

Health Education and Communication Strategies

Guidelines for Writing Advocacy Letters

1. State clearly, what you would like your reader to do.
2. Explain briefly why you think that he/she should do this. Help your reader understand the need for action on his/her part, but avoid giving so much detail that you bore or annoy him/her.
3. If the action you are requesting would require the reader to contact you, provide your telephone number, fax number, and/or e-mail address.

The following additional guidelines will be helpful when drafting your letter:

- **Locate Your Policy Maker's Name and Addresses**
Most local telephone books have a section dedicated to the office addresses and telephone numbers of local elected officials. They may be listed by district numbers. Internet websites can display this information based upon your zip code.
- **Use Formal Business Letter Style**
The date should be at the top of the page. The policymaker name and address should be just below, on the left margin, above the salutation. Close with a handwritten signature and your typed address, e-mail, and phone number.
- **Introduce Yourself**
Begin your letter with a brief introduction including your name, city of residence, and indicating your credentials. It is helpful to state that you reside in the area to which the policy maker is assigned.
- **Provide an Overview of your Issue or Topic.**
Using data and statistics can really help make your case. Make sure these are reliable and accurate.
- **State the "Ask"**
Within the first paragraph, be clear on what you are asking the policy maker to do. Are you asking to develop a policy, earmark funding, or create a program?
- **Make it Personal**
Policy makers are most influenced when they can see how something affects constituents directly. Tell a story about why this important or why you have a passion for this topic.
- **Wrap-Up**
Restate your "ask." Offer to provide additional information. Always thank them and provide your contact information.