

Be a Backyard Advocate



Attention Congress:
Fully Fund ESSA!
#MoreTitleIV





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You don't have to go all the way to Capitol Hill for your voice to be heard on the value of health education and physical education in schools. Throughout the year, members of Congress return home from Washington, DC, to their state and district offices to meet with constituents about key issues in their state.

This is the perfect opportunity for you to visit your senators and representatives — or their key staff members — and urge them to support health and physical education in schools.

This type of “backyard advocacy” is especially critical this year as the new federal education law, the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), is implemented. Senators and representatives need to hear from their constituents about the importance of adequately funding ESSA in order to give states and schools the resources they need to support a well-rounded education for all students.

While the concept of meeting with a senator or representative might feel intimidating, this toolkit provides a step-by-step guide that covers the entire process, from assembling a team of colleagues to following up after the visit. It also provides specific suggestions about connecting personal stories to your message and all the materials you'll need to bring to your meeting. In addition, the toolkit includes the 2017 U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives calendars that show when senators and representatives will be in their state and district offices.

We hope you will consider using this toolkit to schedule a meeting with your members of Congress and become a backyard advocate!

Purpose of Backyard Advocacy Visits

When members of Congress know that their constituents care about health and physical education, they vote accordingly. Establishing and fostering relationships with your senators and representatives is crucial to gaining their support for key programs in ESSA that will offer access to funding for health and physical education programs.

ESSA identifies school health and physical education as part of a student's “well-rounded education” along with other subjects such as art, music, civics, science and more. This new



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federal education legislation provides increased access to funds for health and physical education programs, and allows states and school districts to set their own priorities for funding and accountability.

States and school districts will be implementing ESSA in the 2017-18 school year and allocating funding across all subjects and program areas. In order to ensure that health and physical education programs have access to as much funding as possible, we must call on Congress to appropriate full funding for all Titles under ESSA. It's critical to have a voice for health and physical education at the table as decisions are made in the months ahead.

In your backyard advocacy visits you will:

- Educate your members of Congress about the status of health and physical education programs in your state or congressional district;
- Educate your members of Congress about the ESSA process in your state, including whether health and physical education have been represented in the state ESSA plan;
- Ask your members of Congress to support full funding of Title IV, Part A in ESSA at the authorized level of \$1.65 billion for FY 2018;
- Ask your members of Congress to support full funding of Title II, Part A in ESSA at the authorized level of \$2.295 billion for FY 2018;
- Ask your members of Congress to support after-school programs by funding Title IV, Part B of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* at its authorized amount of \$1.1 billion for FY 2018.

Planning Your Backyard Advocacy Visit

BEFORE THE VISIT

- 1. Get a team together:** Before you meet with your members of Congress, get a team together. A meeting team ideally includes constituents from the legislator's state or congressional district. Be strategic in finding team members who best represent health and physical education within your state and who can commit to building an ongoing relationship with the legislator. The meeting group can consist of anywhere between two to six people in order to ensure everyone has the opportunity to contribute in the meeting.



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- 2. Learn about who represents your community in Congress:** Go to the SHAPE America Legislative Action Center [Directory webpage](#) to find your members of Congress. Enter your home address and click go. Then, click on each legislator to see a list of their state and district offices. Phone numbers will be listed for each office, which you can use to call and schedule a meeting with the legislator and/or their state and district staff. You'll also be able to see what congressional committees they serve on, access a link to their website, and see a list of any upcoming town hall meetings they have scheduled.
- 3. Know his/her record on education:** Find out how your legislator feels about ESSA and health and physical education. Their website and an internet search will give you a good picture of their voting record and what they have said about education in the past. You can also see how they voted on ESSA here: [Senate vote](#), [House of Representatives vote](#).
- 4. Schedule a meeting:** Call the local offices of your member of Congress to request a meeting with them about ESSA and health and physical education. Introduce yourself and tell them where you live so it's clear that you are a constituent. Make sure to tell them how people will be in attendance. If the legislator is unavailable, ask to meet with a staffer who works on education issues. Be persistent and don't be discouraged if you need to follow up in order to get a meeting scheduled.
- 5. Have a meeting plan:** Before you visit your legislator, coordinate with the other meeting participants to decide who will be the facilitator, who will tell the personal story, who will share specific issue area points, and who will make the "asks." Practice by role playing before the day of your meeting so everyone feels comfortable with their role and knows what to do. Check out the [SPEAK Out! Day webpage](#) to download materials that you can print out and use during your meetings.

The facilitator will kick off the meeting by introducing your group, explaining the purpose for the meeting, and asking each person attending to briefly introduce themselves. The facilitator will also jump in if the meeting goes off track, redirecting the conversation as needed.

The personal story is key to every meeting. At least one of the meeting attendees should be able to provide a story about a great health and physical education program in the state/congressional district, a story about how students have been impacted by health and physical education, or a story about how health and physical education programs in the state/congressional district have been negatively impacted by cuts to funding or lack of support. Telling these stories will help bring to life the need for increased access to funding for health and physical education programs under ESSA.



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6. Meeting talking points: Your group should plan to make specific points about ESSA and health and physical education, including but not limited to: the inclusion of health and physical education in federal education law for the first time, the opportunity for states and school districts to support health and physical education programs through ESSA funding, and the result of cuts to funding for health and physical education programs as a consequence of the exclusion of these subjects in *No Child Left Behind*. It will be helpful to have one person take on one or more of these issues to show they are distinctly important. See the [meeting talking points document](#) to find a list of key points to address during the meeting. To find more background information about ESSA and these key points, visit the [Top 10 Tools for ESSA website](#) and your [state advocacy toolkit](#).

7. Prepare your “asks”: Making the specific ask is a critical part of the visit. The asks for your meeting are:

- Please support bipartisan congressional intent by funding Title IV, Part A of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* at its authorized amount of \$1.65 billion for FY 2018.
- Please support professional development for educators by funding Title II, Part A of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* at its authorized amount of \$2.295 billion for FY 2018.
- Please support after-school programs by funding Title IV, Part B of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* at its authorized amount of \$1.1 billion for FY 2018.
- Please send your state’s superintendent of education and/or governor a letter requesting that they support health and physical education as they prioritize and distribute federal education funding across the state.

The asks are clearly listed on the back of our [PE + Health = Student Success](#) flier, which you should distribute during the meeting. Listen carefully and ask for clarification if any answers are vague. Offer to follow up for a clear answer to your “asks” or if they request more information.

DURING THE VISIT

Below is a suggested meeting framework, but please adapt as needed.

Introductions: The facilitator should start the meeting by thanking the legislator for their time, then introduce the group as representatives of SHAPE America and ask each person to introduce themselves individually. Each participant should state the school or university they represent.

Personal Story: One or two attendees should share a personal story showing the importance of health and physical education in schools within your state or congressional district.



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Specific Issue Points: Provide the legislator or staffer with the meeting materials. Address each specific [meeting talking point](#).

Make your asks: Call their attention to the back side of the [PE + Health = Student Success](#) flier to make the specific asks.

Listen well and take notes. Much of advocacy involves listening, providing opportunities for the legislator to ask questions, looking for indications of the legislator's views, and finding opportunities to provide helpful information or correct misinformation. Ask questions and engage in conversation. Answer questions honestly. If you don't know the answer, say that you don't know but you will find out. Assign one person in the group to follow up.

Thank you and invitation: Thank the legislator or staffer and invite them to visit your school to see a health and physical education program in action. Offer to be a resource to them and remember to get the staffer's business card. Consider asking them to take a photo with your group to post on social media.

AFTER THE VISIT

- 1. Debrief your meeting:** It's important to make sure you and your group are on the same page immediately after leaving the meeting, while the conversation is fresh in your mind. Make sure to leave the office building so your debrief conversation can't be overheard. As a group, review: What did we hear? Did we get what we wanted? What are the next steps? Do we need to collect information to follow up with staff on any questions that arose during the meeting?
- 2. Follow up with your member of Congress:** Send the staffer you met with an email thanking them for their time, providing answers to questions that came up during the meeting, reinforcing your request for support for full funding under ESSA, and inviting them for a school visit. If the member of Congress has been supportive of our issues, thank them for their support.
- 3. Let us know how your visit went:** Share photos from your visit and a meeting summary in the [SHAPE America Backyard Advocates Facebook group](#) so SHAPE America staff can track all backyard advocacy visits and do any necessary follow up. Please also share photos and updates from your meeting on social media using the hashtag #MoreTitleIV. Tag your legislators on Twitter in any pictures or tweets.



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- 4. Continue to engage in the advocacy process:** Don't forget that advocacy is an ongoing process and not just a onetime event. Stay up to date on the latest information about ESSA on the [SHAPE America Legislative Action Center](#). Continue to communicate with your members of Congress on social media and through [SHAPE America's legislative action alerts](#). Stay in touch with your legislators by signing up for their newsletters and email alerts via their websites. In addition, their website is a great place to keep track of their schedule for townhall meetings and tele-townhall meetings, both of which are additional opportunities to ask questions and ADVOCATE!!! Soon, you will be your legislator's go-to resource on health and physical education in your state!

Additional Resources:

- [Top 10 Tools for ESSA for Health and Physical Educators](#)
- [Getting Started with ESSA: A Guide for Health and Physical Educators](#)
- [PE + Health = Student Success](#)
- [Meeting Talking Points](#)
- [State Advocacy Toolkits](#)
- [SPEAK Out! Day Meeting Materials](#)
- [Title IV, Part A Action Alert](#)

About SHAPE America

SHAPE America – Society of Health and Physical Educators is the nation's largest membership organization of health and physical education professionals. The organization sets the standard for health and physical education in the U.S., and its National Standards for K-12 Physical Education serve as the foundation for well-designed physical education programs across the country. SHAPE America was also a proud member of the coalition that developed the National Health Education Standards, and is a founding partner of the Presidential Youth Fitness Program, *Let's Move! Active Schools* (now Active Schools) and the Jump Rope For Heart/Hoops For Heart programs.

2017 Calendar: U.S. House of Representatives
 (Representatives will be in their local offices on un-shaded weekdays)

HOUSE CALENDAR

MAJORITY LEADER KEVIN McCARTHY

115TH CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

JANUARY

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2017 Calendar: U.S. Senate

(Senators will be in their home state offices during the days in red)

UNITED STATES SENATE 115th Congress, 1st Session

2017

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

JANUARY							FEBRUARY							MARCH								
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S		
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SENATE CONVENES JANUARY 3, 2017																						
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(Red days = Senate not in session)

1ST SESSION CONVENES—JANUARY 3, 2017
TARGET ADJOURNMENT—DECEMBER 15, 2017