

HOW TO HAVE AN EFFECTIVE MEETING WITH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND THEIR STAFF

Why it matters:

Developing a relationship with members of Congress and their staff helps to increase awareness of children with learning disabilities. It is also a good opportunity for parents to ask for their elected official's support during the process of rewriting the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

What you can do:

- **Share your story.** Explain your child's experiences by focusing on:
 - Problem — child has dyslexia but is not receiving services and/or accommodations and support in public school setting; although students with dyslexia and are capable learners, the school has lowered expectations for your child
 - Action — what you did to address the issue (advocacy at local/state level, private tutoring, structured literacy, developing community support)
 - Results — child is now successful with appropriate intervention and accommodations, including assistive technology and other supports
- **Share data.** Explain how you are one voice for many families facing these challenges within your state. NCLD's reports, [The State of Learning Disabilities](#) and [Diplomas at Risk](#) have terrific national and state specific data.
- **Share ESEA priorities.** Explain that we need a modern education law that reflects the realities of the classroom – students with learning disabilities spend most of their day in the general education classroom alongside students without disabilities. For specific recommendations, read [NCLD's 6 Opportunities to Improve the Law/5 Policy Threats](#).
- **Share why it's critical to include Learning Disabilities in ESEA:**
 - *Students with learning disabilities are the largest population of students with disabilities in every state.* There are over 2.5 million students with learning disabilities throughout the country and there are another estimated 15% of all students who struggle in school due to unidentified learning and attention issues. This issue impacts millions of students and their families.
 - *Time spent in the general education classroom.* Of all students with disabilities, students with learning disabilities spend the most amount of time in the general education classroom – with teachers who have not received preparation in college or through professional development in most cases. This lack of education leads to a lack of identification, a lack of intervention, lowered expectations, and a lack of understanding about the need for accommodations and AT support.
 - *IDEA and ESEA need to better align.* IDEA requires – as part of the identification process only for students with specific learning disabilities – that a state allow for the use of Response to



How to find your elected officials:

1. Visit <http://www.senate.gov/senators/contact/> and select your state to find your two senators.
2. Visit <http://ziplook.house.gov/htbin/findrep?ZIP> and enter in your zip code to find your representative.
3. Follow the link to your elected official's website to find the closest district office.
4. Call the office and ask to schedule a meeting.

Intervention, which is often (RTI), provided by a general educator. General educators need specific professional development to enable them to successfully implement RTI.

- *The Ripple Effect: Training Educators to Work with Students with Learning Disabilities Positively Impacts Students Without Disabilities.* When educators receive preparation to address students who have reading (dyslexia), math (dyscalculia) and writing (dysgraphia), they are more likely to have greater ability to effectively educate other students who may struggle in these areas.

Members of Congress are elected to represent their communities. As Congress works to reauthorize ESEA, it is critical that they hear directly from parents whose children are affected by the law.