2020
Down Syndrome
Indiana
Policy Advocacy
Guide
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How to Use this Guide

Each Icon Stands for a Program Area

Health + Fitness  Connections  Livelihood  School Success  Public Policy

Each Letter Stands for an Age Group

A  B  C  T

Adults  Babies  Children  Teens
Why Public Policy is Important

The Down Syndrome Indiana Public Policy Advisory Committee recognizes how important public policy is to individuals with Down syndrome and their families. Many parents realize this too. However, many parents do not know how to advocate and need a safe environment in order to ask questions and learn civics basics such as how a law is passed, how to find one’s legislator and how to contact their legislator. Down Syndrome Indiana would like to train parents and advocates in the very basics and then encourage them to get further involved in opportunities like NDSS Ambassadors, NDAC, and locally with the Governor’s Council for People with a Disability, the Arc of Indiana and other opportunities that are specific to a person’s interests and passion.
Legislative Advocacy gets Results

“If your Member/Senator has not already arrived at a firm decision on an issue, how much influence might the following advocacy strategies have on his/her decision?”

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<th>Method</th>
<th>Influence</th>
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<tr>
<td>In-person issue visits from constituents</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized emails</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized postal</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local editorial referencing an issue pending</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone calls</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form email messages</td>
<td>56%</td>
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Please Vote

By voting and supporting your chosen candidates, you send a message about the kind of government you want. To vote, a citizen must be registered to vote. Registration to vote ends 29 days before each election. To register, you must be 18 years old (or older) on the day of the election and you must be a citizen of the United States. Individuals who have a legal guardian are eligible to vote.

Where do I Register to Vote?

You can register to vote at your city clerk’s office, local license branch, as well as, many other government offices. You can also register online at: https://indianavoters.in.gov/. Indiana residents with a valid Indiana driver’s license or Indiana state-issued identification card will be able to use this tool to submit a new voter registration application or to update an existing voter registration record.

What do I need to Bring on Voting Day?

Indiana residents must present a government-issued photo ID before casting a ballot on Election Day. In most cases, an Indiana driver’s license, Indiana photo ID card, Military ID or U.S. Passport is sufficient.
The Legislative Branch

Federal

- It is responsible for the creation of federal laws.

- The Legislative Branch consists of the United States Congress:
  - The Senate (100 members/ 2 per state)
  - The House of Representatives (435 members/ varies by state depending on population)

State

- It is also responsible for the creation of state laws.

- The Legislative Branch consists of the Indiana General Assembly:
  - The Senate (up to 50 members)
  - The House of Representatives (up to 100 members)
How to Find Your Legislator

To find your federal and state Senators and Representatives, you can simply click on the link below and type in your address.

State: http://iga.in.gov/legislative/find-legislators/.

**Step 1:** Go to http://iga.in.gov/legislative/find-legislators/.

Click on “Find your Legislator”.

**Step 2:** Type in your address and click on “Search”. A list of those who represent you at both the state and federal will appear.
When the Legislature Meets

Federal
Each Congress lasts two years and is comprised of two sessions. The first session begins on Jan. 3 of odd-numbered years and adjourns on Jan. 3 of the following year. The second session runs from Jan. 3 to Jan. 2 of even-numbered years. Of course, everyone needs a vacation, and Congress' vacation traditionally comes in August, when representatives adjourn for month-long summer break. Congress also adjourns for national holidays.

State of Indiana
A session of the state legislature is actually two years. The General Assembly, made up of our state senators and representatives, meet two times during those two years (at least once per calendar year) unless they decide to meet more.

First Regular Session
The first regular session begins with an organizational meeting held on the third Tuesday after the first Monday of November in each even-numbered year. At this meeting, the legislators elect their officers, receive the oath of office and choose a day on which to begin meeting. The legislature must begin meeting by the second Monday in January of the following year. Once the session begins, it must end by April 29th.

Second Regular Session
The second regular session also begins with an organizational meeting. It is held on the third Tuesday after the first Monday in November of each odd-numbered year. At this meeting, the legislators choose a day to begin meeting. (Remember, they already chose their officers and received their oath the previous year). The date in which they begin meeting, must be no later than the second Monday in January of the following year. This session must be over by March 14th.

First Regular Technical Session, Second Regular Technical Session or a Special Session
As mentioned above, the General Assembly may choose to meet more often than just during the First Regular Session or the Second Regular Session. If that is the case, their additional sessions are called the First Regular Technical Session, Second Regular Technical Session or a Special Session depending on when or why it is needed.
How Does a Bill become a Law?

Federal/State Laws

To pass a law, the Senate and the House of Representatives must pass the same bill in exactly the same language and then it must be signed by the President of the United States or in the case of a state law, the Governor of Indiana. If the President/Governor vetoes or rejects the bill, it will not become a law unless two-thirds or more of the members of both the Senate and the House of Representatives vote to override the veto.

It might be cheesy but here is a link to the Schoolhouse Rock video: https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=how+a+bill+becomes+a+law&view=detail&mid=162A7EA966BE69A2C0A8162A7EA966BE69A2C0A8&FORM=VRDGAR&ru=%2Fvideos%2Fsearch%3Fq%3Dhow+a+bill+becomes+a+law%26FORM%3DHDRSC3.
How to Find Legislation

Bill Track 50 for federal legislation: https://www.billtrack50.com/.

Indiana General Assembly for state legislation: http://iga.in.gov/.

For legislation specific to Down syndrome: https://dsindiana.org/policy-and-advocacy/.

Key Legislation

**US HR6800 - The Heroes Act**
The Heroes Act. This bill responds to the COVID-19 (i.e., coronavirus disease 2019) outbreak and its impact on the economy, public health, state and local governments, individuals, and businesses. Among other things, the bill provides FY2020 emergency...
7/23/2020: Committee on Small Business and Entrepr...

**US S2920 - Violence Against Women Reauthoriza...**
Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2019
11/21/2019: Read the second time. Placed on Senate L...

**US HR4280 - Supplemental Security Income Rest...**
Supplemental Security Income Restoration Act of 2019
9/11/2019: Referred to the Subcommittee on Worker a...
Join the DSI Public Policy Committee

Become a DSI Public Policy Ambassador

Our goal is to have each of Indiana’s 100 House districts covered by a volunteer advocate. The commitment is less than that of an advisory committee member. If you are interested in serving in your district, please contact Lisa Wells, DSI Executive Director for more information or sign up here: https://dsindiana.org/policy-and-advocacy/.
Additional Resources

The Arc of Indiana

The Arc of Indiana works to inspire positive change in public policy and public attitudes. They have a full time presence at the Indiana State House, and, as an affiliate of The Arc of the United States, in the halls of Congress. Through their work with elected officials and leaders of state agencies they advocate for funding, legislation, regulations and policies that make a positive difference in the lives of people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities and families. Whether you are a parent, sister, brother, grandparent, friend or a person with a disability – YOU can make a difference by joining The Arc’s public policy advocacy efforts. Find out more at: https://www.arcind.org/our-programs/public-policy-advocacy/.

NDSS DS-Ambassadors

Participants in the NDSS DS-AMBASSADOR® Program are volunteer advocates of all abilities committed to taking part in the democratic process and serving as liaisons between NDSS and their congressional delegations. The overarching goal of the NDSS DS-AMBASSADOR® Program is to build long-lasting relationships with your elected officials at the federal, state and local level of government to continually raise awareness, educate and advocate for public policy solutions that benefit the Down syndrome community. For more information, please email policy@ndss.org.

National Down Syndrome Congress Advocacy Coalition

The National Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition (“NDAC“) is a member service of the National Down Syndrome Congress (“NDSC”). NDAC is a grassroots advocacy service that is designed to educate individuals with Down syndrome, their family members and other allies about policy issues and give them the advocacy tools and techniques they need to effectively engage with their legislators to advocate for change. NDAC aligns with NDSC’s purpose since its founding in 1973: to promote the interests of people with Down syndrome and their families through advocacy, public awareness and information. For more information, please visit: https://www.ndsccenter.org/political-advocacy/national-down-syndrome-advocacy-coalition/.

Partners in Policy Academy with the Governor’s Council for People with Disabilities

The Partners in Policymaking Academy is a leadership training program for adults with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities. The program teaches leadership skills and techniques to develop positive partnerships with elected officials, school personnel and other individuals who make policy decisions about services that you and/or your family use. More information is available at: https://secure.in.gov/gpcpd/2465.htm.