



# TEEN MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

*For Youth, By Youth*



“When young people **stand** for their beliefs and understand the impact of **their voices**, they can represent their families and communities with pride, courage, and ability. **Youth as advocates take action** throughout our communities and society already. When this is deliberately created as a strategy for social change, **the world can change together.**”

ADAM FLETCHER, FREECHILD INSTITUTE

---



Written by Ayala Rosenthal with support from the Jewish Healthcare Foundation  
© 2020 Jewish Healthcare Foundation



Teens presenting their ideas at the Youth Advocacy Summit on November 6, 2018.

# TEEN MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

## *An Introduction*

Inspired by national youth movements, the Jewish Healthcare Foundation sought to engage teens in an urgent call to action for improving teen mental health by hosting a youth advocacy summit on Election Day 2018. The participating students from southwestern Pennsylvania demonstrated their commitment to reducing mental health stigma and advocating for policy change to improve the quality and accessibility of teen mental health services. They have since connected as part of a statewide youth advocacy network.

Among them is Ayala Rosenthal, the author of this toolkit. She and her fellow youth advocates are an inspiration and continue to be a powerful force for change. Biographies of the youth quoted in the toolkit are included on page 21. They have led the way in promoting the youth voice in policy decision-making and building a coalition of teens committed to creating safer, inclusive school environments where teachers and students alike can learn about mental health.

We hope this toolkit will be a resource for youth who want to start their own advocacy efforts and to connect with efforts to improve teen mental health.

“Empowering youth to engage and take an active role in advocacy can play a critical role in societal change and improving human rights”

BRENT JENSEN, NEW TACTICS IN HUMAN RIGHTS



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

YOUTH WHO HAVE CHANGED HISTORY.....	6
STEP 1: BE INFORMED & KNOW THE CHANGE YOU HOPE TO SEE...	9
STEP 2: START TALKING ABOUT IT .....	10
STEP 3: USE YOUR VOICE AND REACH OUT.....	11
STEP 4: CONTACT YOUR LOCAL OFFICIALS.....	12
STEP 5: IF YOU CAN, VISIT YOUR LOCAL OFFICIALS.....	14
STEP 6: PUT PLANS INTO ACTION .....	15
STEP 7: DON'T GIVE UP!.....	16
TIPS TO STAY MOTIVATED.....	17
ADVOCACY RESOURCES	
SAMPLE LETTER TO LEGISLATOR.....	23
SENDING EMAILS TO A LEGISLATOR.....	24
SAMPLE POSTCARD CAMPAIGN.....	26
LEGISLATIVE VISIT GUIDELINES.....	28
LEGISLATIVE FEEDBACK FORM.....	29

“As with other policy areas, adolescent mental health policy cannot be built in a think tank without input from those it will affect most. We want to inspire community engagement and support youth advocacy to steer the system to work for those it’s supposed to serve.”

KAREN WOLK FEINSTEIN, JEWISH HEALTHCARE FOUNDATION

---



## **WHY YOUTH ADVOCACY IS SO IMPORTANT**

Throughout a person's life, it is likely that they will be affected by a mental health challenge of their own or someone close to them. We all have emotional and mental health needs that must be given as much attention and care as our physical health. One in five young people struggle with a mental illness. Of those teenagers, only 30% will be diagnosed and able to receive proper care. Half of mental health conditions start by the age of 14. Suicide is the third leading cause of death in 15–19 year olds.

Young advocates have the passion, courage and determination to change these statistics. As individuals who are living in this reality, adolescents have a unique perspective on teen mental health issues. Although age may seem like a barrier, adults and professionals are beginning to listen to the voices of younger generations. As a youth or young adult, you can fight for what's right. You are capable of changing the world. The youth voice in today's world plays a vital role in the progression of our society.

Ayala Rosenthal, Youth Advocate and Founder of *Acknowledging Mental Health in Our Teens Together (AMOTT)*

# YOUTH WHO HAVE

Throughout history, youth and young adults have been changing our world for the better. Here are some examples of these empowered individuals:

## LOUIS BRAILLE

Louis Braille became blind at the age of three. In 1824, at the age of 15, Louis developed a language system for the blind known as braille. This form of language includes code for printing and writing and is used internationally among blind communities.



## BARBARA JOHNS

When Barbara Johns initiated a student strike over substandard facilities at her segregated school in Farmville, Virginia at the age of 16 in 1951, her advocacy caught the attention of two NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) lawyers. They brought her case to court to fight for better resources and to demand equality. Barbara's case was one of five that was used by the Supreme Court as evidence that segregated schools are unconstitutional.



## MALALA YOUSAFZAI

Malala Yousafzai began her advocacy at the age of 11. She was an advocate for education and encouraged other girls with similar backgrounds to pursue their studies and interest in learning. Malala bravely spoke out against the Taliban who were discouraging and limiting access to proper schooling for girls. In 2014, at the age of 17, Malala became the youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize.

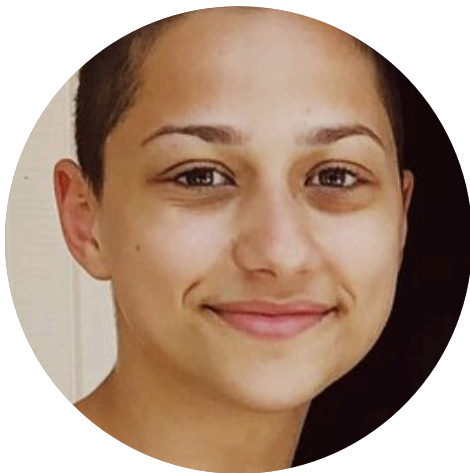


# CHANGED HISTORY



## GRETA THUNBERG

Greta Thunberg started leading advocacy efforts for climate change in 2018, at the age of 15. As part of her activism, she arranged for a school strike in her home country of Sweden. Soon, over 1 million students joined her by walking out of their classrooms to fight for climate change awareness and action. In 2019, she traveled to the U.S. by boat in order to avoid the negative environmental impact that airplanes cause. She embarked on this two-week trip in order to arrive in America in time to advocate at the Climate Action Summit in New York and the UN climate conference in California.



## EMMA GONZÁLEZ

Emma González, along with other students from her school, founded the gun-control advocacy group, *Never Again MSD*. She took this action in 2018 after the tragic shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. At 18 years old, she delivered a powerful speech at the March for Our Lives in Washington D.C., a campaign organized by youth. As a result of Emma and her friends' advocacy, Florida lawmakers passed legislation that raises the age to buy a firearm from 18 to 21 and requires a three-day waiting period for the purchase of most weapons.



## MIANA BRYANT

Miana Bryant founded *The Mental Elephant*, a multi-platform outlet that raises awareness about mental health in 2016. At the age of 21, she hoped to help educate and reduce stigma. Her initiative includes a monthly newsletter, a website with information about mental illness, a YouTube channel, and campus and community events.

Post-it SUPERSTICKY EASEL PAD  
TABLEAU À FEUILLES MOBILES SUPERCOLLANTES  
SUPERFICHES BLOC DE HOJAS REPOSICIONABLES

25 IN/PO x 30 IN/PO  
63.5 cm x 76.2 cm  
5.2 SQ FT/PPF (0.48 m²) 3M

30

**GROUP 1**

**IDEA:** PEER-LED SCHOOL GROUP TO SUPPORT OTHERS WHO ARE UNCOMFORTABLE WITH SHARING B/C OF STIGMA → SIMILAR TO AA MODEL "SPONSORS"

**GROUP 2**

- AWARENESS PROGRAM
- TRAINING PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS & TEACHERS
- ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THOSE TRAINERS

**AUDIENCE:**

SCHOOL BOARD → MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT

STANDARDS IN TRAININGS SIMILAR TO STANDARDS IN EDUCATION SUBJECTS

→ RESEARCH OTHER SYSTEMS TO SEE WHAT WORKS

Ayala Rosenthal  
Yeshiva Schools

# DEVELOPING AN ADVOCACY AGENDA



# STEP 1

## BE INFORMED & KNOW THE CHANGE YOU HOPE TO SEE

It's important to start by understanding exactly what it is you strongly believe in and the specific changes that you hope to see. Familiarize yourself with relevant policies and legislation. Know your facts. Learn about the myths and stereotypes surrounding the issue and find out what is true and what isn't. An advocate's voice is taken seriously when they are well informed on the topic and potential solutions. Have a clear idea about why YOU are passionate about this issue. Ask yourself, why is this so important to me?

### ASK AN ADVOCATE: YOUTH VOICES

#### What are you advocating for?

*Abby: I advocate for many causes as there are so many problems within our society. The main things I advocate for are mental health and discrimination, specifically surrounding gender, sexuality, and religion. It's extremely important because I believe that if no one speaks up, nothing changes.*

*Emma: I advocate for ALL people who need help in finding their voice. I think it is so valuable to look at the world at a larger scale at a young age and be able to give support to people of various groups. Whether I am supporting fellow teens, the LGBTQ+ community, breaking the stigma of mental health or anything else, they all are equally important. I believe it is worth it for people to take extra time to help youth achieve equality.*

*Liam: I hope that we can make a change in schools that aren't taking notice of mental health. The changes I want to see are schools investing money into mental health programs and teacher/support positions so that kids and teens with mental health needs can go to them in school.*

*Ayala: I started advocating because of a suicide in my community. The situation led me to recognize so many things I hadn't noticed in my own circle of friends as well as issues that were prevalent within my community as a whole. Soon enough, mental health became something I was very passionate about and wanted to act upon. When I spoke to people about my desire to make a difference and my ideas, they could tell the cause was something very important to me.*

#### What are YOU advocating for? Why is it so important to YOU?

---

---

---

---

# STEP 2

## START TALKING ABOUT IT

Beginning discussions around mental health in your day-to-day life is part of advocacy. By being unafraid to speak up about your experiences and passions around the people you are close with, you are showing just how important the cause is to you and your determination to do something about it. This can include your schoolmates, teachers, friends, family and acquaintances. Just speaking out in your own circles will connect you with others who share similar feelings and may want to join your efforts or support your advocacy. This step includes reaching out to established adults and professionals who may be able to assist you in strengthening your voice or connecting you to others who can help.

### YOUTH VOICES

#### How did you start using your voice?

*Abby: I started using my voice by speaking with friends and family. From there, I began talking and advocating just about anywhere.*

*Emma: I started to use my voice in student council at my high school. My advisor encouraged me to take a leadership position on the state board and by being in that position with such positive adults who were eager to further assist myself and other students as leaders, I realized the power my voice holds. I'd sincerely like to thank all of those adults in the Pennsylvania Association of Student Councils for helping me to realize my potential as a young advocate.*

*Ayala: My decision to advocate began after I started speaking up about issues that were bothering me: the lack of mental health resources, education, support and stigma in my school and community. Once I began talking about my feelings and frustrations, people began to encourage me to do something about it! By speaking about the issues surrounding teen mental health in my daily life, I was introduced to someone who connected me with others who really helped me use my voice. Being a teen advocate and activist is unique, and most people will be excited to hear what you have to say. The youth voice is strong and powerful, so don't be afraid of speaking up and using it!*

#### How will YOU start the conversation?

---

---

---

---

# STEP 3

## USE YOUR VOICE AND REACH OUT

Don't hesitate to use your resources and connections for help. Find local organizations and foundations that support your cause and try to create strong ties with them. Explain your efforts and goals — many of the people you contact will want to help and they will be part of networks that are also interested!

### YOUTH VOICES

**Were there any resources that were helpful in strengthening your advocacy? How did you connect with them?**

*Abby: There are definitely people that have helped me with my advocacy. It's most important that you go out and search for these people because there are so many to find if you look in the right places.*

*Emma: A lot of the resources I was given were at my high school, with an abundance of clubs at my disposal. All clubs — from student council, Stand Together Against Stigma, Gay-Straight Alliance Club and more — taught me how to work my way up the leadership “food-chain.” They gave me countless opportunities and possibilities to network with even more organizations.*

*Ayala: I was lucky to connect with a local foundation that supported my advocacy efforts on an issue that I felt strongly about. The foundation helped me get started by funding my first mental health awareness community event and a suicide awareness training for teens. I was also introduced to other similar organizations that continue to guide and support my efforts in many ways.*

### Who will YOU reach out to?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# STEP 4

## CONTACT YOUR LOCAL OFFICIALS

Continue your advocacy outside of your circles by connecting with your local officials. These might include your school principal, school counselor, school superintendent, councilperson, school board member, State representative, Senator, Congressperson, Congressional Representative or any other figure of authority.

Here are some ideas on how to connect with officials so that they will see your cause, listen to your ideas and hopefully respond. Before contacting the official, research them so you have an idea of who they are. Look into their background and learn about their passions and beliefs. You may have something in common which can help you relate and connect with them on a personal level!

- **Writing letters and emails-** Write out exactly what you are advocating for and the changes that you wish to see. Be direct, specific and straight to the point without too many words.
  - See resource #1 for a letter outline
  - See resource #2 for an email guide
  
- **Postcard campaign-** Gather as many people as you can to help write postcards with messages about your issue to send to selected officials. The more postcards the official receives, the more likely he/she is going to see the messages and (hopefully) feel the need to act upon the cause and respond. This idea works well when the postcards are sent in honor of a special occasion or holiday, such as New Years, Christmas or Hannukah.
  - See resource #3 for an example guide to a postcard campaign
  
- **Social Media-** Even though the person you are trying to reach may have high status, their social media platforms are often very accessible and easy to connect to. This may seem surprising, but it's a great tool to use! Effective ways of communication through social media can be: commenting on any official's post that is relevant to your cause, sending them direct messaging, and following up on any response that they give. Tagging them in relevant posts can send a message across as well.

## YOUTH VOICES

### How did you get in touch with your local official?

*Abby: I've gotten in touch with state officials through summits that I've run as well as summits that I've gone to. I have contacted officials by email and through other methods of communication.*

*Emma: Email and mail is a great way to communicate! Many are eager to work with the youth in their area so do not be afraid to reach out. I've been in contact with local Senator Wayne Fontana through mail with the Youth Advocacy postcard campaign. It was very reassuring to get a response and know that my thoughts, as well as the thoughts of my fellow classmates were being heard.*

*Ayala: When I was participating in a New Year's postcard campaign, I made sure to get my friends involved in writing letters and messages as well. Regarding social media, I was actually able to go and meet State Legislators in the state capital, and immediately followed them on Instagram after we met. I tagged one of the officials in my Instagram story and was very surprised that he had reposted my Instagram story later that night! I took the opportunity to direct message him and continue a conversation from there. Social media is a great way to connect!*

### **Who will YOU contact? How will you do it?**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# STEP 5

## MEET WITH YOUR STATE & LOCAL OFFICIALS

If you are trying to meet with an official who works in your neighborhood or city, try to arrange a meeting by calling their office or emailing/writing to their administrative assistants. There are some groups and organizations that can arrange meetings with different state government officials too. If you have that opportunity, make sure to take advantage of it! You can also invite them to visit your school or student group.

- See resource #4 for a guide to a legislative visit
- See resource #5 for a legislative visit feedback sheet

### YOUTH VOICES

#### Who did you visit and what was the response?

*Abby: I've spoken to Rep Dan Miller, Rep Conor Lamb, and Rep Summer Lee. Rep Summer Lee agreed to be a guest speaker for a half day summit I planned about discrimination in the education system for teenagers. So many officials want to get in touch with younger people.*

*Ayala: Even if you are not into politics or government, this is worth doing! I have no previous experience (or particular interest) with policy or law. When an opportunity to meet with my state representative came up, I was excited but also nervous. The meeting ended up going very well, and I was so glad to be able to speak to my state representative in person and create a connection.*

#### Who will YOU try to visit?

---

---

---

---

---

#### Ideas:

- School counselor/ staff
- School principal
- City council member
- Mayor
- State legislator
- Governor
- School board member

# STEP 6

## PUT PLANS INTO ACTION

Come up with some ideas for taking action in your own community. This can be anything from an awareness campaign, speaker event or a workshop in your school. Use all the resources and connections you have, and be creative with your ideas to spread your message as far as you can. Some helpful and accessible places to start can be your school, youth group, religious center, and even the main street of your neighborhood. Advocacy is about speaking up and doing something for the cause you are passionate about. People are ready to hear your voice and see the change you hope to spark!

### YOUTH VOICES

**What actions have you taken in your community? How did you get started?**

*Abby: I created a summit on discrimination in the education system. I've gone to many programs to learn about others' perspectives.*

*Emma: Although I would like to do more for the larger society, so far I have done some work in my own community. Housing local events with people of all ages in the community leads to a stronger, more connected area.*

*Ayala: It is always a good idea to have a designated mentor when becoming active in your community. This person can be a community leader, teacher, family member, or anyone you trust and look up to for guidance. Working with others is important and results in more effective advocacy.*

**How will YOU start making change in our society?**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# STEP 7

## DON'T GIVE UP!

Advocacy can be a challenge. It's work and can often be hard. You will get lots of great feedback for the work you are doing, but sometimes there will be others who won't be as positive. You may find people who look at your age before they see the strength of your voice and say things like, "They are so young, what do they know." Although it can be really tough in the moment, don't let these comments get you down! Receiving constructive criticism is beneficial to effective advocacy, so don't let it stop you from doing what you do. At this point, it would be beneficial to find a designated mentor to guide you through your work and help you overcome challenges.

### YOUTH VOICES

**What challenges did you face and how did you deal with them?  
Did you get any unexpected response to your advocacy?**

*Abby: It's hard to advocate when people think of you as 'only a teenager,' specifically a queer, Jewish, female teenager. I didn't expect how willing some adults would be to help teenagers.*

*Emma: I've faced a decent amount of disregard as a young adult. It is sometimes difficult to not get responses back from adults and feel like your message is not being heard, whether on the school district level, the state level, or across the country. Ultimately you have to keep trying and find the proper outlets and people who want to communicate.*

*Ayala: I met with someone working in the mental health field as I was getting started. I wanted to learn about her work and ask if she had advice for me. After I explained my project, she asked who was really doing all the work. When I politely answered that it was really only me doing it, she launched into a long talk, listing all the things that I was missing in my planning and organizing. It was hard to hear, but I took note of what she said and tried to improve the areas she suggested. Another time I was attempting to reserve a room for an event, and the person I was arranging this with said she'd like an adult to call her instead of speaking to me directly. These moments can be hard, but just remember that you are changing the world for the better and no one can stop you.*

**What challenges might you face? How will you approach them?**

---

---

---

---



# TIPS TO STAY MOTIVATED

Although this is usually something that comes naturally when starting your advocacy, it can drift a little bit after a while. It's important to look back every now and then and remember your passion. Remember why the issue is so important to you. Sometimes motivation to advocate can slow down when you don't receive an immediate response to your work and efforts, or maybe not all the feedback you receive is positive. Just know that everything you are doing is making an impact greater than you can imagine. Don't stop fighting for what you believe!

## YOUTH VOICES

### How do you stay motivated?

*Abby: It's easy to stay motivated when things can always be better in the society we are currently in.*

*Emma: I typically look around the environment I am in and when I continue to see the inequalities, I continue to advocate. We do not live in a perfect world and change still needs to be made. Being active in trying to make a change and learning from successful and failed attempts is a great start for anyone who is beginning advocacy.*

*Ayala: During my advocacy, I had lots of other commitments, including school work, extra-curricular activities and volunteering. I often needed to shift my mind into advocacy mode, refocus and remind myself why I was doing it. When things were not moving as fast as I'd like, it would often pull me down and cause me to forget why the advocacy was so important. After looking back at my effort and the work I put in, I would regain the confidence to continue. Remember the changes that you're working towards, even when you can't see it right away.*

### How will YOU keep up the momentum?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## DON'T FORGET

Remind yourself why you got started

---

Trust you're making an impact

---

Ask for help from supportive adults

---

Understand that it's normal to become discouraged at times

---

Practice self-care: your health is important!



**DIFFICULT  
ROADS  
LEAD TO  
BEAUTIFUL  
DESTINATIONS**

---





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Ayala Rosenthal** graduated from Yeshiva Girls High School in 2019, in Pittsburgh, PA. As a youth advocate and through her project AMOTT, *Acknowledging Mental Health in Our Teens Together*, she is working in the Jewish Orthodox community to break stigma and spread awareness of mental health issues. She is a member of the Jewish Healthcare Foundation's Youth Mental Health Advocacy Network and was a member of the Friendship Circle of Pittsburgh and its leadership board until 2019. She has been involved in many advocacy efforts including leading a youth summit, visiting her state senator, and speaking on a filmed panel to spread awareness within teen circles.

## ABOUT THE ACTIVISTS



**Emma Dischner** is a senior at Montour High School (MHS) in Robinson Township. She is an officer of her Student Council, Gay-Straight Alliance, Stand Together Against Stigma, Mock Trial Team, as well as a general member of the National Honors Society and marching band at MHS. She also has the honor to serve on the Pennsylvania Association of Student Councils on the executive board as Region B Representative. After graduating, she plans to attend a 4-year university where she can continue as a student leader.



**Liam Boyd** is a sophomore at Baldwin High School in Pittsburgh, PA. Liam hopes to spread awareness of the prevalence of mental health in teens as well as advocate for schools to have the supports in place for teens to be able to process their feelings. Liam is a member of the marching band, plays various musical instruments and is a member of the volleyball team.



**Abby Rickin-Marks** is a junior at Fox Chapel Area High School. She's been active in Pennsylvania's youth advocacy network as a youth leader. In 2019, she organized a community education event about mental health and minorities, which included the engagement of PA State Representative Summer Lee. She also spoke as a panelist about the impact of social media on teen mental health at a community event with 150+ attendees.

# REFERENCES

Freechild- Youth as Advocates

<https://freechild.org/youth-as-advocates/>

New Tactics- Youth Empowerment

<https://www.newtactics.org/conversation/voice-youth-how-youth-can-take-critical-role-human-rights-advocacy>

Academy Health

<https://www.academyhealth.org/blog/2019-05/building-safety-net-teen-mental-health-youth-advocate-perspectives>

Adolescent growth facts

<https://visual.ly/community/infographic/health/10-facts-about-teens-and-mental-health>

NAMI- Mental health by numbers

<https://www.nami.org/learn-more/mental-health-by-the-numbers>

World Health Organization

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-mental-health>

Source for Louis Braille, Barbara Johns and Malala Yousafzai

<https://www.britannica.com/list/6-teenagers-who-made-history>

Source for Greta Thunberg and Emma González

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcthree/article/0e9e80de-62cb-4782-a26f-1cd480d28f26>

# RESOURCE 1

## Sample Letter To Legislator

(Month) (Day) (Year)

The Honorable (First name) (Last name)  
(Room Number),  
(City), (State) (Zip Code)

RE: (state the topic or include the bill number, author and subject if you are writing to support or oppose a particular legislative bill)

Dear (Assembly Member/Senator) (Last name): My name is (your first and last name) and I am a (family member /service provider/advocate/community member) who resides in your district.

(State why you support or oppose the bill or other issue here. Choose up to three of the strongest points that support your position and state them clearly.)

(Include a personal story. Tell your representative why the issue is important to you and how it affects you, your family member and your community.)

(Tell your representative how you want her or him to vote on this issue and ask for a response. Be sure to include your name and address on both your letter and envelope.)

Sincerely,  
SIGN YOUR NAME

Print your name  
Street address  
City, State, Zip code

# RESOURCE 2

## Sending Email Communication to a Legislator

The same guidelines apply to e-mail as to written letters. If you send an e-mail, send it to the representative directly. Include your full name and address so it is clear that you are a constituent, and ask for a response.

### **Personalize Your Message, Talk about Your Experiences.**

This is one of the most important things you can do to ensure your e-mail makes an impact. It is this information that separates one's message from the standardized, bulk messages drafted by interest groups. Personalized messages are more likely to be read than simply tallied.

### **Be Brief.**

Legislators and their staff are extremely busy. Respect their time and try to tell them only what they need to know. Two or three paragraphs should be sufficient. Do not feel that you have to make every single argument that relates to the issue, only the strongest points you can make.

### **Be Clear About Your Position.**

Your request should be stated as a concrete, actionable item, e.g., "I would like you to support HB 100."

### **Make Your Message Timely.**

Send your message when the legislation is being considered. Your message is less effective if it arrives after a critical vote.

### **Avoid Attachments.**

Congressional offices rarely print or read attachments to e-mail. Offer to provide supporting documents on request, but avoid sending attached files.

### **Avoid Sending Messages Every Day or Mass Emails.**

An office that receives numerous messages from a single person quickly loses sight of the urgency or expertise that the constituent can bring to a specific issue. Resist the urge to send a copy of your message to multiple representatives. A legislative office wants to know that you have appealed to them for a specific action.



**Establish Your Credibility.**

Explain if you are an expert in some area. Also, do not shy away from saying that you are either a personal supporter or a party supporter.

**Know Your Facts.**

Any story that sounds too perfect or any statistic that is not substantiated will not bolster your position.

**Proofread Your E-mail.**

Too often the speed and ease of sending e-mail is reflected in poor grammar and sloppy spelling. Take a break before you press “send,” and proof your message.

*Adapted from the American Planning Institute*  
*<https://www.planning.org/advocacy/toolbox/emails.htm>*

# RESOURCE 3

## Example Postcard Campaign

An inexpensive and impactful way to catch the attention of elected officials is with a Postcard Campaign of hand-written messages on a specific topic. Students can organize a postcard campaign to share what is important to them around the issue of teen mental health with decision-makers.

### Step 1: Get Started

1. Be informed – know your issue and state your concerns.
2. Draft a series of brief points that highlight your issue. These can be used to inform and assist others in writing their postcard messages. Consider including the name of your school or student group in the message.
3. Identify a student leader/contact person at your school or student group.
4. Set a goal for the number of postcards you intend to send and involve other groups in the Postcard Campaign. School clubs and teachers groups are excellent vehicles for outreach and involvement.
5. You can use blank postcards or design a template for everyone to use that highlights your issue or a specific message. For example, “In the New Year, commit to....”

### Step 2: Identify your elected representative

If you do not know who your state legislator is, locate their information online.  
[www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/findyourlegislator/index.cfm](http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/findyourlegislator/index.cfm)

### Step 3: Craft your message

1. State your concern and the change you want to see. State specifically what you are asking the elected official to do.
2. Students should include their own return address or a return address designated by the youth sponsor.

#### **Step 4: Collect and Mail the Postcards**

1. Collect the postcards and mail them separately from various post offices in your area.
2. Keep track of the:
  - Total number of postcards sent from your school
  - Legislators who were contacted
  - A summary of key messages sent on the postcards

#### **Step 5: Keep the Conversation Going**

Keep a record of the responses and use it to inform an ongoing conversation. The goal is to build a relationship with the elected official and continue the conversation.

*Adapted from training materials of the Consumer Health Coalition*



# RESOURCE 4

## Legislative Visit Guidelines

The 3R's of a Legislative Visit:  
**Relationship • Response • Resource**

**IT'S MORE THAN A LEGISLATIVE VISIT.  
WE WANT TO BUILD A RELATIONSHIP.**

### PRIOR TO VISIT:

#### 1) Research the Elected Official:

<https://www.legis.state.pa.us/>

- o District Newsletters
- o Twitter
- o Education
- o Activities before becoming elected

#### 2) Decide Visit Team Roles & Responsibilities

*For example:*

- Team Leader
  - o Take charge and direct the visit
  - o Introductions and staying on point
- Story-teller
  - o 2-3 minute story -- relates to issue at hand
  - o Precise • Purpose • Passion
  - o Engage Elected... “*Tell me more...*”
- Scribe
  - o Tablet and Pens -- keep writing
  - o Observe the space
  - o Notes for follow-up

## THE VISIT:

1) **Introduce the team and engage the elected official by talking about the issue**

2) **Communicate your ask:**

- It should be simple, direct, and determine whether the representative supports the issue.
- If legislator is supportive -- **ASK THEM TO DO SOMETHING** (sponsor or co-sponsor legislation, public comment, lte/op-ed)
- If legislator is not supportive -- **ASK WHAT IS THEIR SOLUTION?**

3) **Bring Materials to Leave Behind**

Take materials about your issue and organization to give the representative additional information for reflection. This could also include materials that could be given to a staffer, if you're unable to meet with the representative directly.

## AFTER THE VISIT:

● **Within 24 Hours -- FOLLOW-UP**

- Use the notes from the meeting and write:
  - Thank you note
  - Letter summarizing the visit
- Subscribe to the district newsletter
- Schedule visits when the elected official is home on district (usually Thursdays and Fridays)
- **Keep in contact**

*Adapted from training materials of the Consumer Health Coalition*



# RESOURCE 5

## Legislative Feedback Form

**Team Leaders:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Members of the team:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Date of Visit:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time of Visit:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Legislative Office Visited:** \_\_\_\_\_

**What time did you arrive for the visit?** \_\_\_\_\_

**How long was the visit?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What was the reason/issue for the visit?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What specific issues were discussed?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Who was the story teller and what story was told?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**How was the story received?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What was the legislator's position on the issues you raised?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What were some of the statements that stood out for you? Why?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What was the leave behind and how was it received?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_





**J E W I S H  
H E A L T H C A R E  
F O U N D A T I O N**