has strong bipartisan support in Congress.
- In **[your town]** we serve **[number]** children and their families every year in our Early Head Start program through home visits, center-based programs, and pregnancy services.
- We have found that Early Head Start is critical because it reaches children when their brains are most rapidly developing, in infancy, and before age three.
- Our Early Head Start services are critical to get our youngest children the health services, like dental care and immunizations, child development, and early detection of disabilities, they need to thrive.
- Early Head Start also provides support to parents when they are most stressed emotionally and financially. Early Head Start not only provides parenting support, it offers free diapers, formula, and access to job training and employment services.
- Nationally, only 11% of income-eligible children are able to access Early Head Start services and in **[your town]** we have a long waiting list for these services.
- I hope you will work with your colleagues in Congress to support additional funding for Early Head Start and the well-trained, but significantly undercompensated, workforce in our programs.
- I also hope you will come visit our program and see the impact for yourself!

Talking Points for Parents


- My name is [your name] and I am a proud Head Start parent. We live in [your town].
- I came to speak to you today because I want you and Congress to know that Head Start makes a big impact in the lives of families here in [your town].
- My child receives a high-quality education along with health screenings, testing, and social and emotional support.
- As a parent, I gain so much from the program too! I have benefitted from professional development and learned how to play an even more meaningful role in my child's development.
- Head Start has become like a family to me.
- Please come visit our program!

Early Head Start Talking Points for Parents and Caregivers

- My name is [your name] and I live in [you town].
- I am a proud Early Head Start parent of an infant/toddler. My child(ren) receives child development services, health services, and other care at Early Head Start.
- I came to speak to you today because I want you and Congress to know that Early Head Start makes a big impact in the lives of families with young children here in [your town].
- My child, [name], who is now [age] years old, started when he/she/they was/were [age] months/years old.
- Early Head Start helped us by providing a safe place for my child to learn and access health care and healthy food. *Share a story of how your child specifically was supported and how they grew or thrived thanks to involvement with Early Head Start.*
- Raising an infant/toddler is expensive and I was grateful the program provided free diapers and was completely cost-free. I could not afford a private child care program, so it gave us support we desperately needed.
- Early Head Start has become like a family to me!
- Please come visit our little Early Head Start program and see how the lives of children and family's are being changed for the better!
- I also appreciated all the parenting classes and connections to community support provided by Early Head Start. Infants and toddlers don't come with a playbook, so it was incredibly valuable to be connected with experts and other parents who could support me as a parent.
- I am really grateful that Early Head Start exists and hope we can count on your support to expand access to more children, since access is so limited due to a lack of funds.

Example Questions

- What do you think about Head Start?
- What are you doing in Washington, D.C., to support Head Start's children and families?
- What are your top priorities for early childhood education and care?

 **Tip: Share a story about how your child or you have advanced or been impacted positively by Head Start.**

Example of a great story from a parent in Ohio:

“At Warren County Community Services’ Early Head Start program, my daughter not only had care from people who understand how to work with children who’ve experienced trauma, but she was among peers, which was amazing, because it helped skyrocket her development,” said DeJionette Norton. “Her speech improved, her social skills improved, she became more friendly and less aggressive.” Read the full story [here](#).

Remember, if you’re unsure of something, don’t hesitate to say:

“I’m not sure, but I am happy to find out and follow up with you.”

If you need help finding an answer, email: advocacy@nhsa.org.