



**Youth Development
Strategy Table**

Powered by School's Out Washington

Toolkit for Planning Site Visits with Legislators

Invite legislators to your program space

Elected officials often need help understanding the youth development ecosystem. Site visits are important for youth development programs because they provide a firsthand look at the program in action. This allows legislators to see the impact of the program on the youth it serves.

Program staff have the opportunity to give legislators a memorable and educational experience that can help shape how they show up and make decisions during the legislative session. Site visits serve as a bridge between youth development professionals and the legislative process, fostering a collaborative environment where the needs of young people can be addressed effectively at the state level. This has the potential to lead to legislators championing state funding, support, and awareness of the needs of the field.

This toolkit aims to empower and educate youth development programs, providers, and communities about the power of advocacy by supplying helpful information, resources, and templates to make connecting with legislators as easy and accessible as possible.

Many providers have expressed the desire to engage in advocacy and policy, but it can feel intimidating, and often, people just aren't sure where to start. If this is you, we hope this toolkit helps you feel equipped to connect with the legislators in your district in a mutually beneficial way.

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Toolkit for Planning Site Visits with Legislators

YDST 2025 Strategic Legislative Goals

The Youth Development Strategy Table (YDST) is an advocacy coalition that comprises public, non-profit, and community stakeholders. Together, we are working to secure long-term commitments from funders and legislators to enable programming that supports the well-being of young people by sustaining early learning gains, improving academic and social-emotional outcomes, and preventing deep-end system involvement.

During the legislative session, the YDST will continue to advocate for more equitable and sustainable funding for the field. To successfully lobby for these outcomes, legislators must be familiar with their districts' vast array of youth development programs. We need to amplify youth development advocates' voices and educate policymakers about the essential services expanded learning programs offer communities. Ultimately, we hope this toolkit will provide the information you need to engage with your legislators and plan an educational and successful site visit.

Tips for inviting your legislators

So, now you know why we are asking you to connect with your legislators, but how do you do it? What should you say? What do they care about? Here are some things to keep in mind before you start this process.

- **Legislators are just people doing their jobs, and their job is to represent their constituents as best as possible - that's you!** They want to hear about the things that matter to you.
- **The summer months** are the best time to host a tour because the session has ended, and the next session won't gear up until late fall. Most legislators use summer to get out and connect with people in their districts.
- **There's power in numbers.** Plan a coordinated tour for multiple programs or invite fellow providers, parents, and community members to join the tour and share their experiences.
- **Legislators have issues they care about.** If they are parents or grandparents, there's a good chance they care about issues impacting children and young people. If they live in a rural district, they might have a strong interest in agriculture. It pays to find out so you have something to connect with them about.
- **Show off your program.** Imagine you're inviting a potential funder or local leader. You'll want to highlight your program's purpose, impact, who you serve, and why you do what you do.



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Who are your elected officials?

STEP 1: If you don't already know, find out who your legislators are. Follow this link: <https://app.leg.wa.gov/DistrictFinder/>. Put in your organization's address, program, and/or your personal address to see whose district you're in.

Street Address * 625 Andover Park W

Apt/Ste/Unit 101

City * Tukwila

State WA

Zip * 98188

Find My District

Once you do that, you'll see a map of your district and, to the left, your Representatives and Senators. (Note: Each district has 2 Representatives and 1 Senator.) For our purpose, we'll be focusing on your state legislators, but below that, you can also see who represents you in Congress at the national level.

State District 11 Legislators:

- Representative Steve Bergquist Democrat
- Representative David Hackney Democrat
- Senator Bob Hasegawa Democrat

Congressional District 9 Legislators

- U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell Democrat
- U.S. Senator Patty Murray Democrat
- U.S. Representative Adam Smith Democrat

Map District Type: Legislative Congressional

Map Satellite



District 11 Legislators

- Representative Steve Bergquist Democrat
- Representative David Hackney Democrat
- Senator Bob Hasegawa Democrat

STEP 2: Once you click on one of their names, you'll be taken to a page that lists all of the Representatives OR Senators. To the right of their name, you can see which committees they sit on. This will give you some indication of a topic they care about. If it says "**Ways and Means**" or "**Appropriations**," this means they sit on a committee that helps *write the budgets for our state*. These are VIPs because we are advocating for bills and provisos that require funding and these legislators have a lot of influence on what gets approved in the budget. Corresponding image on following page.



Toolkit for Planning Site Visits with Legislators

 Home Page	Representative Steve Bergquist (D) 11th Legislative District Email Details	Olympia Office 438B Legislative Building PO Box 40600 Olympia, WA 98504 (360) 786-7862	Committees Appropriations (Vice Chair) Education Rules
 Home Page	Representative Liz Berry (D) 36th Legislative District Email Details	Olympia Office 327 John L. O'Brien Building PO Box 40600 Olympia, WA 98504 (360) 786-7860	Committees Labor & Workplace Standards (Chair) Environment & Energy Transportation
 Home Page	Representative Dan Bronoske (D) Deputy Speaker Pro Tempore 28th Legislative District Email Details	Olympia Office 132D Legislative Building PO Box 40600 Olympia, WA 98504 (360) 786-7958	Committees Health Care & Wellness Labor & Workplace Standards Transportation

STEP 3: To learn more about the legislator, you can click “Home Page” below their picture. This will give you their bio and include important details they want you to know about. It might tell you about their family life, bills they have supported, issues they care about, etc.

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STEP 4: Click “Email” to send a message! If you need help drafting an email and an invitation to a site visit, you can find a template below.





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Draft emails

Invitation Email Template

Dear [member of congress/or assistant who might be scheduling],

My name is [Name] and I am the [Title] of [Name of Organization]. Our program has been in your district since [date] and serves over [number of students] each year. I would love to have you visit our program this summer. I have a few dates to suggest if your schedule is free for a visit. Please let us know which of the following dates would work best: [date, date, or date].

As you may know, Afterschool programs are significantly increasing positive outcomes for children and young people across our state. [Talk about your program here. Mission statement, impact, goals, mention some ways the legislator will be able to directly connect with youth or families.]

It's not enough to hear about the program; you must see it in action! Please join us this summer for a personal tour, during which you will meet young people and program staff and see the impact our program is making.

If the dates above don't work, please share a few dates that work for you. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Name
Title
Phone number

Thank you email template:

Dear [legislator's name],

Thank you for taking the time to visit [Program Name]our program on [date]. We hope you were able to learn more about the critical work we do to support the young people and families in our community.

[Share one specific example from the visit. Share any stats, asks, or details you wanted them to remember and take away from the visit.]

Please feel free to contact our team if you have any additional questions about our program or the work we do. We appreciate you visiting our program and look forward to staying connected in the future.

Sincerely,
Name
Title
Phone number



Toolkit for Planning Site Visits with Legislators

Site visit planning timeline

1 month prior to the proposed site visit date

- Send an email to the congress member's office to schedule the visit
- Do some research on the legislator's interests to connect them to the work you are doing and the community you live in and serve

2 weeks before the legislator is scheduled to arrive at your site

- Identify youth who will engage with the legislator and prepare them for the visit
- If you plan to invite family members, identify caregivers who will engage with legislators and prepare them for the visit
- If you plan to take photos, ensure you have current photo releases for young people in your program

1 week before the legislator is scheduled to visit your site

- Develop a site visit plan (sample plan attached)
- Gather any collateral (one-pagers, annual reports, or other fact sheets and info about your program)

Day of event

- Take photos of the event (for you to keep and share) - ***Do Not Share with legislators, but be sure to tag them on social media.***

After scheduled event

- Send a thank you letter to your legislator (sample letter attached)
- Write a story to share with local media (op-ed to control the message)



Toolkit for Planning Site Visits with Legislators

Talking points during the tour - Providers

Highlight the impact your organization is making in your community. Have some fun facts ready.

- How many programs do you run?
- How many students do you serve?
- Do you partner with schools or other community partners?
- Personal stories make a big difference!

Don't be afraid to talk about the challenges you face as an organization.

- What is your funding model?
- Is it difficult to retain staff? Why or why not?
- Have you had to increase your rates? If you could deliver services for free, what might this look like?

For the past two legislative sessions, the Youth Development Strategy Table has tried to lobby for funding for the field through a Bill and Budget Proviso. Neither has passed.

- Funding for the field is crucial because, currently, there is no cohesive, equitable funding source. Organizations that can afford to hire a lobbyist often have budgets funded through a proviso, but thousands of organizations do not receive any state funding.
- Most organizations are funded through private donations and foundations, but to apply for funding, they require administrative staff who can research, write applications, track data, and report. This is a huge investment of time and resources for an organization, and many funders request that funding not go toward staff “overhead.” This leaves organizations trying to provide programs without the proper infrastructure to sustain them.
- By creating a youth development budget in the state operating budget, funding would be provided more equitably and efficiently.

Remember to do some research ahead of time so you can make connections between your community and programs and the legislator's interests.



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Talking points during the tour - Parents and caregivers

Highlight the importance of afterschool programs

- How long has your kid(s) been in afterschool care?
- How do afterschool programs support their interests?
- How do afterschool programs support your family dynamic?
- Allow you to work nights and weekends?

Highlight the importance of your program

- How does your kid connect with program staff?
- Does your kid have any mentors in the program?
- Do you have any mentors or beloved staff at the program?
- How has your kid benefited socially and emotionally because of the program?
- What would it mean for your family if this program wasn't funded?



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Sample plan day of visit

Greet legislator - Director

Introduce the legislator to key staff in the building

- Give an overview of the program and the ways you serve young people in your program.
- How many youth do you serve?
- How long has the program been in service?

Tour of program

Youth engagement activity

- Outside kids engaging in the program (this will look different for every program)
 - Basketball game?
 - Art activity?
 - Tutoring?

Youth and family conversation

- Youth to talk about things that impact them
- Youth to share something they enjoy doing with the staff members or peers in the program
- Families to talk about the impact of the program

Group photo

Thank you and farewell



Toolkit for Planning Site Visits with Legislators

Now what?

You have a site visit scheduled, or you've already done one. **Now what?**

First of all, great work! We know it's extra time and energy to plan site visits. This is a major addition to the youth development advocacy space, and we appreciate you! Here are some tips for next steps.

- **Let us know about the upcoming visit** by answering a short survey:
<https://forms.gle/yBipQGqG6XUHDaVt5>
- Once you've completed the site visit, **let us know how it went**. Please email Jessica at jwinston@schoolsoutwashington.org to tell us about the visit and share any photos you don't mind us resharing or using as we advocate next session.
- Most importantly, **remember to follow up** with the legislator and their staff. Send them a thank you, and plan to meet with them during the next session!

Additional resources

[Invite Congress to Visit Your Museum](#) 
American Alliance of Museums

[A "How To" Guide to Facility Tours for Elected Officials](#)
American Health Care Association (AHCA) & National Center for Assisted Living (NCAL)

[Tips for Working with State Legislators](#)
Community Catalyst

[Meet the Legislators: The Basics of an Effective Meeting](#)
Alliance for Justice