

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 critical as the 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, the SHAPE America Backyard Advocacy 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.

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.

January of 2019 brought many new members of Congress to Capitol Hill – 101 new members in the U.S. House and 10 new members in the U.S. Senate. This presents an important opportunity for us to bring them up to speed on the history of ESSA, the status of health and physical education in your district or state, and to identify new champions for our issues.

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 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 are currently implementing ESSA and allocating their funding across all subjects and program areas. In order to ensure that health and physical education



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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 \$1.6 billion for FY 2020;
- 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 2020;
- Ask your members of Congress to support after-school programs by funding Title IV, Part B of ESSA at its authorized amount of \$1.1 billion for FY 2020.

Planning Your Backyard Advocacy Visit

BEFORE THE VISIT

- 1. Get a meeting team together.**
- 2. Learn about who represents your community in Congress.**
- 3. Get to know his/her record on education.**
- 4. Schedule a meeting with their local office.**
- 5. Create a meeting plan.**
- 6. Craft and organize your meeting talking points.**
- 7. Prepare your “asks”.**



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DURING THE VISIT

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

- 1. Make introductions.**
- 2. Share your personal stories.**
- 3. Address specific background info about health & PE.**
- 4. Make your asks.**
- 5. Listen well and take notes.**
- 6. Thank you and make a follow-up invitation to visit your school.**

AFTER THE VISIT

- 1. Debrief your meeting.**
- 2. Follow up with additional info or make an invitation to your member of Congress to visit your school.**
- 3. Let SHAPE America know how your visit went.**
- 4. Continue to engage in the advocacy process on social media.**

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](#)