



NHSA Advocacy Lunch & Learn Series: *Empowering Your Policy Councils*

November 12, 2024

Policy Council Basics

...why, who, and what?

Why Do Head Start Preschool & Early Head Start Programs Have a Policy Council?

- Head Start's founders understood that parents are essential partners in educating young children & felt parents should help decide how Head Start can most benefit their family and others in the community.
- Through Policy Councils, parents have a voice in decisions about how programs spend money, what children do in the classrooms, and how programs work with community partners.

Who Makes Up the Policy Council?

- A group of Head Start Preschool & Early Head Start parents and community members who help lead and make decisions about their programs.
- Elected by the parents of children enrolled in the program, often after serving on a parent committee.
- Meets regularly, and members serve for one year at a time for up to five years.
- Works closely with the program management teams to provide overall direction for the program.

What Are the Benefits of a Policy Council?

- Children, parents, and programs benefit when parents take on leadership roles:
 - Children learn more and experience healthier development at school and at home.
 - Parents can become more confident, gain skills, and connect with other parents and staff.
 - Program staff learn about the strengths, interests, and needs of the children, families, and community they serve.

Empowering Your Policy Councils

...when, how, and where?



**Policy Council
members are
already
advocates!**

When Should Policy Council's Be Activated for Advocacy Purposes?

- **AS SOON AS MEMBERS COME ON BOARD!**
- **Parents and community members willing to serve on a Policy Council are effectively agreeing to be advocates.**
- **With that in mind, let them know when they are first elected to the Policy Council that advocacy is expected – they tell the most authentic and effective stories.**

How Should Policy Council's Be Activated for Advocacy Purposes?

- Ask them to discuss the benefits of Head Start – to children, parents, and the community – with everyone they encounter in their daily lives.
- Ask them to encourage other program parents to engage in advocacy actions.
- Invite them to participate in interactions with local, state, and federal officials.

Where Should Policy Council's Be Activated for Advocacy Purposes?

- Invite them to attend and participate whenever an elected official visits the program.
- Ask them to engage with the local media through letters to the editor, *etc.*, when appropriate.
- Urge them to share the benefits of Head Start and Action Alerts on their social media platforms.
- Encourage them to attend NHSA Leadership Institutes to participate in direct advocacy on Capitol Hill.

What's the First Thing You Should Do ...if you haven't already?

Ask Your Policy Council to Take Action!



Urge Them to Urge Congress to Support Increased Funding for Head Start!

- They can take one 1 minute right away to send their emails.
- Then they can take 5 minutes to encourage those on their email lists & social media followers to do the same.



nhsa.org/take-action

Thank You!

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