



# ADVOCACY EVERY DAY IN MAY

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## What is Advocacy?

"Advocacy" can mean many things, but in general, it refers to acting. Advocacy simply involves speaking and acting on behalf of yourself or others.

Take the **31 days in May** to grow as an advocate. Each day there is an advocacy task with resources to guide you.

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### **Promote/Advocate for Children's Mental Health Acceptance on Social Media**

## May 1st

Advocacy means showing public support for or recommending a particular cause or policy. What better way to show that public support than to your friends on social media!

Letting your social network know that mental health is important to you is powerful. It opens opportunities for conversations. It lets your network know that you are a source of information and support on mental health.

- Add a Mental Health Acceptance cover image to your Facebook page during May
  - You can find images at <https://www.ffcmh.org/event-planning-tools>
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### **It's about Acceptance not Awareness**

## May 2nd

Words matter. Acceptance is active. Awareness is passive. It's time to move beyond awareness and into acceptance. Learn why this is an important message to use in your advocacy.

- [Visit the NFF Acceptance vs Awareness Pinterest Board](#)
  - [Why the A now stands for Acceptance](#)
  - [The Meaning and Importance of the Shift from Awareness to Acceptance Infographic](#)
  - [Mental Health Acceptance: Because Awareness is Not Enough Infographic](#)
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### **Post a Message about Children's Mental Health on Your Social Media Page(s)**

## May 3rd

Explore social media for messages about Children's Mental Health Acceptance Week. Repost one of those messages on your own social media channels and add a personal thought about why it is important.

*Not sure where to begin?*

- Search for Children's Mental Health on your social media platform.
  - Look at the [NFF's social media sites](#)
  - Look at the [Facebook pages of NFF affiliates](#)
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### **Learn the History of Children's Mental Health Acceptance Week**

## May 4th

To be an effective advocate, you need to know the history, build on its strength, and have a goal for the future.

- [Why Wear Green?](#)
- [The History of the National Federation of Families](#)
- [Timeline of the Family Movement in Children's Behavioral Health](#)



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May 5<sup>th</sup>

## *Bringing Mental Health into the Conversation*

Dialogue is where change begins. Mental health needs to be part of everyday conversation because taking care of your mental health is just as important as taking care of your physical health.

Learn more about how to talk about mental health.

- [Visit the NFF Talking Mental Health Pinterest Board](#)

May 6<sup>th</sup>

## *Personal Impact is a Powerful Part of Advocacy*

Think about how mental illness has impacted your life. We need more people with first-hand experience talking about mental health challenges. Just by sharing your journey, you can help others see that there is a light at the end of the tunnel, and it is not an oncoming, out-of-control train.

The darkest moments of your life can be just the thing that people who are struggling need to hear about to know that they can make it through. It can also help to break the stereotypes that society has about mental health.

- [Telling Your Story for a Public Policy Purpose - SPAN](#)
- [Your Story: A Powerful Advocacy Tool - NAMI Texas - NAMI Texas](#)
- [Visit NFF How to Tell Your Story Pinterest Board](#)
- [Telling Your Story with a Purpose Video](#)

May 7<sup>th</sup>

## *Develop Your Elevator Pitch*

Sometimes you have just a few minutes to engage someone about mental health and its importance. Having what is called an “elevator pitch” will help you make the most of the opportunities you have to share why children’s mental health is so important.

Remember to include **acceptance** in your pitch. You will want to practice your pitch aloud.

- [Visit NFF Elevator Pitches Pinterest Board](#)
- [Advocacy Elevator Pitch Example](#)

May 8<sup>th</sup>

## *Share Your Pitch*

Wear a green ribbon today and share your elevator speech with anyone who asks you about it.

- [Why Wear Green?](#)
- [Visit NFF Elevator Pitches Pinterest Board](#)
- [Your Story: A Powerful Advocacy Tool - NAMI Texas - NAMI Texas](#)



# ADVOCACY EVERY DAY IN MAY

May 9th

## Say “Thank You!”

Find out if your mayor and governor signed a proclamation for Children’s Mental Health Acceptance Week. Did your city light up something green? If so, send an email thanking them for their support for children’s mental health issues. Be sure to add something about why it is important to you.

This is also an opportunity to talk about the importance of acceptance. A personal thank you is very powerful. For those in elected office, the number of people they hear from on an issue marks its importance.

- [Visit the NFF Acceptance vs Awareness Pinterest Board](#)
- [Why the A now stands for Acceptance](#)
- [Writing Your Legislator](#)

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May 10th

## What is Advocacy?

Advocacy can take many forms and be effective on many levels. Begin to explore advocacy by watching a video.

- [Families, Make Your Voices Heard: An Introduction to Advocacy](#)
- [Visit the NFF Advocacy Videos Pinterest Board](#)
- [Telling Your Story with a Purpose Video](#)

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May 11<sup>th</sup>

## What Does it Mean to be an Advocate for Mental Health?

Get tips for becoming a mental health advocate.

- [Visit the NFF How to Be an Advocate Pinterest Board](#)
- [6 Ways to Become a Mental Health Advocate \(healthcentral.com\)](#)

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May 12<sup>th</sup>

## What is Mental Health Parity?

The 2008 Federal Parity Law requires insurers to cover illnesses of the brain, such as depression or addiction, no more restrictively than illnesses of the body, such as diabetes or cancer. Unfortunately, many insurers are still not following the law.

**Learn about Mental Health Parity.**

- Watch [The System We Need Parity](#)
- [What is Mental Health Parity Infographic](#)
- [Visit the NFF Parity Pinterest Board](#)
- [Do not Deny Me Infographic](#)
- [Do not Be Denied Infographic](#)



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## May 13th *Take a Deeper Dive into Parity*

Have you or someone you know experienced a parity violation? Learn more about violations and how to appeal a denial and who can help you in your state. What are the federal and state parity laws that affect you?

- Visit [Parity Track](#)
- [Examples of Common Violations](#)
- [State Parity Reports](#)
- [Federal Reports](#)
- [Do not Deny Me](#)
- [Parity Resources by State – Where to find help](#)
- [Parity Registry](#)

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## *Explore the National Federation of Families Legislative and Advocacy Webpages*

## May 14<sup>th</sup>

Spend today getting familiar with the National Federation of Families Legislative and Advocacy webpages. They can be a source of guidance for you on your advocacy journey.

- [Legislation and Advocacy | National Federation of Families](#)
- [Staying Up to Date](#)
- [Legislation to Know](#)
  - Latest legislative actions and policies that affect you
  - How legislation and policies are being implemented
- [National](#)
  - Information about navigating committees
  - Find sources for national legislative information
- [From the States](#)
  - Find sources for legislative information in your state
  - Find your state legislators
- [Resources By State](#)
  - Listing of state advocacy organizations
  - Links to each state's legislative websites
  - Find your state's Medicaid Director
  - Find your state's Mental Health Commissioner
- [Advocacy Toolkit](#)
  - Learn advocacy basics
  - Get tools and resources to build your advocacy skills
  - Find tips for writing and speaking as an advocate

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## May 15th *Dig Deeper into Advocacy*

Now that you know more about what advocacy is and what it means to be an advocate, it is time to dig a little deeper. Explore one or more advocacy tools. Determine how you can be most effective in sharing your voice.

- Visit the [Advocacy Toolkit | National Federation of Families \(fcmh.org\)](#) and click on Help Me Learn to Advocate



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May 16th

## *Identify the Ways You Will Keep Up to Date on Advocacy Issues*

There is so much happening that it is hard to keep up. Identify a couple of sources you will follow to get your advocacy news.

- [National Federation of Families Legislative and Advocacy Page](#)
  - [Where to find Legislative and Advocacy Updates Nationally](#)
  - [Where to find Legislative and Advocacy Updates in Your State](#)
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May 17<sup>th</sup>

## *Create your Personal Advocacy List*

Advocacy needs to occur at national, state, and local levels. Advocacy with the right person at the right level is when you can be most effective. You need to know your representatives at every level, how to reach them and what might help connect you to them.

- Create a list of all your representatives and how to reach them.
- Keeping it on your computer would allow you to easily add links to reach them.
- Later in your advocacy journey, be sure to keep track of when and why you contacted them.

*Where to find your representatives:*

- [Who Represents Me? Elected Officials Lookup](#)  
When you enter your address, this site will pull up all your representatives and their contact information. It will give you their contact information, website, email, and links to their social media accounts.
  - Locate your [mayor](#) by name, city, or population size.
  - Find your [county executive](#) (the head of the executive branch of government in your county) by map search or your ZIP Code.
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May 18<sup>th</sup>

## *Learn About Your LOCAL Legislators*

Look at your **Personal Advocacy List**.

Who is your mayor, county commissioner, school board representative, etc.?

- Visit their websites to learn more about each of them.
- Make notes of anything related to mental health that they mention.
- Look for ways you can connect with them on a personal, common ground level.
- Sign up for any newsletters they offer.

*Where to find your representatives:*

- [Who Represents Me? Elected Officials Lookup](#)  
When you enter your address, this site will pull up all your representatives and their contact information. It will give you their contact information, website, email, and links to their social media accounts.
  - Locate your [mayor](#) by name, city, or population size.
  - Find your [county executive](#) (the head of the executive branch of government in your county) by map search or your ZIP Code.
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May 19th

## *Mental Health Action Day*

Action looks different for everyone. Mental Health Action Day encourages and empowers people to take action for themselves, their loved ones, or their community according to their personal preference. National Federation of Families is one of the sponsors for this day of action. Today take an action you are comfortable with to promote mental health as health.

- Post a Mental Health Action Day GIF on your social media.
  - [Social Media for Mental Health - NFF Pinterest Board](#)
  - [Day of Action Video](#)
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May 20th

## *Learn About Your STATE Representation*

Time to find your state representatives. Look at your Personal Advocacy List. At the state level you will want to learn about your governor, state senator, and state representative.

- Visit your state representative, state senator, and governor's websites.
- Make notes of anything related to mental health they mention.
- Look for ways you can connect with them on a personal, common ground level.
- Sign up for any newsletters they offer.

*Where to find your representatives:*

- [Who Represents Me? Elected Officials Lookup](#)
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May 21st

## *Learn About Your NATIONAL Representation*

Now it is time to look at your national representatives - to learn about your senators and congressional representatives. Get that Personal Advocacy List.

- Visit each of senator's websites.
- Visit the website of your congressional representative.
- Be sure to make note of any committees they serve on.
- Make notes of anything related to mental health they mention.
- Look for ways to make a personal connection with them.
- Sign up for any newsletters they offer.

*Where to find your representatives:*

- [Who Represents Me? Elected Officials Lookup](#)
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May 22nd

## *Follow those Legislators!*

Social media is a tool legislators use. You can too! Following them allows you to see what they are posting and tells you what is important to them. Use social media to communicate with your legislators. Follow them on Facebook, Twitter, etc. Comment on their posts and tag them in your posts about issues. Always be polite.

- Grab that **Personal Advocacy List**
- Follow all your representatives on all their social media.

*Where to find your representatives social media accounts:*

- [Who Represents Me? Elected Officials Lookup](#)
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May 23rd

## *Learn How to Communicate with your Legislator*

Now that you have identified, learned about, and are following your representatives, it is time to learn how to be most effective in communicating with them. Nearly all congressional staffers said letters from their constituents influence an undecided lawmaker, whether sent via mail (90%) or email (88%).

- [Visit the NFF Contacting Your Legislator Pinterest Board](#)
  - [How to Write Your Legislator \(cgrcengage.com\)](#)
  - [Partnership to End Addiction 2020 Advocacy Toolkit \(drugfree.org\)](#) pages 9 to 12 have the best tips!
  - [Writing Your Legislator: A Guide](#)
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May 24th

## *Attend the NFF Youth Panel*

Hear firsthand from a panel of young adults as they reflect on what acceptance of their mental health needs would have meant for them as children/youth.

[Register here](#) to join us from 2:00 PM - 3:30 PM ET.

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May 25th

## *Get Active with those State Legislators*

You can make a significant difference in just 15 minutes! Email your state elected officials – governor, mayor, state senator and state representative, and share your opinions about the major policy issues affecting you and your community.

- Email and ask which bills they are supporting to promote children’s mental health.
  - If you can, mention something you learned about them from their website or Facebook.
  - Be sure and record your contact with them on your Personal Advocacy List.
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May 26<sup>th</sup>

## *Get Active with those National Legislators*

Nearly all congressional staffers say letters will influence an undecided lawmaker, whether sent via mail (90%) or email (88%).

- Email or write to your congressperson and senator.
  - Ask which bills they are supporting to promote mental health.
  - Mention something you learned about them from their website or Facebook page.
  - Be sure and note your contact with them on your Personal Advocacy List.
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May 27th

## *Learn about Committees*

Learn how to watch **committees**, who serves on them, and why they are important. Get your Personal Advocacy List, find a committee your legislator is on and plan to watch a session. Then follow up by email to let your legislator know you watched the meeting.

Did you know most committees have Facebook pages you can follow?

- Visit [How to Navigate Committees](#) on NFF Legislative and Advocacy pages.
  - Find committee and committee schedule on the [National tab](#) on NFF’s Legislative and Advocacy Pages.
  - [Committee Schedules](#) | [Committee Reports](#) | [Floor Calendars](#)
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# ADVOCACY EVERY DAY IN MAY

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May 28th

## *Write a Letter to the Editor of Your Local Paper about the Importance of Mental Health*

The best op-eds and letters to the editor use a personal story to help the reader understand an issue. Now is the time to put all you have learned this month into action. Share why mental health acceptance is critical and do not forget to end with a call to action.

- [Planning an Op-Ed or Letter to the Editor Worksheet](#)
  - [Mental-Health-Op-Ed-Toolkit.pdf \(nasmhpd.org\)](#)
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May 29th

## *What is Legislative Advocacy?*

It is educating about certain issues to influence the introduction, enactment, or modification of legislation. Take today to learn more about legislative advocacy.

- [Advocacy 101 Video](#)
  - [How to Be an Effective Advocate \(aacap.org\)](#)
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May 30th

## *Commit to be a Mental Health Advocate Year-Round*

You can impact change in your local community by being an advocate for mental health. Policy change is one way you can make a difference. This month you've taken the first steps.

- *Be Aware* – Knowing your Legislators and how to connect with them is the first step to being a mental health advocate.
  - *Be Present* – Follow your legislators' social media, read their newsletters, and attend their town halls.
  - *Stay Connected* – Staying connected with legislators and proposed legislation is the final step of being a mental health advocate.
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May 31st

## *Maintain your Commitment*

Commit to staying on top of mental health issues and advocacy opportunities happening nationally and in your state.

- Do this by following the [National Federation of Families Legislation and Advocacy Facebook page](#). Repost from the page throughout this year on topics and issues that are important to you.
- Connect with those doing advocacy in your community.
- Stay connected to your elected officials.

It's important that they hear the positives of what they are doing from you as well.

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Stay  
Connected

[Legislation and Advocacy | National Federation of Families \(ffcmh.org\)](#)

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