

# COMMUNICATIONS TOOL-KIT



## FOR OP EDS

[Upper Peninsula News Sources](#)

[Lower Peninsula News Sources](#)

If you can't find where to submit one on the news site, search:  
"how to submit an op ed to \_\_\_\_"

[Sample Op Ed Letter](#)

You are encouraged to include local outcomes and data such as number of families served, number of home visits, etc. (see Michigan Data source below)



## FINDING YOUR LEGISLATOR

[Michigan Legislators](#)



## TELLING THE STORY

[\(shared from The Institute: IFSP Toolkit\)](#)

- **Human interest stories combined with data work best.** That means having a pre-approval from a home visitor and/or a family being served by a home visiting program to share how home visiting works and how it has made a difference in the lives of people in your community. See our data tips in the next section.
- **Keep it concise but powerful.** Think about your elevator speech for home visiting and distill your message into something everyone can latch onto.
- **Pull at heartstrings with your headline.** You only have a few seconds to grab and keep someone's attention. Here are some examples:
  - "Home visiting changed my life"
  - "Home visiting levels the playing field for child learning success"
  - "My home visitor believed in me: How family support professionals promote confident parenting"
  - "Home visitors have a front row seat to family success every single day"
- **Avoid hot button topics** or aligning with a single political party. We have plenty to talk about without triggering a negative reaction or alienating others. Home visiting has always enjoyed bipartisan support—it's hard to be against supporting parents to get their babies off to the best possible start.
- **Ensure transparency and privacy** when working with families and home visitors. As you're telling personal stories, it's important that you honor confidentiality and inform parents and home visitors what is expected from them. They will likely need to provide at least their first name. Before any interview, help them feel more comfortable and practice with them what they are willing and ready to share publicly. There's no one better to explain home visiting than someone who is in the thick of it, but the very nature of the work is personal.

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## USING DATA

**Simplify the data.** Avoid using jargon or overly complicated information about model differences or particular funding streams. Our purpose is to elevate the home visiting story.

**Output data matters.** People understand the number of families served or the number of children served, or the number of home visits provided. You might also select one data point that is meaningful to your specific community or population, such as the percentage of women screened for postpartum depression.

**Share data in small quantities.** Use three to four data points at maximum. Remember most people don't understand the importance of different assessment results. Choose data points that are understandable and relatable to the general population. Most people understand the following:

- Reduction in pre-term births
- Developmental screening results (how many children were on track for school success when they left your program)
- Parents educational gains while in your program

**Present data in various ways.** Use data in your storytelling but follow up with the same data in writing. Also, it really helps to convey data in a visually appealing manner to illustrate what you are describing.

**Avoid data that will alienate some people** or make them think all we do is focus on reproductive health as one example.

**Highlight positive data.** You are trying to put home visiting in the best possible light. If you are asked directly a question about data that might be negative, then please be forthcoming. An example of a negative question would be, "How many families drop out of your program?" You can respond with the percentage if you know it, or you can say, "Too many. We want to reach every family and be successful. Unfortunately, not every family is ready for our services. We do have very good luck with families that have dropped out and later re-enroll when they are ready for home visiting." Another possible response to the question is, "Unfortunately many of our families are in crisis situations and are focused on day-to-day survival. It is a challenge to engage a family that is in survival mode into a developmental relationship." Go out of your way to highlight positive data but be prepared if and when a question like this comes up.

**Don't forget the human element.** Sharing data that is compelling without being overwhelming is a talent and takes some practice. Data is best shared in conjunction with a human-interest story. Decision makers want data, but the story is what will draw them in.



## MICHIGAN DATA

Link to Legislative Reports on Home Visiting:

[Home Visiting Reports](#)