

# Frame Your Message



Many of our key audiences (legislators, legislative aides, agency staff, reporters, business, and civic leaders) often have very little time to discuss complex issues. Given these time constraints, it is imperative to develop a succinct message about early childhood issues that will capture the audience's interest. Advocates must also be capable of communicating a clear and concise message in a number of different formats: letters, e-mails, speeches, and meetings with public officials.

## The message needs to:

**E**ngage the Audience

State the **P**roblem

**I**nform Others about Potential Solutions

**C**all to Action

The EPIC format, trademarked by the grassroots advocacy organization RESULTS ([www.results.org](http://www.results.org)), is a useful way to create a concise but powerful statement.

The following chart shows how you can frame your message for different audiences. If, for example, you operate an early childhood program and are trying to develop support for a bill that provides capital funds to build new early childhood facilities, you would want to tailor your message to lawmakers, practitioners, and the business community. Here is how you would use the EPIC approach.

## Engage the Audience

Identify the audience you are trying to influence. Choose information and language that will resonate with the audience and help it understand the issues.

## State the Problem

Clearly and concisely define the problem. Choose the most compelling component of the issue for each audience. Think about:

- What is the problem?
- Who is affected by the issue?
- Why does the issue need to be addressed at this time?
- Where is the problem greatest?
- When is intervention needed before there are negative consequences?
- How are children, families, and the community being affected?
- What local data can you provide to emphasize how the problem is affecting the community?

## Inform Others about Potential Solutions

Be prepared to suggest and discuss practical solutions. Consider your specific recommendations, the evidence you have to support them, and how these solutions might be funded.

## Call to Action

The call to action required will vary according to the audience and the problem at hand, but make sure to clearly define the “ask.” The action requested should be specific and give your audience an immediate way to get involved.

### Lawmakers

I am your constituent and the director of an early learning program in your district that provides services to more than 100 children and their families in our community.

Our community has grown tremendously in the past several years. We regularly have to turn away many children who could benefit from our program because we don't have enough classroom space for them. There is a vacant building next to our business where we could expand and serve many more families. However, our current funding will not cover renovation costs.

The capital bill includes funding for early childhood facilities. If the bill is approved, it would allow us to apply for at least a portion of the cost of a renovation project, and would go far in helping us reach our goal of serving many more children in our community.

Would you support the capital bill that includes early childhood facilities funding? Would you ask your legislative leaders to also support this initiative?

### Early childhood practitioners

As a fellow early childhood professional, you are likely concerned about providing both the best learning environment for children and a stimulating work environment for your employees.

Our community has grown tremendously in the past several years, and more parents are seeking early childhood programs for their children. Perhaps your program has had to turn away children because there is not enough classroom space. Or you may want to expand your facility, but your current funding will not cover the costs.

The state legislature is considering a capital bill that includes funding for early childhood facilities. If the bill is approved, it would allow programs to apply for funding to build or renovate facilities and help them serve many more children in the community.

Would you call your legislators and ask them to support the capital bill that includes early childhood facilities funding?

### Business community

Early childhood programs are proven to prepare children for school and help them become productive citizens in the future. High-quality early childhood programs are necessary for a strong future workforce.

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Would you call your legislators and ask them to support the capital bill that includes early childhood facilities funding?