



## Checklist for Hosting a Legislator at a Special Event

Hosting a legislative event is a strategic way to inform policymakers on WIC issues, and sometimes a way to gain media attention. It is important that legislators in their local districts understand how beneficial WIC is to children and families in your communities. The following are action steps to take to plan your event:

### **Now**

- Set the date, time and site for the event. Work with your legislator's aide to determine what days and times would be best. [State](#) and [Federal](#) legislative calendars are available online. The site for your event should be chosen based on its potential impact on the legislator and potentially, the media.
- Make sure there is ample parking and A/V equipment hook-up available at your site.
- Your events should be no longer than 90 minutes.
- Send invitations to legislators. Ideally, the legislator should receive a personal invitation from a key constituent – someone who has a personal connection to the legislator.
- Also send invitations to local officials including city council members, the mayor, the chamber of commerce president, other business leaders, faith community leaders, and presidents of local civic groups.
- Make every effort to involve multiple social services and advocacy organizations from your legislator's district. This could include education organizations, medical providers, and community organizations. Urge community non-profit organizations to invite their board members.
- When planning the agenda for your event, follow a schedule that would give your legislator a chance to speak if they desire, as well as giving parents, staff, and community members a chance to tell their WIC stories. Make every effort to secure other speakers that demonstrate powerful community support for WIC. Business and community leaders and local elected officials could be excellent choices.
- Follow up the invitations with a personal phone call and a confirmation letter once confirmation is made. This should also be done for the local officials.
- Make copies of materials to distribute at the event that provide WIC facts and information that showcases the local agency or site.
- Create indoor and outdoor signs and banners for the event.

### **One – Two Weeks Before the Event**

- Develop talking points and/or scripts for the event and the order in which people will speak – make sure that the legislator is placed early in the agenda if they wish to speak, to be respectful of their time. Include introductions for legislators. For biographical information about legislators, check their websites.
- Conduct a dry-run of the event with event coordinators.



- If appropriate, draft a news advisory to announce the event and send it to local media the week before the event. Refer to the news advisory template in this kit. All media invitations should be confirmed with phone calls a week prior to the event and then again the day prior to the event.
- Arrange for a staff member to act as photographer.
- Call legislators to confirm their attendance a few days before the event.
- Complete nametags for guests and speakers.
- Create a sign-in sheet.

### **The Day of the Event**

- Distribute the news release at the completion of the event. Fax or email it to those members of the press who did not attend.
- Make sure the host/co-host recognizes elected officials and staff as well as other dignitaries, as they arrive and in the audience.

### **Immediately After the Event**

- Send personal thank you letters to all those who helped in the preparation for the event.
- Send thank you letters to all public officials and reiterate your key messages. (Provide link or where to find this WIC information.)
- Provide feedback to CWA to keep us informed of your reactions and comments from any legislators at your event. Include any tips or lessons learned for others planning legislative events.

### **Other Ideas**

- If your organization distributes a newsletter, write an article about the event and include photos. Send a copy of the newsletter to the legislator along with any photos they may be able to use in their own newsletters. Be sure to send photos and information to CWA for our media and records of visits.
- Send a follow up news release with a photo of you and your legislator(s) to the local papers.