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## What is Advocacy?

"Advocacy" can mean many things, but in general, it refers to action. Advocacy simply involves speaking and acting on behalf of yourself or others. Take the **next 31 days** to commit to growing as an advocate. Each day, there is an advocacy task with resources to guide you.

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### *Learn the History of the Children's Mental Health Movement*

## Day 1

To be an effective advocate, you need to know history, build on its strengths, and have a goal for the future.

- Read: [Going Green](#)
  - Read: [The History of the National Federation of Families](#)
  - Read: [Children's Mental Health Week History](#)
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### *It's About Acceptance, Not Awareness*

## Day 2

Words matter. Acceptance is active. Awareness is passive. It's time to move beyond awareness and into acceptance.

Learn why this is an important message to use in your advocacy. Commit to using acceptance language.

- Visit: [Acceptance vs. Awareness Pinterest board](#)
  - Review: [The Meaning and Importance of the Shift From Awareness to Acceptance infographic](#)
  - Review: [Mental Health Acceptance: Because Awareness is Not Enough infographic](#)
  - Watch the [2022 Youth Mental Health Acceptance Panel](#)
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### *Bringing Mental Health Into the Conversation*

## Day 3

Dialogue is where change begins. Mental health needs to be part of everyday conversation because taking care of your mental health is just as important as taking care of your physical health.

Learn more about how to talk about mental health.

- Visit: [Talking Mental Health Pinterest board](#)
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### *Have a Conversation About Mental Health*

## Day 4

Find someone in your life and practice what you learned yesterday by having a conversation with them about mental health.

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## *Personal Impact is a Powerful Part of Advocacy*

Think about how mental illness has impacted your life. We need more people with first-hand experience talking about mental health challenges. Just by sharing your journey, you can help others see that there is a light at the end of the tunnel, and it is not an oncoming, out-of-control train.

### Day 5

Hearing about the darkest moments of your life can help people who are struggling know they can make it through. It can also help break societal stereotypes about mental health.

- Read: [NAMI 7 Steps to Telling Your Story](#)
- Visit: [How to Tell Your Story Pinterest board](#)
- Watch: [Telling Your Story With a Purpose](#)

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## *Develop Your Elevator Pitch*

Sometimes you have just a few minutes to engage someone about mental health and its importance. Having what is called an “elevator pitch” will help you make the most of the opportunities you have to share why children’s mental health is so important.

### Day 6

Remember to include **acceptance** in your pitch. You will want to practice your pitch aloud.

- Visit: [Elevator Pitches Pinterest board](#)
- Watch: [Advocacy Elevator Pitch Example](#)
- Visit: [Elevator Pitches Pinterest board](#)
- Write your pitch down!

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## *Celebrate the first day of Children’s Mental Health Acceptance Week by Practicing that Pitch*

### Day 7

Wear a green ribbon today and share your elevator pitch with anyone who asks about it.

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## *What is Advocacy?*

Advocacy can take many forms and be effective on many levels. Begin to explore advocacy by watching a video.

### Day 8

- Watch: [Families, Make Your Voices Heard: An Introduction to Advocacy](#)
- Visit: [Advocacy Videos Pinterest board](#)

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## *What Does it Mean to Be an Advocate for Mental Health?*

Get tips for becoming a mental health advocate.

### Day 9

- Visit: [How to Be an Advocate Pinterest board](#)
  - Read: [6 Ways to Become a Mental Health Advocate \(healthcentral.com\)](#)
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## Say “Thank You!”

Find out if your mayor and governor signed a proclamation for Children’s Mental Health Acceptance Week. Did your city light up something green? If so, send an email thanking them for their support for children’s mental health issues. Be sure to add something about why it is important to you.

### Day 10

This is also an opportunity to talk about the importance of acceptance. A personal thank you is very powerful. For those in elected office, the number of people they hear from on an issue marks its importance.

- [Visit the NFF Acceptance vs Awareness Pinterest Board](#)
- [Writing Your Legislator](#)

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## Celebrate Children’s Mental Health Acceptance Day!

### Day 11

Spread the word today on all your social media about Children’s Mental Health Acceptance Day. Don’t limit yourself to your friends. Post comments and links about acceptance on community Facebook pages as well.

Looking for something great to post? Check out

- [NFF Social Media For Mental Health Pinterest Page](#)

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## What is Mental Health Parity?

The 2008 Federal Parity Law requires insurers to cover illnesses of the brain, such as depression or addiction, no more restrictively than illnesses of the body, such as diabetes or cancer. Unfortunately, many insurers are still not following the law.

### Day 12

#### Learn About Mental Health Parity

- Watch: [The System We Need: Parity](#)
- Review: [What is Mental Health Parity infographic](#)
- Visit: [Parity Pinterest board](#)
- Review: [Don’t Deny Me infographic](#)
- Review: [Don’t Be Denied infographic](#)

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## Take a Deeper Dive into Parity

Have you, or has someone you know, experienced a parity violation? Learn more about violations, how to appeal a denial, and who can help you in your state. What are the federal and state parity laws that affect you?

### Day 13

Visit [Parity Track](#) to utilize the following resources:

- [Examples of Common Violations](#)
  - [State Parity Reports](#)
  - [Federal Reports](#)
  - [Don’t Deny Me](#)
  - [Parity Resources by State – Where to Find Help](#)
  - [Parity Registry](#)
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## Legislation to Know

### Day 14

The Federation works to keep you up to date on the latest bills being introduced and policies being implemented that affect mental health. Take time to get familiar with that section and the bills being introduced.

Determine what bills are of interest to you.

Visit [Legislation and Policy News for Family Advocates](#) learn about what could affect you.

## Explore the National Federation of Families Legislative and Advocacy Webpages

Spend today getting familiar with the National Federation of Families Legislative and Advocacy webpages. They can be a source of guidance for you on your advocacy journey.

### Day 15

- [Legislation and Advocacy | National Federation of Families](#)
- [Staying Up-to-Date](#)
- [Legislation to Know](#)
  - Latest legislative actions and policies that affect you
  - How legislation and policies are being implemented
- [National](#)
  - Information about navigating committees
  - Find sources for national legislative information
- [From the States](#)
  - Find sources for legislative information in your state
  - Find your state legislators
- [Resources by State](#)
  - Listing of state advocacy organizations
  - Links to each state's legislative websites
  - Find your state's Medicaid Director and Mental Health Commissioner
- [Advocacy Toolkit](#)
  - Learn advocacy basics
  - Get tools and resources to build your advocacy skills
  - Find tips for writing and speaking as an advocate

## Dig Deeper Into Advocacy

### Day 16

Now that you know more about what advocacy is and what it means to be an advocate, it's time to dig a little deeper. Explore one or more advocacy tools. Determine how you can be most effective in sharing your voice.

Visit the [Advocacy Toolkit | National Federation of Families](#) and click *Help Me Learn to Advocate*.

## Identify How You'll Keep Up-to-Date on Advocacy Issues

### Day 17

There is so much happening that it's hard to keep up. Identify a couple sources you will follow to get your advocacy news.

- Follow: [National Federation of Families Legislative and Advocacy Facebook page](#)
- Read and Watch: [Where to Find Legislative and Advocacy Updates Nationally](#)
- Read and Watch: [Where to Find Legislative and Advocacy Updates in Your State](#)

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## *Participate in the Mental Health Day of Action*

### Day 18

#### ***What is the Mental Health Day of Action?***

The goal of Mental Health Action Day is to shift the culture of mental health from awareness to action. Today the goal is to ask everyone to dedicate one hour to take action for their mental health. Why one hour? Asking for one hour is simple, measurable, and flexible. Action looks different for everyone. Mental Health Action Day encourages everyone to take action for themselves, for their loved ones, or for their community based on what works best for them.

#### ***Ideas on how to spend your one hour of action:***

- Post about mental Health on your social media. Go to [NFF Social Media For Mental Health Pinterest Page](#) for ideas.
- Participate in [NFF's Children's Mental Health Acceptance Parent Panel](#) from 1pm-230pm ET,
- Share your story with someone new.

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## *Create Your Personal Advocacy List*

### Day 19

Advocacy needs to occur at national, state, and local levels. Advocacy with the right person at the right level is how you can be most effective. You need to know your representatives at every level, how to reach them, and what might help connect you to them.

- Create a **list of all your representatives** and how to reach them.
- **Keeping it on your computer** allows you to easily add links to reach them.
- Later in your advocacy journey, **keep track of when and why you contacted them.**

#### ***Where to find your representatives:***

- Search: [Who Represents Me? An Elected Officials Lookup](#)  
*When you enter your address, this site will give you your representatives' contact information, website, email, and links to their social media accounts.*
  - Locate your [mayor](#) by name, city, or population size.
  - Find your [county executive](#) (the head of the executive branch of government in your county) by map search or your ZIP Code.
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## Learn About Your LOCAL Legislators

Look at your **Personal Advocacy List**.

Who is your mayor, county commissioner, school board representative, etc.?

- Visit their websites to learn more about each of them.
- Make notes of anything related to mental health that they mention.
- Look for ways to connect with them on a personal, common ground level.
- Sign up for any newsletters they offer.

Day 20

### **Where to find your representatives:**

- Search: [Who Represents Me? Elected Officials Lookup](#)  
*When you enter your address, this site will give you your representatives' contact information, website, email, and links to their social media accounts.*
- Locate your [mayor](#) by name, city, or population size.
- Find your [county executive](#) (the head of the executive branch of government in your county) by map search or your ZIP Code.

## Learn About Your STATE Representation

Time to find your state representatives. Look at your Personal Advocacy List. At the state level, you'll want to learn about your governor, state senator, and state representative.

Day 21

- Visit your state representative's, state senator's, and governor's websites.
- Make notes of anything related to mental health they mention.
- Look for ways you can connect with them on a personal, common ground level.
- Sign up for any newsletters they offer.

### **Where to find your representatives:**

- Search: [Who Represents Me? Elected Officials Lookup](#)

## Learn About Your NATIONAL Representation

Now it's time to look at your national representatives—to learn about your senators and congressional representatives. Get that Personal Advocacy List ready.

Day 22

- Visit each of your senators' websites.
- Visit the website of your congressional representative.
- Be sure to make note of any committees on which they serve.
- Make notes of anything related to mental health they mention.
- Look for ways to make a personal connection with them.
- Sign up for any newsletters they offer.

### **Where to find your representatives:**

- Search: [Who Represents Me? Elected Officials Lookup](#)

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## **Follow Those Legislators!**

Social media is a tool legislators use. You can too! Following them allows you to see what they are posting and tells you what is important to them. Use social media to communicate with your legislators. Follow them on Facebook, Twitter, etc. Comment on their posts and tag them in your posts about issues. Always be polite.

### **Day 23**

- Grab that **Personal Advocacy List**.
- Follow all your representatives on social media.

#### **Where to find your representatives' social media accounts:**

- Search: [Who Represents Me? Elected Officials Lookup](#)

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## **Learn How to Communicate With Your Legislator**

Now that you have identified, learned about, and are following your representatives, it is time to learn how to be most effective in communicating with them. Nearly all congressional staffers said letters from their constituents influence an undecided lawmaker, whether sent via mail (90%) or email (88%).

### **Day 24**

- Visit: [Contacting Your Legislator Pinterest board](#)
- Read: [Partnership to End Addiction 2020 Advocacy Toolkit \(drugfree.org\)](#)  
*Pages 9 – 12 have the best tips!*
- Read: [Writing Your Legislator: A Guide](#)

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## **Get Active with Local Legislators**

You can make a significant difference in just 15 minutes! Pick a local legislator—county mayor, school board representative, etc.—and share your opinions about the major policy issues affecting you and your community.

### **Day 25**

- Email and ask which bills they are supporting to promote children's mental health.
- If they have done something positive lately, mention that.
- If you can, mention something you learned about them from their website or Facebook. Try to find a personal connection.
- Be sure to record your contact with them on your Personal Advocacy List.

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## **Get Active with Your Governor**

Check out your governor's website and social media pages. Find an issue they support that you agree on and reach out. Start that relationship on a positive note.

### **Day 26**

- Email and ask which bills they are supporting to promote children's mental health.
  - If you can, mention something you learned about them from their website or Facebook. Try to find a personal connection.
  - Be sure to record your contact with them on your Personal Advocacy List.
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## *Get Active with State Legislators*

You can make a significant difference in just 15 minutes! Email your state elected officials—state senators and state representatives—and share your opinions about the major policy issues affecting you and your community.

### Day 27

- Email and ask which bills they are supporting to promote children’s mental health.
- Mention something you learned about them from their website or Facebook.
- Be sure to record your contact with them on your Personal Advocacy List.

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## *Get Active with National Legislators*

Nearly all congressional staffers say letters will influence an undecided lawmaker, whether sent via mail (90%) or email (88%).

### Day 28

- Email or write to your congressperson and senator.
- Ask which bills they are supporting to promote mental health.
- Mention something you learned about them from their website or Facebook page.
- Be sure to note your contact with them on your Personal Advocacy List.

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## *Learn About Committees*

Learn how to watch committees, who serves on them, and why they are important. Get your Personal Advocacy List, find a committee on which your legislator serves, and watch a session. Follow up by emailing your legislator to let them know you watched the meeting.

### Day 29

Did you know that most committees have Facebook pages you can follow?

- Visit the **Navigating Committees** section of the [National tab](#) on NFF’s Legislative and Advocacy pages, where you can view [committee schedules](#), [committee reports](#), and [floor calendars](#).

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## *What is Legislative Advocacy?*

Legislative advocacy is educating ourselves about certain issues to influence the introduction, enactment, or modification of legislation. Take today to learn more about legislative advocacy.

### Day 30

- Watch: [Advocacy 101](#)
  - Read: [How to Be an Effective Advocate \(aacap.org\)](#)
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## **Commit to Being a Mental Health Advocate Year-Round**

You can effect change in your local community by being an advocate for mental health. Policy change is one way you can make a difference. This month you've taken the first steps.

### **Day 31**

- *Be Aware.* Knowing your legislators and how to connect with them is the first step to being a mental health advocate.
- *Be Present.* Follow your legislators' social media, read their newsletters, and attend their town halls.
- *Stay Connected.* Staying connected with legislators and proposed legislation is the final step of being a mental health advocate.

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## **Maintain Your Commitment**

Commit to staying on top of mental health issues and advocacy opportunities happening nationally and in your state.

### **Day 31**

- Follow: [National Federation of Families Legislation and Advocacy Facebook page](#)  
*Repost from the page throughout this year on topics and issues that are important to you.*
- Visit: [Legislation to Know](#)
- Connect with those doing advocacy work in your community.
- Stay connected to your elected officials.
- It's important that they hear the positives of what they are doing from you as well.

### **Stay Connected**

[\*\*Legislation and Advocacy | National Federation of Families \(ffcmh.org\)\*\*](#)

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