



Each family has a voice.  
Together, our voices will be heard.

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[familyvoiceswi.org](http://familyvoiceswi.org)



Family Voices helps families navigate health care and community supports and services by providing training, in-person and online, information and education.

As a family-run organization, we support families in their own leadership and advocacy journey, and we promote family-centered care and family/professional partnerships.

Visit our website to view our fact sheets, newsletters and online trainings.



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# **Developing Your Message and Delivering it to Legislators**

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# How to Tell Your Family Story

- Choose one or two “slices” of your family story
  - Have it be impactful
  - Have it related to what your will be asking for
- Be **clear and brief** about what you want to say.
- The goal of your family story is to make a point and be listened to
  - The legislator or staff person will remember you by the story you tell

*“Because we could not afford to put a ramp on our house, my daughter has to leave her wheelchair at school and can’t go out to the park or anyplace in our community.”*

## Telling a “Slice” of Your Family Story

### Here’s another example:

*“We are struggling to meet the needs of our family and keep a job. I don’t have a way to pay for someone to reliably care for my 12-year-old daughter with disabilities after school every day. I have had to cut my hours at work and my boss says I might be fired if I can’t stay after 3 pm.”*

# Developing and Delivering Your Message

## Family Voices has a worksheet for you to use for this purpose!

It includes the following steps:

1. Introduce yourself, your family, and where you live
2. Briefly explain the issue or problem that concerns you
3. Share a personal story or experience about how the issue or problem is affecting your life
4. Explain what you think needs to be done to fix this issue or problem (*this is your “ask”*)
5. Ask if the legislator can support your issue
6. Thank them for their time and share your contact information

## An Example

Let's look at an example where we want our family story to support an ask for the development of a Disability Resource Center for Children and Families...

## Step 1: Introduction

### Introduce yourself and your family and where you live:

My name is Barbara. I'm from Milwaukee and I live in your district. I'm the parent of a teen with significant disabilities and a seizure disorder. Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today so I can share some of my ideas about our next state budget.

## Step 2: The Issue or Problem

### Briefly explain the issue to problem that concerns you:

Since my son was born almost 15 years ago, we have struggled to find the services we've needed – it's been both a financial struggle and an emotional struggle. Finding the right information when we needed it has not been easy. Unlike the county Aging and Disability Resource Centers (who serve adults only), there isn't one place for parents to go to get our questions answered.



## Step 3: The Slice of Your Story

### Share a personal story or experience about how the issue or problem is affecting your life:

Because of my son's high care needs, I have not been able to go back to work full time – at times we lived paycheck to paycheck and things like paying for diapers, his over-the-counter medications and having someone help me at home were expenses we struggled with.

I didn't know until he was older that his Medicaid card covers these items – not until another mom told me she hired personal care workers and used Medicaid for diapers did I know about these benefits. I really wish I had known about these Medicaid benefits earlier in his life. It would have saved us a lot of money.

## Step 4: Your Ask

### Explain what you think needs to be done to fix this issue or problem – this is your “ask”

Families like mine could benefit from a resource center (a **Disability Resource Center for Children and Families**) that all families across the state could know about and call if they have a child with a disability – there should be one telephone number and someone on the other end who really knows what programs are out there for families. They could help us understand the benefits our children may be eligible for and what programs families might be able to access, so we don't feel so isolated as we navigate care and supports for our children.

**Step 5:  
Can they  
Support Your  
Ask?**

**Ask if the legislator can support your issue:**

Can you support this Resource Center as a proposal that should be added to the state budget? Advocates have estimated that \$2.9 million will be needed during the next 2 years to create this important resource for families who have kids with special needs.

## Step 6: Thanks and Offer to Follow Up

### Thank them for their time and share contact information:

I appreciate you taking the time to meet with me. Can I give you my email and telephone number so you can get in touch with me? I'd be interested in following up in a few weeks. If you have questions about the Disability Resource Center, Liz Hecht from Family Voices can also give you a call soon.

**Now it's Your  
Turn!**

**As you get ready to meet with your legislators or their staff, consider:**

- What problem will you present to them?
- What will be the “slice” of your family story?
- What will be your “ask”?

*This is easier than you think – just dive in!*

Thank You!

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