**Building Relationships with Legislators & Effective Advocacy Tools**



**FRYSC Coalition of Kentucky, Inc.**

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[www.fryscky.org](http://www.fryscky.org)

GET TO KNOW YOUR LEGISLATOR

Legislator contact information can be found at <https://legislature.ky.gov/Legislators/Pages/default.aspx>

or

[www.fryscky.org](http://www.fryscky.org)

**SENATOR INFORMATION**

Name

District Number

Address

Local Phone

Frankfort Phone

Email

**REPRESENTATIVE INFORMATION**

Name

District Number

Address

Local Phone

Frankfort Phone

Email

**Tips for Building a relationship with your legislator**

1. Send them a birthday card. (Find the information on <https://legislature.ky.gov/Legislators/Pages/default.aspx>)
2. Invite them to school open houses, parent nights or programs.
3. Read the news paper and listen to news reports. Go where they are going (ribbon cutting ceremonies, picnics, community events) and make sure that your legislator KNOWS you are there. Take a minute to reintroduce yourself, say hello and thank you for the job they are doing.
4. Send them a copy of your center newsletter or flyers for activities in your center.
5. Send handwritten invitations to center activities.
6. When you see your legislators in public ALWAYS say hello and thank them for their service to your community. Let them know that you appreciate their support of your programs.
7. Invite your legislators to bring the America’s Legislators Back to School program to your schools. Work with your classroom teachers (4th or 5th in elementary, social studies teachers in middle or civics teachers in high school) to have legislators visit at times that are most beneficial to the program of studies.
8. If you are hosting a big event and want to invite your legislators, be sure to tell them how many people have attended in the past. (Last year over 1,200 people attended this exciting and informative event.)
9. Send them a Christmas or holiday card (most have religious affiliations on their bio page at [https://legislature.ky.gov/Legislators/Pages/default.aspx](https://legislature.ky.gov/Legislators/Pages/default.aspx%20)
10. Call and leave a message on your legislator’s home phone. Ask them to keep a look out for materials you are putting in the mail. Always leave several contact numbers such as center number, your home number or cell phone number.
11. When you invite your legislators to center events always send a ticket or special invitation EVEN if no ticket is necessary. It gives the impression that it is a “special” event.
12. When invitations are sent to legislators for well attended events let them know that you will have a spot reserved for them in your parking lot. Put their name on parking signs in lot.
13. When you are attending events in Frankfort, contact legislators and ask if you might be able to just drop by and share some information with them. This might be something as simple as notes from children or as important as information concerning changing demographics in their area. This is an opportunity for a face to face contact with our political decision makers.
14. Let your legislator know that you understand that people contact them all the time needing assistance. Send them a few business cards and ask them to share them with families in need. Let them know that you consider yourself as part of their team and want to help them meet the needs of constituents.
15. Give your legislator an award. Be creative and acknowledge them for an act of kindness, a significant milestone or service to the community. Provide for photo ops with children. ALWAYS send out a press release to local press. If the press does not attend submit a story to local papers for publication.
16. Ask their opinion about a program or an event you are planning. Your legislator is a wealth of information and they like to feel helpful!
17. When the legislature is not in session, request an appointment at your legislator’s home or office. Let them know that you have some important information to share and would like to discuss it with them personally. Always be honest about how much time you will need don’t say 5 minutes when you really need 15!
18. Send your legislators thank you notes for serving our state. Specifically thank them for anything they have done for children such as education, health, childcare, etc. Share how this will impact our work as FRYSC coordinators and how their efforts are appreciated.
19. Ask them if they need more information about a topic. Make sure that they are getting factual information about our programs. YOU are the expert! Make sure that your voice is being heard.
20. Do you have a Face Book page? Do you twitter? Have you invited your legislator to become a friend?
21. Send your legislators an email with the web address of your center webpage. Send them an email when new information has been added to your page. (Make sure it is up to date!)
22. Share stories with your legislators about how your center has impacted the life of a child or a family. Be specific! Legislators like to know that we are impacting the community in a meaningful way.
23. When you have the opportunity to talk with legislators let them know that you are working with other programs to meet the needs of children. Share the wealth and let them know that it really does take a “village” and that we are a significant part of the tribal council!
24. Be a name dropper. We may not always know our legislator on a personal level but remember the game Six Degrees of Separation? We can always find someone that we know who knows them. A personal connection always makes for an easier conversation.
25. Invite them to come “fill in” on Grandparents Day for a child being raised by a grandparent who is still working and could not attend the event. Speak to them about the growing numbers of grandparents raising grandchildren in your school community.

**This is just a short list to get you thinking of ways to stay in contact with your local legislator. The important thing is that you be creative and consistent in your contact.**

EFFECTIVE Advocacy TOOL

1. **Educate yourself**

It is important that you as an advocate understand the issues and are comfortable with your knowledge of them. Thorough preparation will make you a more confident and successful advocate.

There are many resources available to help you build your knowledge base.

* Read and review legislative updates from the FRYSC Coalition (FRYSCKY, Inc.)
* Read and review the FRYSC Administrator’s Guidebook- know and learn our history and the legislation that built and sustains us.

The legislature’s website (<https://legislature.ky.gov/Pages/index.aspx>) also provides valuable information:

* Biographies of your legislators
* List of legislative leadership

(both Senate and House of Representatives)

* Track Legislation through Bill Watch (<http://kentucky.gov/services/pages/billwatch.aspx>)
* Meeting schedules & Visitor Information
1. **Contact your legislators**

BY REGULARLY CONTACTING your legislators and developing a relationship with them, you will be able to influence their decision-making process on education issues, specifically those that affect family resource and youth services centers. You can use email, write letters or make telephone calls. **Contact your legislator prior to a legislative session to introduce yourself and develop a relationship.**

Don’t make your first phone call to your legislators during a legislative session. First, establish a relationship. Then, when you call about an issue during a legislative session, your legislator will be more willing to consider your point of view. Make a friend before you need one!

**WHEN YOU CALL DURING THE INTERIM**:

Give your name, title, the name of your center, and the school district in which you are located.

Don’t be surprised if you have to schedule a time to speak with your legislator; remember, most legislators have full-time jobs during the interim.

Focus your conversation on one or two top priorities, remembering that your immediate goal is to introduce yourself and offer yourself as a resource for the legislator on FRYSC issues.

Invite your legislators to activities sponsored by or involving your center. If possible, give the legislator a role in your event.

**WHEN YOU CALL DURING A LEGISLATIVE SESSION**:

Ask to speak to the senator or representative but be prepared to discuss your issue with a legislative assistant or to leave a message.

Give your name, title, the name of your center, and the school district in which you are located.

Focus your call on ONE issue or bill, and if possible, identify the bill by number; briefly state what position you want the legislator to take and be prepared to offer your rationale based on local impact.

*NOTE: Very often the FRYSC Coalition will have gathered information and presented it to its members to make an effective statement to legislators.*

As always, ask your legislator what position he or she will be taking on the bill or issue.

Share with the FRYSC Coalition public policy committee or your regional representative what you learn about legislators’ positions on issues.

1. **Share information**

Share the information with your advisory council, the families you serve and your community. No one is more qualified than you to talk about your center and what is going on within it.

Formalize legislative advocacy on your advisory council by creating a standing agenda item for legislative updates. Use this time to update your advisory council and – by extension - your community, on important legislative issues. Report on your contacts with legislators and encourage your advisory council to make similar contacts.

Keep your civic and community groups informed on legislative issues that affect family resource and youth services centers. As a coordinator, you are a community leader, and you can have great influence in your community’s attitudes.

1. **Invite and involve your community**

Invite your legislators and members of the public to visit your school and/or center when highlighting successful programs. Showcase your achievements and successes. Be sure to call or email media representatives in advance and prominently thank legislators for coming.

1. **Come to Frankfort**

AS THE CULMINATION of your advocacy efforts and to help ensure a successful legislative session for issues affecting FRYSC, go to Frankfort to meet directly with legislators.

Attend FRYSCKy, Inc. sponsored events. During the budget legislative session (60 day session, held bi-annually), FRYSCKy hosts a legislative reception. This event has proven to be beneficial to both coordinators and legislators. The Legislative Reception is one of the best attended events by legislators during the session. Each region is provided the opportunity to highlight programs in their respective areas. Coordinators are also given a more casual environment to discuss issues with their legislator. In a 30 day session, regional representatives host regional receptions on a much smaller scale. This is another opportunity for coordinators to highlight programs and services in their communities, and build relationships with legislators.

**State Offices**

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| **Lieutenant Governor**State of Kentucky700 Capitol Avenue, Suite 142Frankfort, KY 40601502.564.2611 | **Auditor of Public Accounts**State of Kentucky105 Sea Hero Road, Suite 2Frankfort, KY 40601502.573.0050 |
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