



**Safekids**  
NEW ZEALAND

Tamariki Haumaruru o Aotearoa

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## Information Sheet

### Advocacy for Child Safety

Effective child injury prevention requires collaborative action from a wide range of individuals, community groups and organisations throughout the country. Advocacy is an essential part of this action.

***Advocacy is the constructive, truthful and compelling use of evidence to inform experts, decision makers, media, community organisations and individuals about effective ways to reduce the numbers of New Zealand children who experience unintentional injury.***

Unintentional injury is the leading cause of mortality and hospitalisation of New Zealand children aged 1 to 14 years.<sup>1</sup>

An average of two New Zealand children are killed *every week* by potentially avoidable events, on roads, in homes and public spaces (2000 to 2004). Leading causes of death are; road traffic crashes, drowning, threats to breathing and burns.<sup>2</sup>

Many more children are hospitalised following an unintentional injury. A class room of children (approximately 30) are hospitalised *every day* due to events such as road traffic crashes, falls, burns and poisoning (2000 – 2004).<sup>3</sup>

Preventing unintentional injury is not about stopping children from having fun, or wrapping them up in cotton wool. It is about minimizing preventable harm, enabling children to grow up healthy and active.

Injury prevention is about putting in place the policies, processes and systems that will maximise opportunities for children to experience the world and grow into healthy adults without being put at unnecessary risk of suffering injuries that might cause their death or hospitalisation.

#### **Advocacy can be ...**

- Asking a question
- Making a phone call
- Writing a letter
- Going to a meeting
- Speaking to a group of people
- Organising an event

#### **Steps for effective advocacy**

- Identify the problem - decide on the problem you wish to focus upon
- Find solutions that will be effective
- Identify who makes the decision, where and when, and who or what might influence the outcome
- Create and put into action a plan – include stakeholders and media
- Monitor the response to your effort – and never, ever give up!

<sup>1</sup> Gulliver P, Simpson J. *IPRU Fact Sheet 38*. Injury Prevention Research Unit, University of Otago, April 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Craig E, et al. *Monitoring the Health of New Zealand Children and Young People: Indicator Handbook*. 2007. Paediatric Society of New Zealand, New Zealand Child and Youth Epidemiology Service 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

*Safekids New Zealand's mission is to reduce the incidence and severity of unintentional injuries to children in New Zealand aged 0-14 year.*

## Advocacy Steps for Child Safety

### Identify the problem

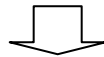
Communities and families are often aware of dangers for children on their local roads, in their playgrounds, in open spaces, homes and on routes to school. Effective advocacy starts when you identify a situation of concern for child safety, and begin conversations about how to achieve a solution.



### Find solutions that will be effective

Most solutions impose a cost, you will need a good case for why it is justified. Research provides guidance about what is effective for child injury prevention. Safekids NZ has information, start with our website or contact us for advice.

Slowing traffic speeds on local roads, providing footpaths and crossings, cycle helmets, correctly fitted child car seats and fenced home swimming pools are all well researched and demonstrated ways to reduce child injuries.

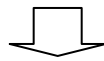


### Identify decision makers and when and how decisions are made

Local government (Councils) and central government agencies all have roles in preventing unintentional injury to children.

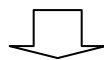
Local Councils are represented by either local politicians or staff (Officers), who can be approached for information. Council meetings are usually public events.

Central government agencies, such as Housing New Zealand, schools, the Ministry of Education and the Fire Service all have reporting hierarchies within their organisations. The Local Member of Parliament (MP), who will be either a Government MP or a Member of the Opposition, and is able to ask questions of the relevant department, or seek answers from the Responsible Minister.



### Create a plan and put it into action – include stakeholders and media

Advocacy can be as simple as making a phone call, having a meeting or asking a question. It is also important to remember to include all the people who might wish to help you. Highlight the issue, bring it to the attention of others and ask for support. It is helpful to find a high profile person in your community who will support the changes you are seeking.



### Monitor the response, never give up & celebrate your success

Be vigilant, patient and persistent. Government organisations have budgets, prioritised work and timetables. An issue raised, accepted and understood in one year must wait until the next financial year for action. Remember a new fence, footpath or set of traffic lights are a huge achievement.

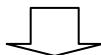
You can, and will, make a difference.

## Advocacy Steps for Child Safety

### A Practical Example

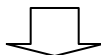
#### **Identify the problem – No crossing for children in your street**

Your local street is busy with cars travelling quickly and no easy places to cross. The opening of a new housing development has also made it a main route to the local school. You feel there is 'an accident waiting to happen'.



#### **Find solutions that will be effective – Road safety is well researched**

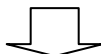
We do not need to wait until road injuries and deaths happen before acting. Road traffic injuries can be prevented through a range of measures that have been shown to be effective. These include providing road engineering measures, enforcement of speed limits and educating people about safe road behaviours.



#### **Identify the local Councillor or Council staff who will assist**

Local roads are usually the responsibility of your council. Contact your local council and find out who provides traffic safety measures on your road. Ask for a meeting with this person and find out their expert advice about addressing the problem you have observed.

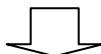
When meeting with people, find out their official title and the role they have in allocating resources within the council. Do they have a budget? Do they Chair a committee where resources are allocated and projects agreed? Can they make the solution they are suggesting happen? From whom, when and where will the required money be allocated?



**Plan ahead** – Diary all the meetings where spending decisions will be made

**Recruit support** - Ask other residents in the street if they share your concerns and will support the proposed solution. Approach the school; meet with the Board of Trustees; speak with your local newspaper reporters.

**Monitor the response** – Check Council minutes, reports and annual plans for mention of the issue, success is when the council commits to your project in its official documents.



#### **Never, ever give up & celebrate your successes**

Be vigilant, patient and persistent. Government organisations have budgets, prioritised work and timetables. An issue raised, accepted and understood in one year frequently must wait until the next financial year for action. Do not give up.

Remember; a new road crossing, footpath or set of traffic lights are a huge achievement.

You can, and will have, made a difference.