4. PUT IT IN WRITING
If you are not able to visit your legislators, you can always write letters or email. And make no mistake - - legislators read mail from their constituents. Letters from families can really add up, and they get added up. They can directly impact votes and action.

If you or your family member have a present or future need for state services, write each of your legislators several times a year, stating in your own words your concerns and opinions to the Governor. While this folder focuses on communications with legislators, don't neglect to voice your concerns and opinions to the Governor. Here too a strong united voice from families can make a difference.

Continually urge your legislators to vote for key bills and budgets affecting your family. They can directly impact votes and action. Communications from families can have a strong impact on the size of these budgets or bills that will be important to your needs or those of your family member. All legislators keep logs on phone calls. And they add them up!

To find the best times to call on issues of importance to you, use the information Sources. (see back cover)

When you call, state your name, address, and that you are a constituent then your message. Keep it brief and to the point. Don’t hesitate to ask your legislator how he or she plans to vote on any given issue. If you cannot reach your legislator, leave your message or question with an aide.

Join other advocates and parents. Keep the State House phones ringing. Raise your voices clearly, loudly and in unison.

Thank your legislators when they support your requests. Always be courteous. Treat them as allies.

Finally, on the most urgent issues, call the State House Leadership as well. (see back cover)

5. KEEP THEIR PHONES RINGING OFF THE HOOK
Phone calls from constituents are the lifeblood of the legislative process. They can be made quickly and painlessly. Calls should be timed to influence votes on budgets or bills that will be important to your needs or those of your family member. All legislators keep logs on phone calls. And they add them up!

To find the best times to call on issues of importance to you, use the information Sources. (see back cover)

When you call, state your name, address, and that you are a constituent then your message. Keep it brief and to the point. Don’t hesitate to ask your legislator how he or she plans to vote on any given issue. If you cannot reach your legislator, leave your message or question with an aide.

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Finally, on the most urgent issues, call the State House Leadership as well. (see back cover)

Phone Numbers and Email Addresses
(Keep this brochure near your telephone or computer)

This brochure belongs to:

__________________________

My State Senator: ___________________________
State House phone and Email: ___________________________
My State Representative: ___________________________
State House phone and Email: ___________________________

For the above information, check Clerks’ offices (provided in “Establish Contact” section) or visit http://www.capwiz.com/thearc /ma/home/ (pick Elected Officials).

STATE HOUSE LEADERSHIP: PHONE
Governor Charlie Baker.............................617-725-4005
http://www.mass.gov/governor/
Senate President Stan Rosenberg.............617-722-1500
Stan.Rosenberg@masenate.gov
Speaker of the House Robert DeLeo.........617-722-2500
Robert.DeLeo@mahouse.gov
Chair, Sen. Ways & Means Comm..............617-722-1640
Karen.Spilka@masenate.gov
Chair, House Ways & Means Comm...........617-722-2990
Brian.Dempsey@mahouse.gov

INFORMATION SOURCES:
For schedules, bills, legislative matters: The Arc of Massachusetts..................arcmass@arcmass.org
217 South Street, Waltham, MA 02453
781 891-6270, extension 101
www.thearc.com

Department of Developmental Services www.mass.gov/dds
500 Harrison Avenue, Boston, MA 02118
Office of Citizen Leadership......................617 624-7755

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Let the Governor hear from you

While this folder focuses on communications with legislators, don’t neglect to voice your concerns and opinions to the Governor. Here too a strong united voice from families can make a difference.

Achieve with us.
“Every letter—every e-mail—every visit—every phone call counts. Yours may be the one that tips the vote.”

What the Legislators Say

- “Keep the letters, e-mails and phone calls coming. They motivate and educate legislators to vote for your cause.”
- “You can help legislators put human faces on issues and statistics. Tell us your family’s stories. Come visit. Send us letters and pictures. Believe me, you’ll get our attention.”
- “Heartfelt letters from individuals and parents are difficult to ignore. Large numbers of them are impossible to ignore.”
- “Especially in times of shrinking resources for government services and competition for scarce public funds, it is a necessity for citizens to give the highest visibility to their personal issues. You are the best qualified to keep your family member’s needs on the legislative front burner. Visit us, call us, write us and do it often. Urge other families to do likewise.”
- “Whatever the budget crisis, our government must never neglect our most vulnerable citizens. Do not let us ever forget that!”

Why Is It So Important for You to Communicate with Your Legislators?

Economic trends of recent times make it essential that advocacy efforts by individuals, families and supporters get stepped up significantly if we are to maintain a high quality service system for individuals and families with disabilities.

The lives of almost all persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities in our Commonwealth are affected by legislation and budgets passed by the State Legislature. Dozens of bills on disability issues are filed and voted on, and the entire budget of the Department of Developmental Services, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, Medicaid and others must be appropriated every year.

You are your best advocate. Nobody knows more about the need for services than you do. Nobody can describe them better than you can. It’s part of your empowerment to send your message to your legislators and urge them to pass laws and budgets that serve you or your family member and others with similar needs.

In good times we can enhance the necessary funding. In bad times we must protect what we have and maintain high visibility for our issues.

How your State Senator and State Representative vote on key bills and appropriations depends not only on how many families they hear from on each given issue—but also how strongly, clearly and in unison these voices are raised.

Follow These Steps to Maintain Effective Communications with your Legislators

1. ESTABLISH CONTACT AND KEEP IT GOING
If you do not know who your State legislators are, find out online or by calling the State House:

Senate Clerk: 617-722-1276
House of Representatives Clerk: 617-722-2356
Web: malegislature.gov/people/search

Write down their full names, phone numbers and email addresses on the back of this pamphlet.

Begin your communication by sending each of your legislators a short letter to establish contact. Identify yourself by name and state your needs or those of your family member. Ask them for their support and keep in touch.

2. STAY ON TOP OF WHAT’S HAPPENING
Familiarize yourself with bills and budget line items related to disability policy so that you can communicate with your legislators on a well-informed and timely basis.

Check with local advocacy groups. Network with other individuals or parents on issues of mutual importance. Get on email lists and if you don’t have a computer, on mailing lists.

The better informed you are, the better advocate you will be for yourself or your family member.

ADVOCACY YEAR-ROUND PRODUCES RESULTS

A key time to write legislators is during the first few months of the year to comment on the Governor’s budget, the House budget, and the Senate budget. We must also maintain visibility year-round. When we work together throughout the year we get results, as demonstrated by two State House rallies and a previous letter campaign which substantially restored huge budget cuts.

3. VISIT WHEN AND IF YOU CAN

The best way to connect with your legislators is face-to-face, especially if you or your son or daughter has an urgent or long-standing need for state services. Phone for an appointment in the State House or at the legislator’s meeting place in his or her home district near you. If you are not able to visit, they will be glad to pass on your message. They are anxious to listen.

Try to visit the State House for rallies, receptions, public hearings, and/or other opportunities to meet lawmakers as well as other advocates. Many advocacy groups have legislative events in their own localities. These activities provide strength in numbers and generate new ideas. Access event schedules through the Information Sources. (see back cover)