

**ZERO TO THREE**  
Early connections last a lifetime

# Think Babies: Advocating for Early Head Start

Amanda Perez, *Senior Advocacy Specialist*

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**Learning Outcomes**

- Understand the political landscape around Early Head Start
- Identify your passion for this program, and your role in advocacy
- Make a plan for advocating for Early Head Start that builds on your individual skills, resources, and passion

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**About ZERO TO THREE**



- We help babies and toddlers benefit from the early connections that are critical to their well-being and development.
- Our mission is to ensure that all babies have a strong start in life.
- We envision a society with the knowledge and will to support all infants and toddlers in reaching their full potential.

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**What We Do** 



**ZERO TO THREE fulfills its mission by supporting:**

- **Parents** with practical resources that help them connect with their babies.
- **Professionals** with knowledge and tools that help them support healthy early development.
- **Policymakers** in advancing policies which support and strengthen families, caregivers and infant-toddler professionals.

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**About the ZERO TO THREE Policy Center** 

- Nonpartisan
- Research-based
- For policymakers and advocates
- Speak to the developmental needs of babies and their families



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**Exercise:**  
**What do Infants and Toddlers Need?** 



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## All About Early Head Start

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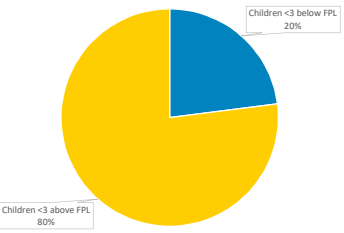
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**How does poverty affect babies and toddlers?**

### Infants and Toddlers Living in Poverty



Category	Percentage
Children <3 above FPL	80%
Children <3 below FPL	20%

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**Poverty and the brain**

### Research shows poverty diminishes brain growth.

Early stress and lack of positive early experiences means poverty gets under the skin, undermining development in key brain regions for school readiness and academic success.



- A.** SELF-REGULATION & LEARNING
- B.** MEMORY & LANGUAGE
- C.** EMOTIONAL CONTROL

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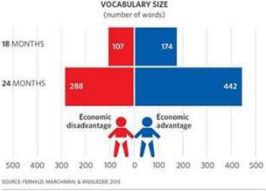
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**Early gaps** 

**Gaps in development appear before children turn 2.**

By age 2, children in the lowest socio-economic group are behind their peers in measures of cognitive, language and social-emotional development. A six-month gap in language skills undermines other learning.

**VOCABULARY SIZE**  
(number of words)



Age	Economic disadvantage	Economic advantage
18 MONTHS	107	174
24 MONTHS	289	442

SOURCE: TENNALD, MARCHAND & WEBSTER, 2015

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**What makes a difference?** 

**Strong nurturing relationships help build healthy brains.**

These relationships buffer children from harmful stress and strengthen brain development in key areas that affect academic success.



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**Building a comprehensive program** 

-  Safe and developmentally enriching environments
-  Support as primary caregivers and educators
-  Support in meeting goals and self-sufficiency
-  Assuring comprehensive services
-  Development of trained, caring and compensated workforce

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**Comprehensive services** 

Child development and learning services

Family engagement services



Health (including mental health, nutrition, and dental) services

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**How does Early Head Start affect babies and parents?** 



- Children did better on measures such as cognitive, language and social-emotional
- Parents were more supportive of language and learning, more positive, and emotionally supportive
- Parents progressed toward self-sufficiency
- Fathers significantly more engaged
- Outcomes better when:
  - Began prenatally
  - Performance standards implemented early and fully

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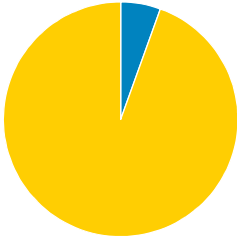
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**So what's the problem?** 

Proportion of Eligible Infants and Toddlers Served



■ Served ■ Unserved

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What is happening with Head Start?



Overdue for reauthorization



S. 185/ H.R. 1921 Head Start Improvement Act

2017 Appropriations Committees put additional money to Head Start

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Taking Action for Early Head Start

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How are you a Big Voice for Little Kids?



ZERO TO THREE POLICY NETWORK  
I'm a Big Voice for Little Kids™  
[www.zerotothree.org/policy](http://www.zerotothree.org/policy)

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**Why Advocate?** 

- Responsibility: If we don't who will?
- Constituents matter!
- A link to the State/District
- You're the expert!




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**Think Babies Campaign** 



Make their potential our priority.





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**Think Babies as a Platform** 



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**Taking Action in Your Community** 

The future begins with babies.



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Early Childhood Care & Education



<http://www.thinkbabies.org/take-action/> 22

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**You Have What It Takes!** 

Advocacy Strategy	Relationship	Knowledge of Issue	Persistence and Patience	Ability to Connect with Others	Communication Skills - Oral	Communication Skills - Written	Organizational Skills	Creativity	Problem Solving	Technology	Leadership
Build Relationships and Partnerships with Other Advocates	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High
Join a Coalition	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High
Recruit Others to Be Advocates for Your Young Children!	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High
Be a Source of Information for Other Advocates	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High
Communicate with, call, or meet with a local, state, or federal policymaker	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High
Write an Editorial or Letter to the Editor	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High
Testify before Legislators and Other Policymakers	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High
Host a Site Visit for Policymakers	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High
Organize Meetings or a Coalition of Other Advocates	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High
Invite Other Advocates to Support or Oppose to a Policy	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High

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**Share the *Think Babies* Message** 

The future begins with babies.



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- Share on social
- Publish a blog post
- Promote *Think Babies* in newsletters
- Send an email to your network

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**Share the Think Babies Message**

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**Publish a Blog Post**

Your organization's blog or personal blogs can be a great way to share the Think Babies message. Check out this sample post for inspiration and adapt it based on your network, experiences, and expertise. The more you can personalize the blog post, the more it will resonate with readers.

**Sample Blog Post**

The first three years of a baby's life shape all the rest. In that short time period, babies form more than one million new neural connections every second. This leads to life-long developmental, educational, and health outcomes. But when babies don't get what their growing brains need, they waste risks another child raising out on families, and that's not good for our future.

That's why ZERO TO THREE created the Think Babies national priority.

When babies don't get what their growing brains need, they waste risks another child raising out on families, and that's not good for our future.

We need to give parents the time to bond with their child and need to nurture and nourish their baby family who needs it has access to quality, affordable care.

**Send an Email to Your Network**

The more people you engage in Think Babies, the stronger our voice will be. Sending an email to colleagues and others in your network is a quick and easy way to introduce more people to the campaign.

**Sample Email**

Subject: Baby Brain Development Campaign

Dear [NAME],

Have you seen ZERO TO THREE's new campaign for infants and toddlers? It's called Think Babies. They are bringing national attention to what babies and families need to thrive. This includes making sure parents and babies have time to bond in the earliest months, getting parents information and resources to help nurture and nourish their babies, and access to quality, affordable child care for those who need it.

There are lots of opportunities to get involved—from sharing messages with our network to meeting with our elected officials. There's even a fun tool to send messages on Twitter and Facebook to our members of Congress. Do you have time to connect and talk about ways to get involved in the Think Babies campaign?

Thank you,

[NAME]

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**Spread the Word in your Community**

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- Talk with parents
- Connect with advocates
- Write a letter to the editor
- Submit an opinion editorial

**An oldie but goodie: Spread the word in your community.**

**think babies**

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**Spread the Word in Your Community**

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**Think Babies Talking Points**

**Submit an Opinion Editorial**

An op-ed is a great way to show your passion, persuade readers to care about the issue, and encourage policymakers to take action. Your op-ed should provide steps people can take to make a difference. Make sure to include references to your professional and/or personal experience to lend credibility.

**Sample Op-ed**

As a [JOB TITLE/JOB DESCRIPTION/ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY], I meet a lot of new moms and dads adjusting to the joys and new routines of parenthood, including figuring out how to have dedicated time with their baby during the first weeks and months without compromising their economic security and finding quality, affordable child care when they need to head back to work.

They all feel the immense responsibility for their child's future, and know that the early years shape a child's life. But it can be hard to fully grasp what that means when it comes to brain development.

Babies' brains grow at warp speed—forming more than one million new neural connections every second. That's amazing when you think about it. In fact, between the ages of 0 and 3, a child's brain will grow faster than at any other point in their life.

[INSERT ANECDOTE ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE SUPPORTING BABIES AND FAMILIES IN SERVICE OF BRAIN DEVELOPMENT AND/OR REFERENCE RECENT NEWS STORY.]

As a community, we can do more to support babies and families. When babies thrive, we all benefit. And, when babies don't get what their growing brains need to thrive, they don't develop in ways they should. This leads to life-long developmental, educational, social, and health

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**Engage Your Elected Officials** ZERO TO THREE



- Call or email your elected officials
- Attend Town Hall meetings
- Visit Congressional offices in your state
- Invite Members of Congress to visit you

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**Engage Your Elected Officials** ZERO TO THREE

**Visit Congressional Offices in Your State or District**

Making the trip to Washington, DC to meet with your members of Congress isn't always feasible. But all members have "lame duck" work periods when they meet with constituents in their home state or district. These "recess" periods can last days or weeks, but even when your members aren't back home, their district offices have full-time staff who work directly with the staff in DC. The district staff serve as key advisors for members of Congress and we encourage you to meet with them as well. All of these meetings provide an important venue to share your story.

**Prepare for the Meeting**

1. Find your member using ZERO TO THREE's Member Directory.
2. Schedule a meeting by phone or the House and Senate calendars, holidays. Make an appointment if the member is not available, dig up front what issues you'd like to discuss.
3. Use the *Think Babies* talking points and background research on the good information on a variety of topics:
  - Our Infant-Toddler Agenda
  - Child Care
  - Paid Family Leave
  - Social and Emotional Health
  - Early Head Start
  - Physical Health
4. Bring copies of the *Think Babies* handout.

**Invite Your Members of Congress to Visit Your Program**

Members of Congress don't have the firsthand experience working with babies and families that you do. So invite them for a site visit to experience the work you do with infants and toddlers for themselves. It's an opportunity for you to talk about the challenges families face and directly ask your member of Congress to lend their support. We've outlined some tips to help you prepare for a successful visit.

1. **Plan ahead.** Find out when your member of Congress will be in your home state or district and extend an invitation at least 4-6 weeks before.
2. **Be specific, but flexible.** Be sure to mention that you are a constituent and explain the when, where, and why of your invitation. Members of Congress are busy, so you may want to offer multiple dates or open the invitation to their staff. Be sure to confirm prior to the day of the visit.
3. **Prepare for the day.** Think about how you'd like to welcome your guest and line up an activity that showcases your work and its importance. Remember to let your staff and families know ahead of time, so they can help during the visit.
4. **Follow up.** Send your guest home with information about your program or the *Think Babies* handout. And get in touch soon after the visit to recap and reinforce your message.

For more information and a sample invitation, check out ZERO TO THREE's How to Plan a Site Visit for Your Policy Makers.

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**Strolling Thunder: May 8** ZERO TO THREE



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**Things You Can Do Right Now** 



- Sign Up for the ZERO TO THREE Policy Network
- Sign up for Think Babies™!
- Send us your Child Care story
- Plan to join us!

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**Thank you!** 

**Amanda Perez**  
Senior Advocacy Specialist  
[aperez@zerotothree.org](mailto:aperez@zerotothree.org)

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