




SPEAK NOW
FOR KIDS

*Be a Champion for
Children's Health*



When advocates dedicated to children's health and well-being raise their voices, great things can happen.



Join children's hospitals and advocates from across the country as we work together to improve access to quality care for all children. With your help, we can ensure our elected officials put forth policies that support children's unique health care needs.

Representing more than 220 hospitals, the Children's Hospital Association (CHA) is the voice of children's hospitals nationally. CHA works hard to promote policies that enable hospitals to better serve kids and is the premier resource for pediatric data and analytics.

TOGETHER WE:

- Extended the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) for a historic 10 years
- Increased funding to train more than 7,000 pediatric specialists at nearly 60 independent children's teaching hospitals
- Worked with Congress to pass the Advancing Care for Exceptional Kids Act (ACE Kids Act) to improve pediatric care for children with complex medical conditions

We need to ensure all children have access to the right care, in the right place, at the right time. It's a goal that needs your help to become a reality.

It's Easy to be a Champion for Children's Health

The patients children's hospitals serve depend on champions like you to be their advocates and to support policies that improve the well-being of all children. Whether you're a patient, parent or a staff member concerned about our kids' health, you can raise your voice to influence local, state and federal policies. We need to educate our elected officials on how their decisions affect children's health.

Speak Now for Kids is an online advocacy network designed to raise awareness among legislators about how public policies affect children's health care. Established by CHA, Speak Now for Kids strives to support your advocacy efforts.

Follow these simple recommendations to increase your effectiveness as a champion for children's health:

- Identify your legislators
- Write to your legislators
- Promote your positions through social media
- Make timely and effective phone calls
- Meet your legislators

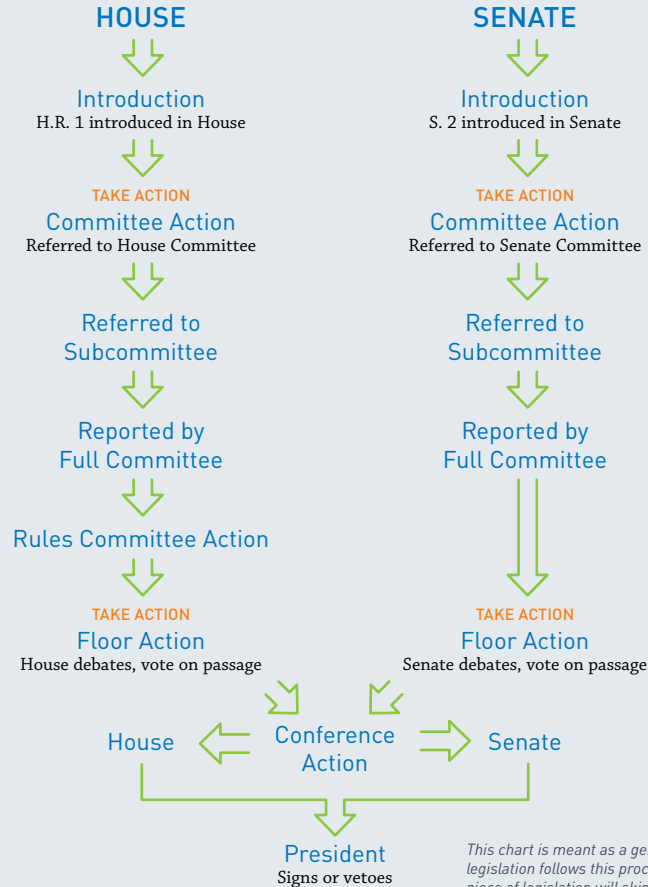
Contents

Learn About the Legislative Process.....	4	Visit Your Legislators.....	17
Identify your legislators	5	Before your visit.....	18
Write to Your Legislators	6	During your visit	18
When to write	9	The powerful 90-second prepared speech	19
Advocate Through Social Media	10	After your visit.....	19
Twitter.....	11	Resources.....	20
Facebook	12	Common policy priorities for children’s health	20
Make Timely and Effective Phone Calls	14	Additional resources.....	22
		Common legislative terms	24

The Legislative Process

As a champion for children's health, you want to be in the know when it comes to understanding the legislative process. Creating and passing legislation is complicated; this chart will help you understand how a bill becomes a law.

At every step in this process, you have the power to influence your legislators. Some sit on committees that craft legislation before it reaches the full House or Senate. And all of them will ultimately vote on any legislation considered by Congress. There is no bad time to reach out to your legislators, and this guide will show you how.



This chart is meant as a general overview—most legislation follows this process. Occasionally, a piece of legislation will skip one or even many steps to be passed more quickly.

Identify Your Legislators

There are multiple resources available to identify your elected officials at each level of government. For starters, visit speaknowforkids.org and click ACT NOW. You'll be given contact information on all of your lawmakers, from the president of the United States to your state legislators. You can also find information about important bills Congress is considering that may affect children's health care. And, as you'll see next, we give you the tools you need to contact your legislators.



Write to Your Legislators

Now that you know who your legislators are, let's talk about the best way to contact them. As a constituent, you carry a lot of power with your elected officials—remember, they work on your behalf. Simply visit our Legislative Action Center at: speaknowforkids.org/act_now. There you'll find pre-written letters to your legislators that you can personalize with your thoughts on why quality health care for all kids is so important. Many congressional staffers say a personalized letter carries more weight than a pre-written letter

since it shows the constituent took the time to tell their story.

While our pre-written letters will cover most of the basics, here are some more tips on writing to legislators:

- Begin by introducing yourself as a constituent. Many legislators won't accept letters or emails from folks outside their district.
- Make "the ask." Within the first paragraph, specify what action you want taken and, if possible, refer to bills by name or number.


Legislators can't know what you want them to do unless you tell them.

- Briefly explain the issue you are referencing—this is your chance to educate legislators on how the policy will affect you.
- Be clear, but be respectful in your request.
- Make it personal. Briefly share your story about how your legislator's actions will directly affect you, your community, your job and your family.

-
- Ask for your legislator's view on the issue. If they agree with your opinion, you can hold them accountable if they don't vote your way.
 - Include your name, home address, email address and phone number. It is important to include your home address so you can be identified as a constituent.
 - Include a link to your CarePage or blog if you have one.
 - Keep the length of your email to three or four paragraphs and less than 500 words.



Elected officials respond to constituent outreach in a number of different ways. In-person visits carry the most weight with legislators, but it's not always convenient to visit your legislator in Washington, or even while they're at home in their district offices. Luckily, more than 90 percent of congressional staffers say written communications from constituents can influence their bosses.



*“Political action is the
highest responsibility
of a citizen.”* John F. Kennedy

When to Write

There is no wrong time to communicate your concerns to your legislators, but there are key times in the legislative process where legislators may be most receptive to your point of view (these are indicated by **TAKE ACTION** on the chart on pages 4 and 5):

- After a bill is introduced and assigned a number, it is sent to the appropriate committee. This is a great opportunity to educate your elected official on the effect the new legislation may have on children's health. Committees are always seeking input from

the public, and sending an email can provide just the right amount of detail and personal touch.

- Just before a committee takes action or votes is another ideal time to reach out to your legislators with a clear request to vote for or against proposed legislation.
- When a legislator acts favorably on your request, follow up with a thank you message regardless of whether or not the end result is consistent with your

position. The thank you message strengthens the constituent-legislator relationship. It also helps reinforce that constituents pay attention and are engaged in the entire legislative process.

- You can easily deliver your thanks via email or phone. Many legislators also say they appreciate handwritten letters, but keep in mind that security restrictions can delay their arrival by as much as three weeks.

Interact with Legislators on Social Media

While legislators continue to use their own websites and email, many have shifted their energy and attention toward Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and blogs to better engage with those they represent. Electronic communications are fast, inexpensive and allow legislators and their staffs to respond quickly.

Normally, legislators only want to hear from constituents—the people who live in their district, vote for them and keep them in office. However, social media is not tethered by geography—you can communicate through Twitter and Facebook with a legislator in a position of leadership, or on a key committee, even if he or she isn't your legislator. (Learn more about congressional committees and jurisdiction on page 22.)





Twitter

Twitter has become a favorite tool of legislators to release press statements, photos and short news items. Every senator and around 99 percent of representatives use Twitter.

You can find all of your legislators' Twitter handles on their official websites. After using speaknowforkids.org to determine who represents you, visit house.gov and senate.gov to locate your lawmakers' official sites.

To reach your legislator, simply include their Twitter handle (user handles begin with an @ sign). You'll also want to include relevant hashtags, (which begin with a # sign). Hashtags are a way of labeling your tweet and making it easier to track conversations. For example:

Please support children's health, @SenateMajLdr, by funding #Medicaid and #CHGME.

CHA also uses these common hashtags:

#SpeakNowForKids

#ACEKidsAct



Facebook

Over 95 percent of legislators in Congress have a Facebook page and use it for sharing information with constituents. Legislators frequently use Facebook to communicate their opinion on pending issues or legislation. They also use Facebook to talk about what is going on in their states or districts, including events they're holding or attending. This is a good way to find out where you can meet your legislators in person.

In addition, legislators read comments and posts on social media. A survey by the Congressional Management Foundation found that over two-thirds of congressional communications and legislative staff said social media enabled more meaningful interaction with constituents. Keep track of what they post and add your thoughts—this is a great way to make your voice heard.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a smartphone. The screen displays a Facebook profile page with a blue header, a profile picture, and a post. The background shows a white laptop keyboard and a stack of papers.

A survey conducted by the Congressional Management Foundation found that a majority of congressional staff felt social media has made senators and representatives more accountable to their constituents.

Thirty or fewer similar comments on a social media post are enough to get most congressional offices' attention.



Make Timely and Effective Phone Calls

The window of opportunity to influence legislation when Congress or a state legislature is in-session can be very small. A personal phone call to your legislator's office is always an effective and timely advocacy tool.

When calling your legislator's office:

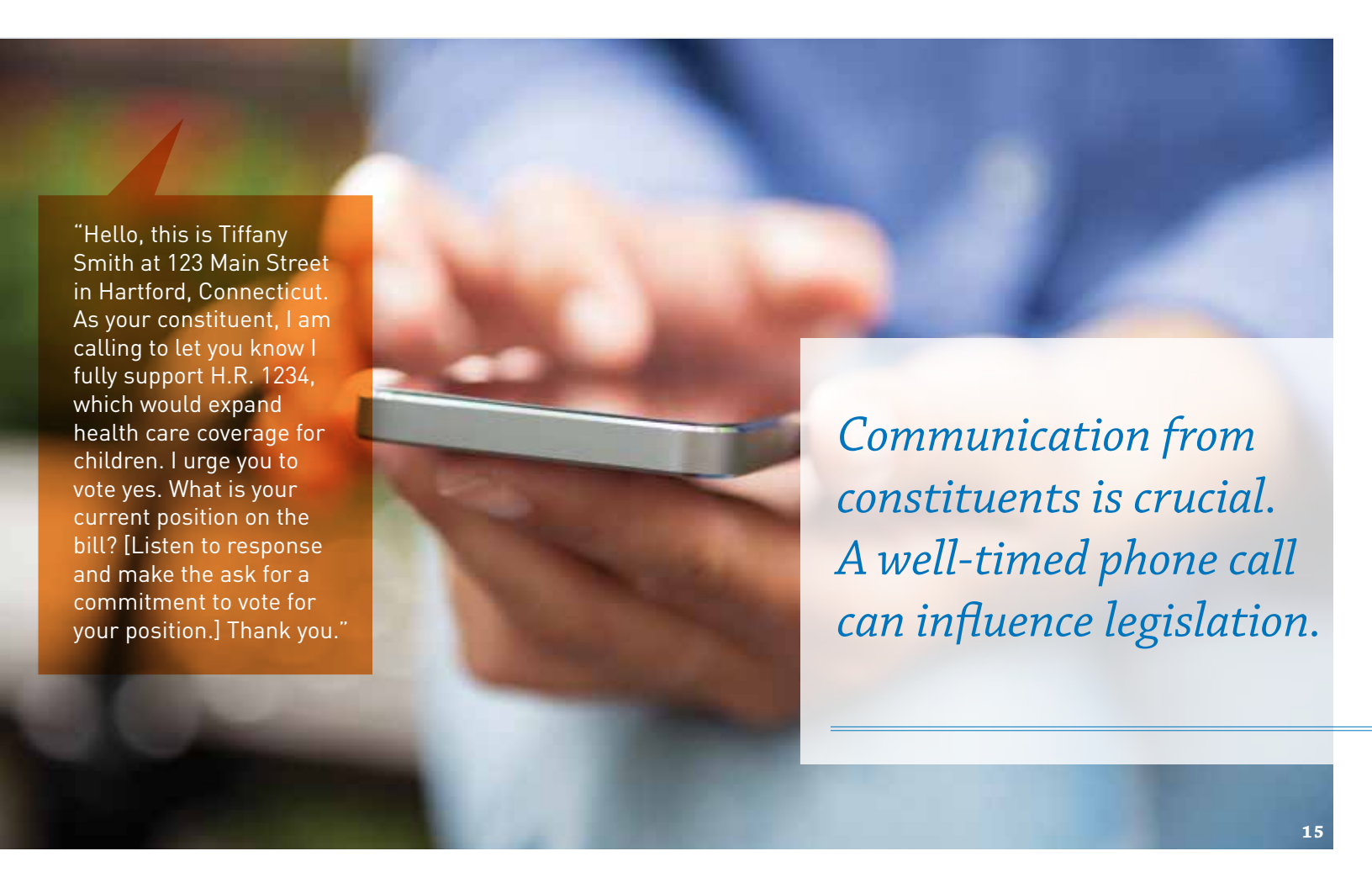
- Provide your name and address so you are recognized as a constituent.
- Identify the bill or issue you are calling about by its name and/or number if you have it.

- Ask to speak to the staff member who handles health issues; the health staffer will relay your comments and concerns to the legislator.
- Briefly state your position and how you would like your legislator to vote.
- Ask for your legislator's stance on the bill or issue and for a commitment to vote for your position. Remember to make "the ask."
- Don't guess at answers to questions. If the elected official's

staff requests information you don't have, tell them you will gladly follow up with the requested information.

Keep your phone calls quick and simple since most staff multitask during calls to keep up with the volume of communication from constituents.

For the most effective phone conversation, follow this example:



“Hello, this is Tiffany Smith at 123 Main Street in Hartford, Connecticut. As your constituent, I am calling to let you know I fully support H.R. 1234, which would expand health care coverage for children. I urge you to vote yes. What is your current position on the bill? [Listen to response and make the ask for a commitment to vote for your position.] Thank you.”

Communication from constituents is crucial. A well-timed phone call can influence legislation.



Visit Your Legislators

Visiting your legislator is the most effective means of conveying your message. A face-to-face visit connects the issues you care about to the people your legislator was elected to serve.

In a recent survey, 94 percent of congressional staffers said an in-person visit could help influence an undecided lawmaker. Visiting your legislators may sound intimidating, but remember: their offices are open to the public; they are elected

to work for you; and they need to hear your story and opinions in order to vote on issues that will benefit the communities they serve. Your visit helps your legislators to do their job well.

Visits can be conducted in your home state or congressional district, as well as in Washington, D.C. Building a positive face-to-face relationship requires you to plan ahead. If you would like to visit your legislator, you may

want to consider contacting your children's hospital government relations department to ensure your efforts and messages are coordinated.

Please note that legislators frequently ask their staff to handle meetings with constituents. A meeting with the appropriate staff member is often just as effective as a meeting with the legislator.

Before your visit:

- Make an appointment in advance. Expect to get about 15 minutes with your legislator or their staff—sometimes less. Be prepared to deliver your message in as little as 90 seconds.
- Be on time (or early).
- Know where your legislator stands on the issue by doing some research on his or her website. You can also contact CHA to get your legislators' voting history.
- CHA frequently posts fact sheets on its website; download the relevant fact sheets to share with your legislators and their staff.
- Dress in business attire.

During your visit:

Summarize who you are and why you are meeting with the legislator within the first 90 seconds of the meeting by doing the following:

- Identify who you are and your relationship to your children's hospital (if any).
- Identify yourself as a constituent.
- Highlight the issue you came to discuss.
- Be specific about the action you want taken.
- Use this meeting to explain how the bill or issue will affect you personally, as well as other voters in your district or state.
- Make "the ask." You can't know if the legislator will support

(or oppose) a given piece of legislation if you don't ask.

- Stick to the issue and avoid political attacks on your legislator or staff (or even his or her opposition—keep the visit positive).
- Share a personal story to provide context for why you care about the issue.
- Before leaving, ask how you can be of help on this issue. Position yourself as a resource.
- Give your legislator or staff the fact sheet on your issue and briefly highlight your points.
- Thank the legislator or staffer for his or her time.



An example of a good introduction/ 90-second speech:

“Hi, I’m John Smith. I am a constituent of yours, and I am here to talk with you about health care for children. I am asking you to vote yes on H.R. 1234, which funds the Children’s Hospitals Graduate Medical Education program. CHGME helps train half of the nation’s pediatricians and pediatric specialists. Here’s a fact sheet with some more information. My phone number and email address are included if you have any questions. Thank you for your time today.”

After your visit:

Follow up with a thank you letter or email and include any information the legislator or staff requested. This will strengthen your relationship and leave a positive impression with the legislator’s office.

Common Policy Priorities for Children's Health

Medicaid

Medicaid is a federal-state program and covers 37 million children in the course of a year. In fact, children represent over 40 percent of all Medicaid enrollees, yet they account for less than 20 percent of Medicaid spending. Kids can qualify for Medicaid based on family income or due to a serious medical condition. More than half of the care provided at children's hospitals is covered by Medicaid.

On average, Medicaid reimburses children's hospitals only 80 percent of the cost of care provided—

even including all supplemental payments. Although there is room for improvement, continued investment in Medicaid is critical to children's health and our nation's future.

ACE Kids Act

The Advancing Care for Exceptional Kids Act (ACE Kids Act) is a proposal to improve how care is delivered to America's children with complex medical conditions on Medicaid. Once law, the ACE Kids Act will improve coordination of care for children, address problems with fragmented care across state

lines, and gather national data on complex conditions to help researchers improve treatments for rare diseases.

Get the facts on the ACE Kids Act by visiting: childrenshospitals.org/ACEKids

CHIP

The Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) provides health insurance to 9 million children who do not qualify for Medicaid and do not have access to private health insurance. States receive federal matching funds after providing

their own contribution and may choose to design their CHIP programs by expanding Medicaid to uninsured children of qualifying families, creating alternative insurance programs, or through a combination of both approaches.

CHIP was designed with children in mind and includes child appropriate benefits, access to pediatric providers and cost-sharing limits to protect vulnerable children and families. Since its creation in 1997, this critical program has enjoyed bipartisan support.

CHGME

The Children's Hospitals Graduate Medical Education (CHGME) program was created in 1999 to provide children's hospitals with federal graduate medical education (GME) support—the government had already been providing GME to adult teaching hospitals through Medicare. Today, CHGME supports the training of more than 7,000 residents at nearly 60 children's hospitals. Hospitals receiving CHGME funds train about half of the nation's pediatricians and pediatric specialists.

TRICARE

TRICARE is the Department of Defense military health system for active duty military, guard and reservists, and their families. It serves 2.3 million children in active service and retiree families. TRICARE is the only health insurance plan for children that is consistent in policy and payment across all 50 states. The Tricare for Kids Coalition seeks to optimize the military health system's understanding of children's health care needs, and the ability of children's hospitals to best serve military children.

Additional Resources for Children's Hospital Advocates to Stay Informed

CHA provides information on policies affecting children's health and how you can get involved as a champion for children's health at childrenshospitals.org/issues-and-advocacy

Check out Speak Now for Kids' storybank and learn how you can get your friends and family involved in advocacy efforts at speaknowforkids.org

Take action at our Legislative Action Center at speaknowforkids.org/act_now

Relevant Congressional Committees

House Energy and Commerce Committee

The Energy and Commerce Committee maintains principal responsibility for legislative oversight of drug safety, Medicaid and CHIP. Learn more at energycommerce.house.gov

Senate Finance Committee

The Finance Committee has jurisdiction over Medicaid. Learn more at finance.senate.gov

Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee

The HELP Committee handles most issues relating to public health, medical research, and individuals with disabilities. Learn more at help.senate.gov

Other Resources

U.S. House of Representatives
house.gov

U.S. Senate
senate.gov



Common Legislative Terms

Glossary adapted from “Congress at Your Fingertips,” copyright 2013, CQ-Roll Call, Inc. Publishing: Newington, VA.

Act – Legislation that has passed both chambers of Congress and becomes law

Amendment – A change in a bill or document by adding, substituting or omitting portions of it

Appropriations Bill – Legislation that provides funds for authorized programs

Authorization Bill – Legislation establishing a program and setting funding limits

Bill – Legislation introduced in either the House or Senate

Budget Resolution – Concurrent resolution that establishes spending and revenue targets for the upcoming fiscal year

Chamber – Place where the entire House or Senate meets to conduct business; also, the House of Representatives or the Senate itself

Cloture – Method of limiting debate or ending a filibuster in the Senate. At least 60 senators must vote in favor before cloture can be invoked

Committee – A group of legislators assigned to give special consideration to certain bills

Conference Committee – Meeting between representatives and senators to resolve differences when two versions of a similar bill pass the House and Senate

Continuing Resolution – A joint resolution to appropriate funds, usually for a short period of time

and often in the absence of a regular appropriations bill

Co-sponsor – Legislator who joins in sponsoring legislation but who is not the principal sponsor or the one who introduced the legislation

Filibuster – Tactic used in the Senate whereby a minority intentionally delays a vote

Lame Duck – Senator or representative (or the president) who has not been reelected but whose term has not yet expired

Lobbying – The process of attempting to influence the passage, defeat or content of legislation by individuals or a group other than legislators

Majority Leader – Chief spokesman and strategist for the majority party, elected by members of the majority party. In the House, the majority leader is often the second-ranking lawmaker, behind the Speaker of the House.

Minority Leader – Chief spokesman and strategist for the minority party, elected by members of the minority party

Omnibus Bill – Bill regarding a single subject that combines many different aspects of that subject

Quorum – The number of senators or representatives who must be present before a legislative body can conduct official business

Ranking Members – The members of the majority and minority party on a committee next in seniority after the chairman

Sequestration – The permanent cancellation of budgetary resources by a uniform percentage, applied to all programs, projects, and activities within a budget account

Speaker – The presiding officer of the House, elected by members of the House

Sponsor – The representative or senator who introduces a measure



CHILDREN'S
HOSPITAL
ASSOCIATION

600 13TH STREET, NW, SUITE 500
WASHINGTON, DC 20005

p | 202-753-5500

f | 202-347-5147

16011 COLLEGE BLVD., SUITE 250
LENEXA, KS 66219

p | 913-262-1436

f | 913-262-1575

CHILDRENSHOSPITALS.ORG

SPEAK NOW
FOR KIDS



[FACEBOOK.COM/SPEAKNOWFORKIDS](https://www.facebook.com/SPEAKNOWFORKIDS)



[@SPEAKNOWFORKIDS](https://twitter.com/SPEAKNOWFORKIDS)



[INSTAGRAM.COM/SPEAKNOWFORKIDS](https://www.instagram.com/SPEAKNOWFORKIDS)

SPEAKNOWFORKIDS.ORG

*Be a Champion for
Children's Health*

Photo Credits

Cover: Ingrid Barrentine, Mary Bridge Children's
Hospital & Health Center; Tacoma, Washington

Inside front cover: Seth Dixon, St. Jude Children's
Research Hospital; Memphis, Tennessee

Pages 5, 7, 10-11, 16, 19, 23: Kevin Allen