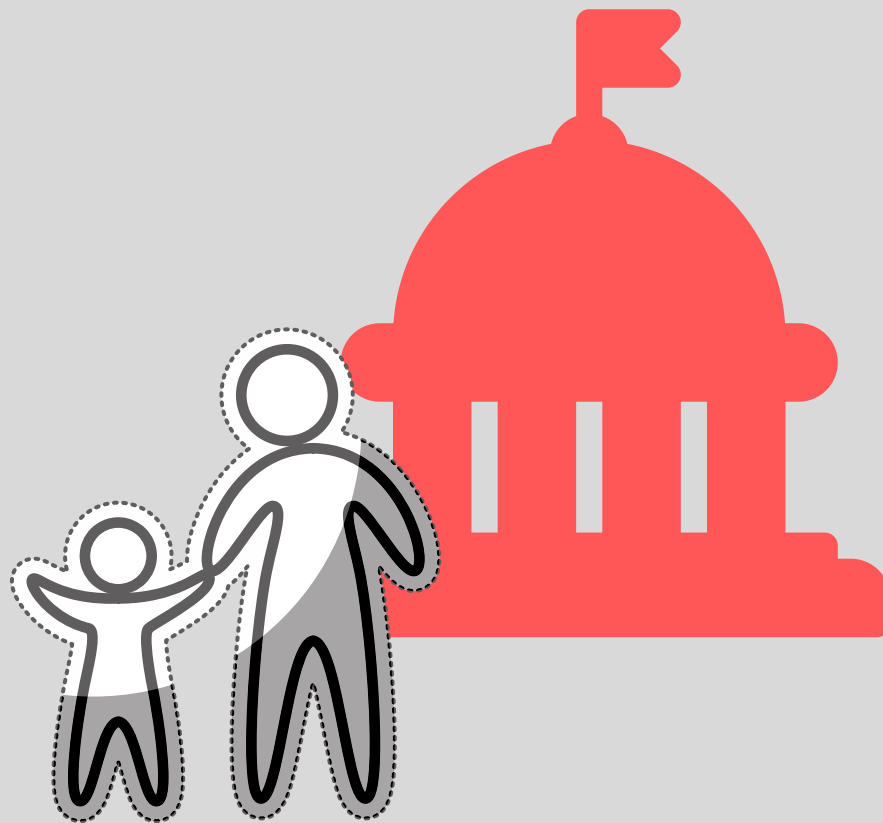


# GUIDEBOOK TO ADVOCACY

*A GUIDEBOOK FOR PARENTS  
AND SELF-ADVOCATES*



Utah Parent Center

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*PART I:*

# WHAT IS ADVOCACY?



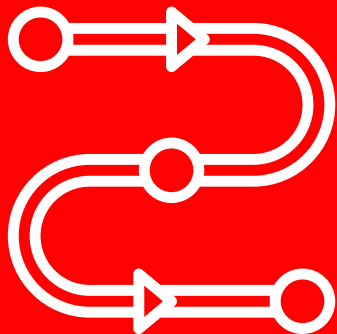
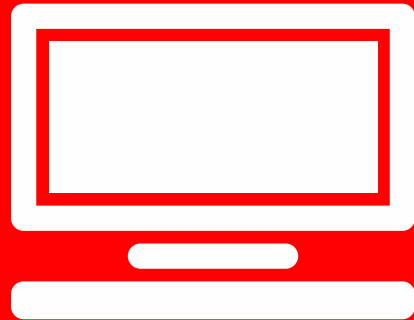
Advocacy is an important process to overcoming inequality and disparities in communities. It is a means by which people like you and me publicly support or recommend solutions to a particular problem. It requires some commitment, and the process involves a lot of learning, growing, and sometimes frustration. However, we promise that it will be of infinite worth to you to go through these experiences.

Margaret Mead, a famous scientist who studied societies and how people interact with each other, said of advocacy: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.” It is important for you to know that you can make a difference, and that the path to getting there is not as difficult as you may think. It starts with believing in yourself, and having the confidence that you deserve to be heard and listened to.

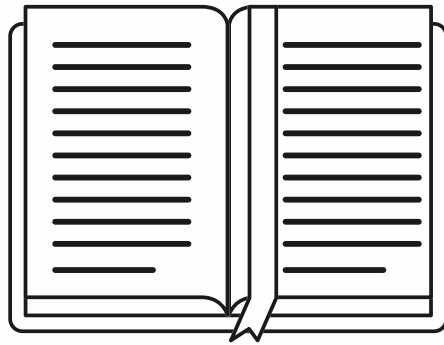
We hope that the skills taught in this workbook will help you with your goal of making changes to better the lives and well-beings of your children and yourselves. Remember that with the Utah Parent Center, advocacy does not have to be an individual journey, but rather an opportunity for you to be a part of a loving team who has some experience. We are here to support you throughout every step.

*PART II:*

# STEPS TO ADVOCACY



# 1: CHOOSE AND LEARN ABOUT YOUR ISSUES



Choosing and learning about what issues affect your family is the first step in becoming an advocate. Your personal experiences will be the most valuable information on your journey. Utah has a lot of great organizations that will help you learn about issues that may be impacting you or your family. Always feel free to call the Utah Parent Center for help reaching any of these resources.



The Disability Law Center (DLC) provides information for individuals regarding issues related to their disabilities so that they can advocate for themselves. They can help refer you to relevant programs and services for people with disabilities. They also offer training on a variety of different disability rights topics.

During each legislative session, they offer legislation trackers, as well as videos that will keep you updated on disability-related legislation. Their policy agendas are always aimed to ensure that existing or proposed policies either protect or improve the lives of Utahns affected by disabilities. You can visit their newsletter and follow them on their social media pages for regular updates.

<http://disabilitylawcenter.org/public-policy/>

Facebook: Disability Law Center

Twitter: @DLCofUT

YouTube: Disability Law Center of Utah



The Utah Developmental Disabilities Council (UDDC) aims to advocate for and strengthen leadership skills in individuals with disabilities and their families. They also collaborate with the legislature, as well as public and private agencies that serve these individuals and families.

They can help you learn about issues affecting you or your families through their informative and regularly updated issue summary documents and talking points. These documents report information that has been discussed during the current session, including a summary of the issue and a list of key points to be aware of.

<https://www.utahddcouncil.org/resources/legislative-engagement>

Facebook: Utah Developmental Disabilities Council

YouTube: Utah Developmental Disabilities Council

Newsletters: <https://www.utahddcouncil.org/council-newsletters>





The Legislative Coalition for People with Disabilities (LCPD) holds weekly meetings during the legislative session that discuss issues affecting individuals with special needs or disabilities. Outside of the annual legislative session, they hold monthly meetings to keep people informed and involved.

You can become a member of the LCPD for free, receive regular updates, and attend meetings in person or virtually. They also have a fantastic legislative tracker that will help you stay informed on current issues.

Become a Member: <http://www.lcpdut.org/membership/>  
Legislative Tracker: <http://www.lcpdut.org/files/>



Utah State University has an entire program dedicated to individuals and families affected by disabilities. Their policy resources include a legislative advocacy guide, blogs, and policy briefs that will help you stay updated on current legislation.

<http://www.cpd.usu.edu/policy/>

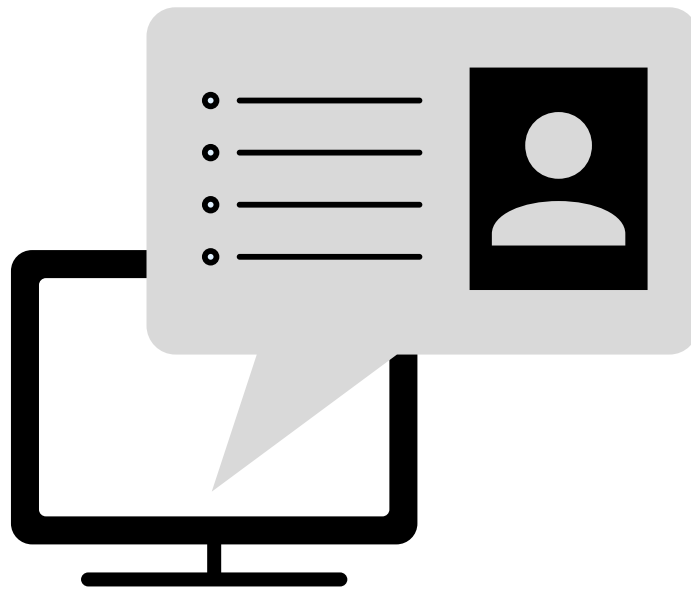
**"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."**

Martin Luther King Jr.

”

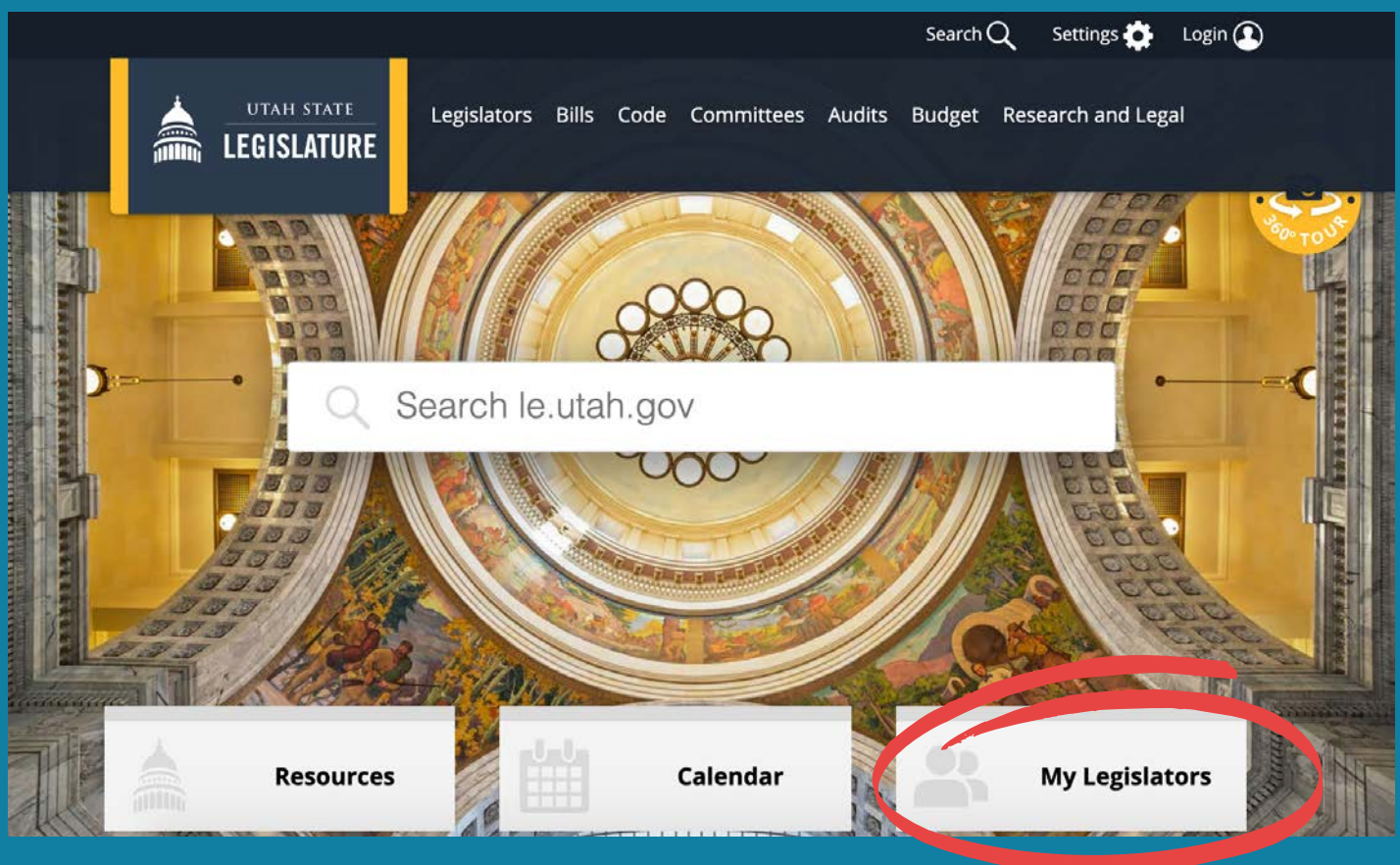
# NOTES

## 2: IDENTIFY YOUR REPRESENTATIVES



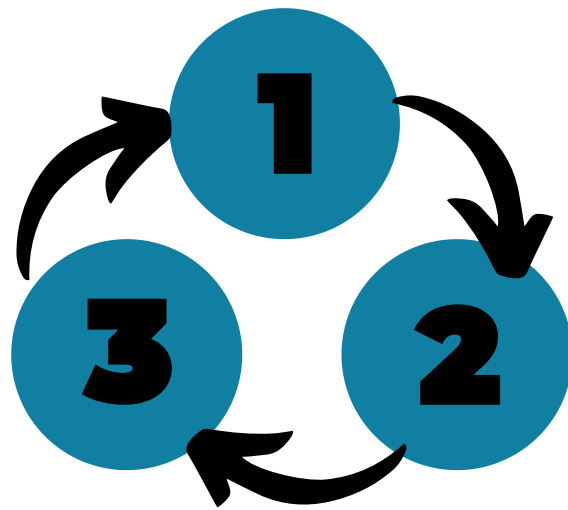
Your representative has every incentive and intention to represent you and help you achieve your policy goals. They will be making impactful decisions on behalf of your family. Learn who represents you on the house and senate floors, and remember, there's no reason to feel intimidated, they are people just like you.

Our local government has a great webpage that will help you find your representatives, as well as locate their preferred contact information. Just visit [le.utah.gov](http://le.utah.gov), click on "My Legislators" and then "Find by Address/Map." Now, simply enter your address and zip code to view your local representatives! The UDDC has a great step-by-step guide that can help. Visit the UPC website for a link to this guide.



# NOTES

# 3: UNDERSTAND THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS



The legislative process is the means by which proposed policy actions (or, *bills*) become laws. An understanding of the legislative process is an important tool for effective advocacy. It can help you know when contacting legislatures will be helpful, and when it will be less productive.



Action Utah has a webpage dedicated to helping you become familiar with Utah's legislative system. Things that they cover include:

- The State Legislature
- What is an Interim Session?
- How elections work in Utah
- What is a delegate and why do they matter?

<https://www.actionutah.org/utah-political-system/>

**"A journey of a thousand  
miles begins with a single  
step."**

Lao-Tzu

”



# NOTES

## 4: TAKE ACTION



Your voice is essential in creating a better world. Everyone needs to participate, or we truly do not have a democratic government, one that is operated “by the people for the people.” Your voice is key to making a change! The next section of this guidebook reviews simple activities that you can engage in each month to take action and get involved in advocacy.

*PART III:*

# ADVOCACY IN EVERY MONTH



# JANUARY

The legislative session begins at the end of this month! Learn how to watch the session from home and familiarize yourself with agendas and calendar of the session. If possible, register for and attend the LCPD reception at the state capitol.

# FEBRUARY

The legislative session is in action. Follow legislation trackers and call or email your representative about your issues. If you can, come to the capitol and give public testimony.

# MARCH

Legislative session ends. Send a thank you letter to your state representative and senator. Express what you agreed with and what you want to further address with them.

# APRIL

Review the happenings of latest session and take inventory of lessons learned. If you were unable to advocate during the session, learn about what issues were discussed that may have affected your family by reading through legislation trackers and other resources.

# MAY

Find out who your representative is and save their contact information to your phone.

# JUNE

Find out how your representative prefers to be contacted: email, phone, text, or letter.

# JULY

Write one letter to your state representative and senator. Make sure that it is one page, handwritten, and include a photo of your family/child with a disability. Tell your story to introduce yourself to your legislator.

# AUGUST

Talk to family and friends about all issues at holiday gatherings, picnics, trips etc. Getting the conversation going about what is important to you will build community support.

# SEPTEMBER

Write a second letter to your state representative and senator. Thank them for their time and interest in your family, as you are a constituent and voter. One page, handwritten again. Talk about your needs and family situation.

# OCTOBER

Make sure you are registered to vote and that your voter information is updated. Call your county clerk or visit this website:  
<https://secure.utah.gov/voterreg/index.html>

# NOVEMBER

Find out what issues will be discussed in the upcoming legislative session by getting involved with advocacy groups such as the LCPD, UDDC, DLC, and Action Utah. Working together on disability issues will make us all stronger. This is a great way to stay up to date with legislative happenings. Also, don't forget to vote if it is an election year!

# DECEMBER

Send a holiday card to your state representative and senator.

*APPENDIX A:*

# 19 GOLDEN RULES OF ADVOCACY



# 1

**Be fair toward public officials.** With very rare exceptions, they are honest, intelligent, and want to do the right things. Your job is to inform them effectively about what you think is right.

# 2

**Avoid cynicism.** Government and politics may be faulty, but so is every profession. The political process we too often disparage is still our best hope for effecting constructive social change.

# 3

**Be understanding.** Put yourself in the public official's place. Try to understand his/her problems, outlook and aims.

# 4

**Be friendly.** Don't contact public officials only when you want their help. Take pains to keep in touch with them throughout the year, every year.

# 5

**Be reasonable.** Recognize that there are legitimate differences of opinion. Never indulge in threats.



# 6

**Be thoughtful.** Commend the right things public officials do.

# 7

**Be charitable.** The failure of public officials to do what you wanted may be your responsibility if you have not done a good job in preparing, presenting and following through on your case. Every public official knows that you can express your opinion at the ballot box.

# 8

**Be constructive.** You don't like to be scolded, pestered or preached to. Neither do public officials. Present an alternative, a new way of looking at the problem, a new formula, and not merely negative carping.

# 9

**Be realistic and persistent.** Remember that controversial legislation usually results in a compromise not wholly satisfactory to any one contending party. Progress, although incremental, is no less real – and may even be more enduring for its evolutionary development that builds wider support.

# 10

**Be practical.** Recognize that each lawmaker has commitments and that a certain amount of vote-trading goes on in all legislatures. Don't chastise lawmakers who normally support you if they vote against one of your bills.

# 11

**Be a good opponent.** Fight issues, not personalities.

# 12

**Be informed.** Do your homework. The mere fact that you want a public official to adopt your position won't be enough.

# 13

**Be trustworthy.** When promises are made, keep them. If you tell a public official you'll do something, stick to your end of the bargain.

# 14

**Be loyal.** Never leave officials out on a limb by changing your position after they have publicly taken the position that you have urged upon them.

# 15

**Evaluate and weigh the issues.** Many bills are tossed into the legislative hopper by request and are never intended to become law. Don't criticize lawmakers for every bill which is introduced. Don't sound the panic alarm until you're sure a bill or legislative action is "for real".

# 16

**Be discrete.** Participation in discussions about lawmakers being “bought” or “paid off” is worse than useless. You have absolutely nothing to gain and everything to lose by such speculations. Furthermore, chances are extremely high that it isn’t true.

# 17

**Be generous.** Remember that in success, everyone can claim credit. Thank policymakers for their positive acts at least as often as you inquire why they went wrong. Let them know you are watching their record closely.

# 18

**Be visionary.** Especially when it comes to the political process, there is seldom an absolute and final defeat. A loss with one member may lead to finding a better champion elsewhere.

# 19

**Work – and be persistent.** In the immortal words of Charlie Chan: “Everything cometh to he who waiteth, as long as he who waiteth worketh like hell in the meantime!”

*ADAPTED FROM: A GUIDE FOR THE POWERLESS – AND  
THOSE WHO DON’T KNOW THEIR OWN POWER; SAMUEL  
HALPERIN, INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP,  
WASHINGTON, D.C., 1981*