**Parent-Led Legislative Advocacy: Tip Sheet**

* Build a network of impacted parents to support and learn from one another with the goal of creating legislative change.
* Have a parent with lived child welfare experience in a dedicated position to organize and lead the efforts. Invest in that parent ally’s professional development in the area of legislative advocacy.
* Survey your network of parents about their priorities for system improvement.
* From those priorities, draft key messaging and asks as a group, making sure you have consensus on both.
* Create trainings for all parents in your network on how the policy and lawmaking processes work and how to navigate them.
* Get guidance and support from a lobbyist or legislative staff person to write the bills that emerge from parent priorities.
* Train parents on how to share their story and your ask—concisely!
* Coordinate testimony and create sample letters for written testimony for parents in your network to use.
* Compile a list of lawmakers, their districts and contact information, and show parents in your network how to use the list to find who their lawmakers are.
* Get on mailing lists for your local representatives.
* Find out what your representatives are supporting and what their values are.
* Go to their public forums.
* Request meetings with your representatives, and always cc’ their assistants.
* Ask for meetings with representatives’ assistants as well. They are trusted informants.
* Meet with other stakeholders who might also support your bill. Ask them to write or speak in support of your bill, or support your bill in other ways.
* Ask to sit on public policy committees of diverse stakeholders in your state in order to ensure that the voices of impacted parents are heard as often and as widely as possible.
* Listen to legislators and other potential supporters who have concerns about your bill. Be willing to change language or make other changes if those changes do not negatively impact your bill’s goals and purpose.
* While the legislature is in session, utilize holidays like Valentine’s Day to send what is in your heart related to your legislative proposal.
* Send follow-up thank you’s and updates. Create an ongoing relationship with legislators for future policy work!