

# ALAMEDA COUNTY FAMILY CHILD CARE COALITION MEDIA & ADVOCACY TRAINING TOOLKIT



Project supported by





# Alameda County Family Child Care Coalition

*...helping one make informed decisions about licensed family child care...*

July 19, 2005

On behalf of Alameda County Family Child Care Coalition we are proud to present the **Media and Advocacy Training Toolkit**. This set of documents was created as a resource for family child care providers to encourage providers to engage in media and community advocacy on behalf of the family child care industry and family child care providers in Alameda County.

The Family Child Care Coalition is made up of representatives from each of the family child care associations in Alameda County. The Coalition's mission is to educate Alameda County's communities, local businesses, and legislators about the contributions and challenges impacting the licensed family child care provider industry's workforce, political visions, and families they serve.

With these goals of advocacy and education in mind, a group of representatives from the Coalition associations worked in coordination with Every Child Counts/Alameda County First Five and the Alameda County Child Care Planning Council to create this media and advocacy training resource. To provide the highest quality of advice and training, the media and advocacy project hired a media consultant to provide professional expertise and advice. We recognize the importance of successful advocacy – and the knowledge and practice necessary to achieve successful advocacy – in creating positive policy changes and increasing general knowledge of these important issues. We hope that this toolkit will be useful for any family child care providers interested in making positive contributions to family child care advocacy.

This toolkit is also available for distribution in electronic format at the Planning Council's website: [www.acgov.org/childcare](http://www.acgov.org/childcare). For further information about this project, contact Lea Eaglin at (510) 875-2412. For further information on the Family Child Care Coalition, contact Angie Garling at (510) 208-9675 or Barbara Terrell at (510) 436-6043.



*Our mission is to educate Alameda's communities, local businesses, and legislators about the contributions and challenges impacting the licensed family child care provider industry's workforce, political visions, and the families they serve.*

**The Coalition of Alameda County  
Licensed Family Child Care Providers**

Alameda Family Day Care Association  
Asociación De Proveedoras Latinas  
Association of Professional Child Care Educators  
Berkeley-Albany Licensed Day Care Operators Association  
East Oakland Licensed Child Care Association  
Oakland Licensed Day Care Operators Association  
Southern Alameda County Child Care Association  
Valley Family Child Care Association

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**Alameda County Family Child Care Coalition**  
**Media and Advocacy Training Toolkit**

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# General Message Points

- **Family child care providers are an indispensable resource for thousands of parents in your district.**
  - For hard working parents, family child care means there's one more caring adult around the corner who has a loving connection to their child over the years.
  - We're part of a vital support network for parents – sometimes the *only* source of reliable support – especially for single mothers.
  
- **When it comes to child care, parents need as many choices as possible.**
  - Family child care is a first choice for hundreds of thousands of parents across the state who want their children to learn and grow in a n intimate, private setting with a small group of children.
  - Every child has different needs. We pride ourselves on being able to tend to children's emotional and educational needs individually. We're happy to let you hear from parents who can testify about the difference we've made for their kids.
  
- **We are licensed by the state, and it's important that policy makers recognize us as the professionals we are.**
  - As licensed early educators, we take advantage of ongoing training and professional development.
  - We are experts when it comes to structuring activities to nurture children's curiosity and stimulate their development.
  - We're trained to recognize the different learning needs of different children. We use our training and our years of experience to prepare children to succeed in school.
  
- **Family child care offers many advantages.**
  - In family child care, the ratio of children to adults is generally smaller than you would find in a child care center.
  - Children get continuity with one caring adult who sees them every day. Parents get flexibility, convenience and support – we are an around-the-clock resource for families.
  
- **Family child care providers are as diverse as California.**
  - Family child care providers are ethnically diverse and speak many languages. We help ensure that parents can find child care that honors their child's cultural heritage.
  
- **We're part of the backbone of California's economy.**
  - Our hard work supports the state's social and economic infrastructure – we're not always visible, but we're critical to the economic vitality and quality of life here.
  - We help sustain the workforce by enabling parents to take new jobs, remain in existing jobs and training programs, and return to work after a period of disability or unemployment.
  
- **Many parents are in desperate need of dependable, high quality child care.**
  - Many communities in California have a “supply gap” in child care and/or infant care. Licensed family child care providers are ready and able to fill that gap with accessible, flexible child care.

# Talking to Parents About Family Child Care

You can use your conversations with parents to:

- Educate parents about the differences between family child care and center-based child care.
- Market your services!
- Raise awareness of the “social benefit” of the hard work you do – the contributions of licensed family child providers to Alameda County communities;
- Build support for the advocacy work of your family child care association or planning council. (When it comes to winning public policies that recognize and include family child care providers, parents’ voices can make a real difference.)

**Family child care offers many unique advantages.**

- **Intimacy**
  - “In family child care, the ratio of children to adults is generally smaller than you would find in a child care center. We’re able to offer individual attention in a relaxed, nurturing environment.”
- **Choice**
  - “Family child care comes in many sizes - homes with just a handful of children and others that accept more children and are staffed by several adults. Different providers offer a wide range of teaching styles and activities for parents to choose from.”
- **Flexibility**
  - “We know how hard parents work to juggle child care and make ends meet. We try our best to be flexible and available when work schedules change or crises arise.”
- **Stability**
  - “We’ve chosen family child care as a career because we love children and enjoy playing a part in their development and growth. We’re not going anywhere, so you don’t have to worry about ‘turnover.’”
- **Continuity**
  - “In family child care, children get continuity with one caring adult who sees them every day. The stability can really make a difference in kids’ lives, especially when they’re going through a rough time at home or at school.”
- **Special bonds**
  - “Family child care providers share responsibility for each child’s learning and growth. There’s a bond with the parent, rooted in trust, that endures over years.”
  - “Because we care for children in small groups, we’re able to get to know each child as a unique and special person with needs and moods and joys all their own.”

➤ **Support for parents and families**

- “We know that moms and dads sometimes need support to meet the challenges of parenting. We use our experience as parents and caregivers to offer practical information, advice and moral support.”
- “For parents, family child care means there’s one more caring adult around the corner who has a loving connection to their child over time.”

➤ **Ties to cultural heritage**

- “The Bay Area is home to thousands of family child care providers who speak Spanish, Cantonese, Hindi and just about every other language on earth. For parents who are raising bilingual, bi-cultural children, family child care is often the perfect fit.”
- “I use my knowledge of African history and traditions to create a bi-cultural learning environment. It’s important that the children in this neighborhood know about the history and pride of Black culture in the U.S.”

➤ **Mixed age groups**

- “In many family child care homes, older children model learning and social skills for younger ones, and in the process they learn how to be patient and creative in steering a child’s attention. It makes for a lively learning environment where different stages of development are going on at the same time.”

➤ **Special needs**

- “Many child care providers are equipped to provide specialized care to children with special needs.”

➤ **School Readiness**

- “High quality family child care providers offer a preschool curriculum wrapped around a full day quality day care program, helping to prepare young children on the road to a successful scholastic career.”

**Family child care providers are a critical resource for families in Alameda County.**

- “In cities across the county, the demand for child care exceeds the supply. Licensed family child care providers are ready and able to help fill this gap with high quality home-based child care for children of all ages from infants and toddlers to preschoolers and school-age children.”
- “Family child care providers are small business owners who make a significant contribution to our regional economy. More than \$84 million in revenue is generated each year by family child care homes in Alameda County alone.”
- High quality family child care providers are well educated, understand child development and offer a preschool curriculum that helps prepare children for kindergarten and later school success.

# Talking to Other Providers About Family Child Care

*In conversations with other licensed family child care providers, you have the opportunity to:*

- *Relate to one another on common ground by communicating that you understand the challenges involved in running a home based child care business.*
- *Share your conviction that family child care providers deserve recognition and respect.*
- *Let the person you're talking with know that there are thousands of providers like her/him in the Bay Area who are interested in "lifting up" family child care by strengthening the political voices of providers.*
- *Introduce your family child care association and invite her/him to get involved.*

*Because one of the goals is to make the voices of providers louder, stronger, and more unified, **you may want to include in each conversation an invitation to join your association, come to a meeting, or some other form of involvement.** That way you're helping to grow the number of people who are able to speak up and speak out on behalf of family child care.*

*Use the talking points below as a starting point. Practice your own ideas for extending the conversation by inviting participation.*

## ➤ **Professionalism**

- "We are early childhood educators. As *professionals*, we invest a tremendous amount of time and resources to earn our licenses and run our businesses. We deserve to be recognized for our roles as experienced educators who are committed to high quality care."
- Here is an example of how, following on the talking point above, you might invite the provider you're talking with to get more involved:

*"Would you be interested in coming to a meeting next month to talk about what we're doing to educate our local elected officials about family child care?"*

## ➤ **Recognition and Respect**

- "There are more than 44,000 licensed family child care homes in California. \$84 million in revenue is generated each year by family child care homes in Alameda County alone. We are an economic force in this region and we deserve to be recognized as such."
- "In policymaking that affects the child care field, we are entitled to a place at the table. We've been invisible for too long."

- “As providers, we work 50, 60, 70 hours per week. We’re more dedicated than most people can imagine. We deserve to be respected for our hard work preparing kids to succeed in school.”
- “Without us, parents wouldn’t be able to get to work and hold onto their jobs. In addition to our roles as educators, we should be acknowledged for our contributions to the economic health of our communities.”

➤ **Strengthening our Voices**

- “There is a history of family child care providers being left out of decision-making that affects us, and there’s a lot of ignorance about what family child care is and is not. It’s time for us to speak out about the contributions that family child care providers make to children and families. We’re committed, licensed early educators and we’re often the only flexible child care option for parents.”
- “As family child care providers, we’re standing on the shoulders of many generations of home-based providers who came before us. Our struggle for recognition and respect is on behalf of all of us.”

➤ **FCC Associations – a resource for providers**

- “Our family child care association provides a way for us to come together to share information and resources, support one another, and work together strategically to get our messages out.”
- “During the day, many of us work long hours by ourselves. It’s easy to feel isolated. The [insert your association here] is a way we can connect with one another to share strategies about everything from marketing our services to reaching out to elected officials.”

# Talking to Legislators About Family Child Care

*Use this outline when you're at the Capitol talking to Members of the State Legislature and their staff about family child care. On the line next to each point, you might want to jot down the name(s) of teammates who will speak to that point.*

## **Remember:**

- Be polite and a good listener
- Don't assume that the lawmaker or staff member you are talking with is familiar with the child care landscape or with the history, regulations or debates surrounding family child care
- Allow everyone in your delegation to say a few words
- Be sure to stay on topic
- Be sure to manage the time you are allotted
- If you don't know the answer to a tough question, offer to follow up after the meeting

## **Introductions:**

- Choose a Team Leader who will introduce herself and ask everyone else to do so as well. Those who have brought business cards should give them to staff at the beginning of the meeting.
- The Team Leader should be in charge of presenting the Legislator or staff person with the written materials you have prepared in advance.

## **Thank you for taking the time to meet with us.**

- We are at the Capitol today representing more than 500 family child care providers in Alameda County. Together we provide care to thousands of children and make it possible for their parents to get to work.
- There are more than 44,000 licensed family child care providers like us in counties across California.
- We are here to ask the Legislature to acknowledge the role that licensed family child care providers play in providing high quality early education to children across the state.

# Tips for a Successful Legislative Meeting

*Even people with many years experience as advocates can get nervous before meeting with policymakers. Use these tips to go into meetings full of confidence.*

- Be ready to be flexible.
- Think: this could be the beginning of a beautiful relationship.
- Be clear, concise and to the point.
- Make sure you use your time well.
- You got a staff person instead of a legislator? That's just fine!
- Remember that legislators love a local story.
- Got an issue or problem you want to raise? Remember to offer a solution as well.
- Become a resource for legislators who express a sincere interest in child care. Ask about the best way to follow up.
- Don't accuse elected officials or staff members of being ignorant or disrespectful of family child care. You can make your points clearly and forcefully without letting anger or frustration get in the way. Keep your cool.
- You are lifting up family child care, so exemplify the pride you want people to associate with the family child care profession.
- Leave your card or other printed material and take a card when you leave.

# Writing to Elected Officials

*It is important that we tell elected officials what family child care is, why it's important to parents and communities, and why licensed family child care providers need a voice in child care policy.*

*As a family child care provider, you have the opportunity to communicate messages that many elected officials haven't heard before: the advantages of home-based child care, parents' needs for many child care choices, the flexibility that family child care offers and how employers benefit, the importance of early learning that incorporates bilingualism/biculturalism, among many other key points.*

*Emails, postcards, and phone calls are good communication tools, but letters and faxes are the most effective and persuasive way of communicating our views to elected officials.*

## These tips will help you write a persuasive letter:

- **Keep it short.**
  - Limit your letter to one page and one issue.
- **Identify yourself and the issue.**
  - In the first paragraph of your letter state who you are and what issue you are writing about. If you are referring to a specific bill, identify it by number (e.g. H.R. 2372 or S. 1287).
- **Focus on your main points.**
  - Choose the three strongest points to support your argument and develop them clearly. Too much information can distract from your position.
- **Make it personal.**
  - Tell your legislator why the issue matters to you and how it affects you, your family, and your community. Make a connection to the legislator. Did you vote for her? Did you contribute to the campaign?
- **Ask for a reply.**
  - Include your name and address on both your letter and envelope.
- **Trust your voice.**
  - Be polite and take a firm position in your letter. Be confident in your understanding of the issue and remember that the legislator may know less than you. Thank elected officials when they vote the way you want.

## SAMPLE LETTER #1

**Date**

**Your Address**

**Name and address you are writing to**

Dear Assemblywoman/State Senator (**insert name here**)

**Introduce yourself and where you work:** I am a family child care provider who serves (how many families; income range, age range of children, etc.) in \_\_\_\_\_(city). I am also a member of the **name of association here**, a professional organization of licensed family child care providers. [You can write as a group or class or professional staff \(joint letter\) also.](#)

**State your concern/issue:** I (we) am writing about the Preschool for All (PFA) movement in California, and AB172, which is the legislative bill addressing the development of such a program. While I firmly believe in the strong benefits of quality pre-school experiences for children, (we) my colleagues and I are concerned about several aspects of the various proposals for establishment of preschool for all. We urge you to view and to build PFA within the context of our existing early care and education (ECE) system and the needs of families of young children, especially in our demographically changing state.

**Give specifics or examples:** Specifically, we encourage you to address the issues we've listed below as you design the legislation for PFA:

- Include licensed family child care as PFA sites
- Include a full day, full year, high quality option to meet the needs of working parents and provide parental choice of programs for their children
- Include provisions for children with special needs and English as a second language
- Include a plan and resources for facility development, including low cost loans and grants for a wide variety of programs
- Include resources for increasing the compensation and lowering the turnover rate of staff of ECE programs

**Thank you.** Thank you for your attention and support of this important issue. I'm sure that you agree that without adequate attention paid to parents and to the ECE workforce, preschool for all will not succeed. I (we) would be happy to speak with you or your staff at any time about our experiences and the research upon which we base these recommendations. Please do not hesitate to contact me (us). **Phone & email #'s ...**

Sincerely,

**Your Name**

**SAMPLE LETTER #2**

February 15, 2004

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger  
State Capitol Building  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

On behalf of the Alameda County Child Care Planning Council, we submit the attached policy statement regarding your proposed budget for FY 2004-2005.

The Planning Council has serious concerns that the mechanisms to eliminate the budget deficit are not balanced and should include revenue enhancements to avoid devastating cuts to educational, social services and health services to our state's most vulnerable populations.

The cumulative cuts to services in child care, health care, social services, and increased fees amount to taxing our lowest income families and threatening their ability to become self-sufficient and contribute to California's economic health.

Alameda County is home to three child care resource and referral agencies, seven alternative payment programs, more than 40 center-based, subsidized child care programs, and eight family child care associations, all of which participate in the Planning Council at some level. These constituencies, along with an active parent, community and public agency representation, bring a wealth of information from the field and a keen eye based on years of experience with child care subsidy programs. On January 31, the Planning Council passed a unanimous motion in support of the attached policy statement and recommendations.

Please do not hesitate to contact Angie Garling, Planning Council Coordinator, at (510) 208-9675, if you have any questions or would like further information.

Sincerely,

Rosemary Obeid  
Planning Council Chair

**Attachment**

cc: Alameda County State Legislative Delegation  
Members of the Legislative Women's Caucus  
Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell  
Alameda County Federal Legislative Delegation  
Planning Council Steering Committee

# Tips: Writing Letters to the Editor

*Letters to the Editor are one of the most widely read sections of the newspaper and reach a large audience. They allow community members to comment on the way issues are being addressed in the media and to influence what topics the local paper covers. Elected officials often monitor this section of the newspaper and take notice of constituents' opinions.*

*Due to strict space limitations in newspapers, not all letters will be published, but the more letters the newspaper receives on a certain topic, the more likely they are to run at least one letter on the topic. Check the letter guidelines in your local paper and use these tips to write an effective letter to the editor:*

➤ **Keep it short and focused.**

- Many newspapers have strict length limits and edit letters for space. A concise, single-issue letter has a better chance of retaining its salient points and keeping the reader's interest.

➤ **Make specific references.**

- While some newspapers will print general commentary letters, most prefer letters that respond to a specific article. Here are some ways to refer to an article:

*"I am writing in response to the recent editorial about the importance of universal preschool by Assemblywoman Wilma Chan."*

➤ **Be factual and highlight aspects of the issue that haven't been previously addressed.**

*"Children thrive with a caring adult who is knowledgeable in child development and who provides a stimulating environment. That environment can be a licensed family child care home..."*

➤ **Include your contact information.**

- Many newspapers will only publish a letter to the editor after verifying the author's contact information. When printed, the letter will usually only include your name and city.

➤ **Type your letter and sign it.**

➤ **Don't forget to send letters to smaller newspapers as well as large ones.**

- Small newspapers are more likely to print your letter and the letter can then spark local community action.

# Sample Letters to the Editor

## Child care professionals educate

*Printed in Oakland Tribune, Sunday, March 2, 2005. 193 words.*

I am writing in response to the recent editorial about the importance of universal preschool by Wilma Chan, chairperson of the Assembly Health Committee. As a family child care provider, I wish I could have taken part in the imaginary park bench conversation with the governor Chan describes.

Chan addressed many of the reasons that passage of universal preschool legislation is important and necessary, but her editorial left out one very important factor: the role of family child care professionals in providing safe, nurturing early education to California's preschoolers.

As licensed child care professionals, family child care providers specialize in structuring activities to nurture children's curiosity and stimulate their development. Because we care for kids in intimate settings with low child-to-adult ratios, we are able to work with children one-on-one, and offer special attention to those who absorb new concepts more slowly. In addition to focusing on intellectual development, we give young children the affection and encouragement they need to feel confident.

As the drive toward universal preschool gains speed, it is critical that family child care providers be included in the conversation and the legislation.

Barbara Douglass, Oakland

## Time to notice

*Printed in The Argus on Saturday, April 16, 2005. 211 words.*

THE PUBLIC has read and heard a great deal about the importance of universal preschool.

Communities like San Mateo and Los Angeles are launching broad efforts to offer a preschool education to all 4-year-olds.

I am a family child care provider and read an earlier opinion piece by Assemblywoman Wilma Chan in which she imagines a park bench conversation with the governor. If I had been on that park bench with them, I would have discussed the benefits of quality family child care to California's preschool-aged children.

There are many of us who provide child care in our homes who also have the requisite credentials to give credibility to our chosen profession.

I am one of many who possess a preschool teaching credential from the state of California. This coveted document, signed by the governor, says that I am qualified to teach preschool.

The only difference is that I do so in my home instead of a large center.

Studies show that most young children do better in a smaller, more nurturing environment.

It is time for the public to notice our ability and willingness to provide a quality preschool education.

We have the education and the experience it takes. Send us the children.

Lynda Schwabe, Union City

# Planning and Practicing for Your Media Event

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Decide on your target audience:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why do you want coverage?</li> <li>• Who do you want to reach?</li> <li>• Which media reach your target audience?</li> </ul> </li>   <li>➤ <b>Be a media consumer:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read, watch, listen.</li> <li>• Identify writers, themes.</li> </ul> </li>   <li>➤ <b>Compile your “media database”:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• make a list of media outlets, stories you liked, and reporters.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Build your media list</b></li>   <li>➤ <b>Practice pitching your story:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• role-play a busy reporter.</li> <li>• role-play an interested reporter.</li> <li>• role-play a disinterested reporter.</li> <li>• role-play what you’ll say if you get a reporter’s voice mail.</li> </ul> </li>   <li>➤ <b>Draft your press release:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• find a headline that grabs attention.</li> <li>• use active verbs and evoke images.</li> <li>• organize the release as an “inverted pyramid,” with date and time in the first paragraph.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Finish the press release</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• verify phones and faxes</li> <li>• check spellings of names</li> <li>• get approval for quotations</li> </ul> </li>   <li>➤ <b>Write down your talking points</b></li>   <li>➤ <b>Choose spokespeople:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• practice talking points, interviewing</li> </ul> </li>   <li>➤ <b>Continue developing your media list</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Send out your press release</b></li>   <li>➤ <b>Pitch to reporters</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use your 30-second sound bite.</li> <li>• have all the who, what, when, where, why written down and get comfortable delivering it.</li> </ul> </li>   <li>➤ <b>Continue pitching</b></li>   <li>➤ <b>Start interviewing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• remember: interviews are not conversations.</li> <li>• prepare, prepare, prepare!</li> <li>• use the event to get out the key messages that will lift up family child care.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Adapted from Media Alliance’s Media How-To Guidebook, by Marianne Manilov (1999).

# Planning and Practicing for Your Media Event

*You can use these simple tips when talking to the public through the media, or when you're making a presentation at a meeting, or when you're talking with an elected official or other opinion leader.*

- **Practice, practice, practice.**
  - Practice what you want to say in advance, preferably a few days or a week in advance.
  - Decide what you want listeners to take away from your speech or what you would like reporters to record as your “sound bite.” Which key messages have you chosen to express? Choose one or two.
  
- **Stick to what you know, and be confident in your knowledge.**
  - Think about how what you have to say fits into the bigger picture, the bigger story. What is *your* contribution? If you're an expert in family child care (as you are), then don't feel like you have to answer questions about the fine points of the governor's budget, for example.
  - Stay on message and be confident. (If you *are* loaded with facts about the governor's budget and want to comment on it, and you can tie your opinion to a key message about family child care, that's another story!)
  
- **Get the scoop before your media event or speaking engagement.**
  - If you're speaking at a rally or a press conference, get the details before the event starts so that you'll know what's going on and when you're on deck. What's the set-up like? How many minutes are you expected to speak? Who is before you and after you? How will the event end?
  
- **Visualize yourself giving your speech.**
  - Imagine yourself speaking, your voice loud, clear, and assured. When you visualize yourself as successful, you will be successful.
  
- **Turn nervousness into positive energy.**
  - Harness your nervous energy and transform it into vitality and enthusiasm.
  
- **If you're making a speech or providing testimony to a committee, start off in a way that grabs attention.**
  - For example, you could raise a thought-provoking question, say something controversial, recite a quotation or even make a joke. Once you have won the attention of the audience, you can move seamlessly into your key messages.
  
- **Don't apologize.**
  - If you mention your nervousness or apologize for any problems you think you have in expressing yourself, you may be calling the audience's attention to something they hadn't noticed. Keep silent.

- **Speak from the heart.**
  - Don't read a script. Craft and practice your speech ahead of time by writing out a two to three minute statement.
  - Time yourself. If you need to, carry a note card with your messages on it, and key words to jog your memory.
  
- **Use emotion, but make it work for you.**
  - Think about how you want to come across. If you're angry because people in power misunderstand or disrespect family child care, how can you make your anger work *for* you? What's the difference between coming across as angry, reasonable, powerful and determined, and coming across as just plain angry?
  
- **Get personal.**
  - Use a personal story to make your testimony more memorable, more powerful.
  
- **Be body conscious.**
  - Don't fidget. Think about where you want to make eye contact.
  
- **Speak up!**
  - Project your voice to make sure you're heard.
  
- **Plan for distractions.**
  - Think in advance about what you will do if someone interrupts or even heckles you, or if there's another distraction, like a plane flying overhead or a TV camera shining a light in your eyes.
  
- **Feel the love.**
  - Keep in mind that the people you're talking to want to hear what you have to say - they want you to succeed in getting your message across. Even people who aren't necessarily advocates for family child care are interested to hear your views on what's best for children and parents. (With reporters, you won't *feel* the love, but you can imagine it's there).
  
- **Gain experience.**
  - Experience builds confidence, which is the key to effective speaking.
  
- **Lift up family child care.**
  - The goal is to educate people about the contributions that licensed family child care providers make to communities, families and to the economy.
  - In calling for changes, criticize policies, not people. Don't cast center-based child care workers or parents in a negative light.
  
- **Remember:**
  - This is not about you. It's about lifting up family child care! If you don't step up to the plate, who will?

\* Note: Several of the above tips are adapted from Toastmasters International ([www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org))



# Talking to Reporters About Family Child Care

Use this outline to help you prepare to be interviewed by a member of the media.

➤ **Remember:**

- Don't simply answer a reporter's questions; respond with your messages!
- Try your best to speak in sound bites.
- Never lie or wing it. (Everything is on the record.)
- If it's appropriate, tell a story that's personal.
- Don't assume the reporter knows much about child care or family child care. (Or children, for that matter!)
- Always return reporters calls before deadline.

➤ **Introduce yourself with confidence.**

- When a reporter asks your name and affiliation, identify yourself in a way that underscores your professionalism and dedication:

*"My name is Rosi Reyes. I'm the owner of Rosi's Early Learning Lab in Oakland. I've been running my business for four years and I've become a real resource for parents in this neighborhood. I'm a member of the East Bay Family Child Care Association – we represent more than 200 licensed family child care providers in East Oakland."*

- Spell your name to make sure he or she gets it right. Don't be offended if a reporter asks your age – this is journalistic routine!

➤ **Think of reporters' questions as opportunities to lift up family child care.**

- Reporters often ask broad, general questions. This gives you lots of freedom to respond in ways that allow you to be strategic in getting your message out.

- **Tell me about your background. How did you get into family child care?**  
*(If you have a personal story that's unusual, impressive or important to you, this question gives you an opening to share it.)*

- **What's the most rewarding thing about being a family child care provider?**

*"There are countless ways to nurture the natural curiosity of children and stimulate learning. I see small, significant changes in each child and I know I'm playing a role in that child's development."*

- **Why would parents choose to place their child in family child care?**

*“Many parents prefer home-based child care because we offer flexibility. When work schedules change or crises arise, we’re often the only safety net that parents can count on.”*

*“Parents love the fact that their child can have a special bond with one caregiver day in and day out. I see that child every day and I’m able to understand his moods and needs.”*

- **If voters approve a ballot measure for Universal Preschool, who will be the winners?**

*“When voters invest in childcare, everyone wins.”*

*“Universal Pre-K is a step in the right direction, but it’s not sufficient. We need to continue to expand child care choices available to parents.”*

*“We’re using the ballot measure as an opportunity to recognize the women who have provided home-based, licensed family child care in the Bay Area since World War II, long before voters recognized that pre-school should be a right accessible to every child.”*

*“We need to continue to expand further the child care choices available to parents. Family child care is a choice that more and more people are talking about.”*

- **Don’t feel you have to answer a question that makes you uncomfortable.**

- If you aren’t comfortable answering a question or don’t know the answer, tell the reporter you’ll get back to him or her, or refer them to someone else who you know will be able to respond quickly. Avoid saying “no comment.”

- **Remember to respond to the question and then stop talking.**

- Don’t feel that you need to fill silence with words.

- **Remember that reporters may use a tone that sounds antagonistic. Don’t be put off.**

- They’re practicing what they learned in journalism school – that you ask tough questions in an effort to get at all sides of the story.

