

# You Have What It Takes!

## A Tool For Identifying Your Skills As An Early Childhood Advocate



National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families

Infants and toddlers don't have a voice in the public policy process, but you do! You can be an effective advocate for very young children and their families, and you already have the skills to do it. In fact, your abilities, knowledge, and experience give you the foundation to be an excellent advocate.

This unique interactive tool helps you identify the skills that make you a great advocate, and then guide you as you turn those skills into action! In four easy steps, you can:

1. **List** your priority early childhood issues.
2. **Assess** your skills and see how those skills contribute to effective advocacy.
2. **Match** your skills to advocacy strategies that can make a difference for very young children and their families.
4. **Create** your own advocacy action plan!

You already have everything you need to be an advocate for very young children. Use this form to **Become a Big Voice for Little Kids™!**

### Priority Issues

What early childhood issues do you have interest in working on as an advocate?

Example: Increasing early childhood mental health services in child care centers and other child-serving settings.

Issue 1:

Issue 2:

Issue 3:

## Skills Assessment

With this chart, you can identify the skills you possess that will make you an effective advocate for very young children. For each of the skills listed below, rate yourself on a scale of 1-4 (4 being highest).

| Skill   | 4- Excellent             | 3- Good                  | 2- Fair                  | 1- Needs Improvement     |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Enthusiasm for Early Childhood Issues</b><br>I have a passion for my work and believe it makes a difference.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Knowledge of Early Childhood Issues</b><br>I can speak with ease about my area of early childhood work and am familiar with resources that I can direct others to if I do not know the answer. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Persistence and Patience</b><br>I am not deterred by obstacles in my way or discouraged when others tell me "no." I know change takes time, negotiation, and compromise.                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Ability to Connect with Others</b><br>I am a "people person" and enjoy building relationships.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Problem-Solving</b><br>I enjoy thinking through a problem and figuring out possible solutions.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Communication Skills - Oral</b><br>I am not intimidated by public speaking. I can condense information into "sound bites" easily.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Communication Skills - Written</b><br>I can persuade others through writing. I am able to make a written piece both interesting and informative.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Creativity</b><br>I like to test innovative techniques and think outside the box.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Organizational Skills</b><br>I can coordinate many different responsibilities without feeling overwhelmed.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Technological Skills</b><br>I am able to utilize technology to collect and disseminate information, and to connect with others.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Leadership</b><br>I enjoy developing a vision and setting a course for how to attain it.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



## Create Your Advocacy Action Plan

1. Pick the advocacy strategies from the previous page that most closely align with your skills, and describe how these actions could support your priority issues.

| Advocacy Strategy                                       | How will you use this advocacy strategy to support your priorities?  |
|---|--|
| Example: Join a Coalition<br><br>1.<br><br>2.<br><br>3. | I will join my state's early childhood coalition and encourage them to support increased funding for early childhood mental health services in child-serving settings. |

2. Identify resources you can draw from to achieve your goal. Think about individuals, state and national child advocacy organizations, government agencies, foundations, universities, academic research organizations, professional associations, and national early childhood organizations that might be valuable to your work.

| Individual or Organization           | How will you connect to this resource?                           | How will this resource be helpful to your advocacy?  |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| Example: ZERO TO THREE Action Center | www.zerotothree.org, click "Public Policy" then "Action Center." | I will use ZERO TO THREE's "How to Plan a Site Visit" tool while planning for my legislators to observe the early childhood mental health services at my child care program. |

## You Have What It Takes: Now Be a Big Voice for Little Kids™!

As an early childhood professional, you may have thought you were unprepared or unqualified for advocacy. In fact, it is your first-hand experience and personal knowledge that make you the perfect advocate. You know what policy changes are needed to support the healthy development of very young children.

By completing this tool, you have identified your priority issues, discovered how your own strengths match up to advocacy strategies, and identified resources that will support your advocacy. All that is left for you to do is to follow your advocacy action plan, and **Be a Big Voice for Little Kids™!** By sharing what you know with policymakers, you can improve the lives of so many young children and their families.

[www.zerotothree.org/policy](http://www.zerotothree.org/policy)