



A-Team Delaware

2026 Advocacy Guide

How to Speak Up for Your Loved One





"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

- Margaret Mead

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Why Advocacy Matters

Advocacy is how we create change. If you care for a loved one with intellectual or developmental disabilities (I/DD), your voice is crucial in shaping policies around housing, education, healthcare, and support services.



This guide will walk you through the basics of contacting legislators, preparing for meetings, and testifying at public hearings so you can confidently advocate for a better future.

Finding Your Legislators

The most impactful way to begin is by sharing your story directly with your local State Senator and Representative.

For state-level issues, reach out to:

State Senator and Representative:

Visit [this page](#) or scan the QR code:



Enter your home address under "Who is my legislator?" and click "Find My Legislator." Your State Senator and Representative will be listed, along with their email addresses.

Lieutenant Governor:

Visit [this page](#) or scan the QR code:



Governor's Office:

Visit [this page](#) or scan the QR code:



For federal issues, such as protecting Medicaid, contact the Delaware leaders who represent us in Washington, D.C:

Sen. Chris Coons: coons.senate.gov

Sen. Lisa Blunt Rochester: bluntrochester.senate.gov

Rep. Sarah McBride: mcbride.house.gov

Contacting Your Legislators

You can email, call, or meet in person. Every communication should include:

- **Your name, address, and connection to intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD):** "I'm a parent of a child with I/DD."
- **Why you're reaching out:** "We need higher wages for Direct Support Professionals (DSP)."
- **A personal story:** "My child's services were cut due to low staffing" or "My adult child needs a place to live when I can no longer care for them."
- **A clear request:** "Support funding for better compensation for DSPs."

Emailing Your Legislator

- Keep it short and personal.
- End with a call to action.
- Always follow up if you don't receive a response.

Calling Your Legislator

- Write out the message you want to leave so you're ready to speak live to your legislator, their aide, or a voicemail.
- If they don't answer, leave a voicemail with your key points.
- Follow up with an email.

Asking for a Meeting

- Call their office and schedule an appointment.
- It's common to drop in, but an appointment increases your chances of a productive meeting.

Speaking at Budget Hearings

The Joint Finance Committee (JFC) conducts public budget hearings to help determine funding for disability services. **This is your chance to make your voice heard!**

How to Sign Up to Testify:

Links to sign up will be updated as hearings approach in January 2026.

[Visit this page](#) or scan the QR code for more information.



Testimony Guidelines:

You have 2 minutes—keep it personal and direct:

- Introduce yourself and your connection to I/DD.
- Explain the issue and how it impacts real lives.
- Make a clear funding request.
- Thank them for their time.



 **Pro Tip:** If others have already addressed the main issue, focus on sharing your personal experience rather than repeating the same information.

What if I'm Nervous?

- **Legislators work for you**—they need to hear real stories.
- **Your voice has power**—policies change when people speak up.
- **You don't need to be an expert**—just share your real-life experience.

Key A-Team Advocacy Events



Joint Finance Committee (JFC) Budget Hearings *February 25, 2026*

Your public testimony can help influence funding decisions.

[View public hearing schedule](#) or scan the QR code to learn more.



Advocacy Day at Legislative Hall *2026 Date TBD*

Meet lawmakers, share your story, and attend a Senate or House session with other advocates. Don't miss the photo opportunity inside the steps of the lobby!

Final Advocacy Tips

- **Stay persistent** – Change takes time, but every effort matters.
- **Be professional but passionate** – Personal stories create an impact.
- **Follow up** – Keep the conversation going with your legislators.
- **Encourage others** – The more voices we have, the stronger our impact.
- **Show appreciation** – Always say *thank you* for their time and attention.

Together, we can create a better future for individuals with I/DD. Let's make a difference!

Advocacy Samples

Elevator Pitches

Personal Pitch:

Hi, my name is John Doe, and I have an adult child with an intellectual disability.

There is a shortage of housing in Delaware for adults like my son/daughter, and the Direct Support Professionals who assist them need to be paid a living wage. I appreciate anything you can do to address these issues.

Thank you!

A-Team Pitch:

A-Team Delaware is a grassroots nonprofit organization that advocates for adults with intellectual disabilities.

Many of our members are parent volunteers who also serve as caregivers for their adult children. We support other parents in advocating for increased residential and housing options for their children, as well as a livable wage for the Direct Support Professionals who assist them.

Visit our website at www.ateamde.org to learn more!

Advocacy Samples

Email A

Dear Senator **(Last Name)** and Representative **(Last Name)**,

My name is Mary Smith, and my son, Jack, has Down syndrome. He is 30 years old but functions at the level of a 10-year-old boy. I worry about his future—where he will live when I am no longer able to care for him and whether there will be enough Direct Support Professionals to assist him.

He currently works as a **(insert job title and job site)**, and I am concerned about whether he will be able to keep that job as he gets older. **OR:** He currently attends a day program at (insert name), and I worry that if the program closes, he will have nowhere to go and no opportunities to engage with the community.

What is Delaware's plan to support adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD)? Are there enough housing options available to meet their needs?

Thank you for your time. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,
Mary Smith
123 Main Street
City, DE, ZIP Code

Advocacy Samples

Email B

Dear Senator **(Last Name)** and Representative **(Last Name)**,

My name is Mary Smith, and my daughter, Susan, has autism. She is 40 years old and requires assistance with daily living skills. Due to her severe cognitive impairment, she is unable to work. I worry about how she will be able to live after I pass away.

What is the State of Delaware's plan to support adults with disabilities like my daughter? We need more housing options and additional Direct Support Professionals to help caregivers manage the needs of their adult children. Please take action to address this critical issue.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,
Mary Smith
123 Main Street
City, DE, ZIP Code



*Thank you
for your advocacy!*



ateamde.org

Email us: ateamofde@gmail.com



This project was made possible with generous support from Delaware Foundation Reaching Citizens.