In lieu of NASP’s annual Capitol Hill Day, which was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, NASP is coordinating a virtual Advocacy Action Week, **July 20-24, 2020** with the purpose of increasing awareness of school psychology among federal policymakers and staffers through a multimedia digital advocacy campaign. Mental health for children has been at the forefront of national conversations in promoting social justice and improving our country’s system of mental health. We must ensure that school psychologists are a part of the solution - to do so, we need your help!

NASP will be organizing its members to digitally advocate in three different ways:

1. **Making a video** sharing an overview of your job, why school psychology is important, and a policy priority that is important to you and your work. Once submitted, NASP will send the videos to the offices of members of Congress along with key information about school psychology and NASP policy priorities.
2. **Sending letters** to Congressional offices through [NASP’s Advocacy Action Center](#).
3. **Posting on social media** (from personal and state association accounts) to advocate key messages to congressional offices.

NASP is providing examples of videos, sample scripts, key talking points, and social media language (see below) to help make your participation as easy as possible. If you have never participated in a NASP advocacy campaign, now is a perfect time to start!

NASP has set a goal of sending at least one video from every state/district/territory in the country; **100 total videos; and 10,000 letters through the Advocacy Action Center** - and with your help, we are certain we can do it!

*Who can participate?*

All members are encouraged to participate! We will send all videos you send to us directly to your members of Congress. In addition, every participant will be entered into a raffle for a **$30 gift card to NASP’s Online Learning Center**.

*Dates to Remember*

The webpage of resources, examples of videos, and the form to submit videos will open on **July 10th**. The final Date to Submit Videos is **July 26th**.
I: Making your Video

General Communication Tips

Effective communication and messaging is vital to making an effective video. Part I, Section I of NASP’s Policy Playbook identifies tips for effective communication – from identifying your target audience to getting your message to resonate. Be sure to take time to identify the critical advocacy issues for school psychologists in your state that you would like your members of Congress to hear about.

In addition, you may use NASP’s key messages and talking points in Section VI of NASP’s Policy Playbook to develop your message. Additional resources and research for specific topics can be found on NASP’s Critical Policy Issues webpages.

Some other quick tips to keep in mind for your video message:

- Keep your video brief; 1-3 minutes long is ideal
- Determine and communicate your main point at the beginning and end of your video.
- Back up your key messages with 2-3 points or facts each.
- You are putting a “face” to the issue. Tell personal stories, not just facts!
- Have a clear “call to action”
- Use NASP resources to develop your script!

General Outline and Tips for Developing your Script

It will be most beneficial for you to write your own script for your video based on your own experiences and local information. Members of Congress are highly interested in what is happening in their state/district - that’s where you come in!

Your video message should generally follow this outline:

1. Introduce yourself
   a. Include your name, credentials, your current position, your school/school district, and any leadership positions in NASP or your state association
   b. Identify yourself as a constituent

2. State why you are reaching out
   a. You can either say that this is part of NASP’s Advocacy Action Week, or that you just feel this issue is important enough that you feel the need to reach out for help

3. Give a brief overview of school psychology and why it is important
   a. Offer basic information about the role of school psychologists and the importance of your work in supporting school and student success and making sure all students have access to a high-quality public education.
b. Focus on the comprehensive role of a school psychologist including prevention, intervention, and consultation services with school staff and families.

c. Highlight the importance of collaboration among teachers, administrators, parents, families, communities, and other professionals in addressing the needs of children and youth.

d. **Focus on the kids.**

4. Identify a specific problem in the field that your representatives could help with
   a. Share your story! Include relevant anecdotal comments, situations, and your experience as a school psychologist throughout your video.
   b. If there is a specific policy that is not working well in your state or district, share information about it.
   c. Ideas for this could include: the implications of the shortage of school psychologists, issues relating to school safety, the underfunding of public education, and the lack of support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds
      i. Resources and key messages for these issues and others can be found in NASP’s [Policy Playbook](#) and [Critical Policy Issues webpages](#)
      ii. Consider sharing specific needs that have arisen as a result of current events, including COVID-19 and efforts to confront systemic racism

5. Identify how solving the specific problem would help students
   a. Again, share your story. *How would solving this problem help you do your work? How would solving this problem help you help kids?* For example, *what additional services could you provide if there were more school psychologists?*

6. Make a clear “call to action”
   a. Urge them to support legislation to solve the problem that you previously identified
   b. Urge them to increase federal appropriations to programs that will help solve the problem you previously identified

7. Thank them for listening and for their service

*Sample Script*

Below is an example of what your script could look like.

“Hi, my name is [state your name] and I am a [state your position: school psychologist, professor of school psychology, etc.] at [identify your school/school district] and the [leadership position in NASP/state association]. I am your constituent and I want to share the critical work that school psychologists do for kids and to ask for your help in supporting legislation that will give kids increased access to mental health services in schools. I’m asking you to help me help kids.
As a school psychologist, I have received unique training that allows me to deliver services within the context of learning and in support of the mission of schools. I provide critical early identification and intervention services to support the academic, social-emotional, and mental and behavioral health needs of students. I am also a key member of school teams dedicated to improving school climate and safety and building trauma-informed schools. [Give specific example(s) of how you work with students, families, and administrators to support student learning in the schools you serve.]

1 in 5 children and youth will experience a mental health disorder, and approximately 80% of students who need mental health care do not receive it. Those that do access their services at schools, where they are more likely to ask for help. Unfortunately, there is currently a significant shortage of school psychologists and school mental health professionals across the country. These shortages lead to unmet needs across the country, especially in rural and low-income areas. In our state, the average ratio is [average ratio in your state] and I personally am responsible for working with [# of students you are responsible for] students.

It is more important than ever for students to have access to mental health services at schools. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the social unrest due to racism and police brutality, there has been an increase in calls to suicide hotlines, and we anticipate a higher need than ever when we return back to schools. It is imperative that schools prioritize mental and behavioral health and social emotional learning as we return to school, but with significant personnel shortages, that are likely to get worse without significant financial support from Congress, our children will suffer. Much of my time is spent working with students with disabilities, including completing evaluations for special education eligibility. This is important work to be sure, but if we had more school psychologists in my district, I would be able to spend less time testing and more time on improving school climate and the mental wellbeing of the students at my school - which could include suicide prevention and violence prevention strategies, trauma-informed classroom training for teachers and staff, and ensuring that a continuum of services is provided for kids between school and their communities.

As my representative, please do everything you can to not only protect the existing positions of school mental health professionals, but also to invest in new ones. That means that I need you to support legislation to build a pipeline of school employed mental health professionals, make meaningful investments to Title IV-A of ESSA, fully fund IDEA, and support increased emergency funding to help schools address the fallout from COVID-19. I urge you to support me and the health and wellbeing of our kids by advocating as much as possible for this critical legislation and funding. Help me help kids.

Thank you for taking the time to watch this and for your service to the country. Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions.”

Video Tips and Guidelines

Video length can be up to 5 minutes (preferably 1 - 3 minutes).

Dress appropriately for the video.
● Wear a color that isn’t the same as the background behind you to make sure you don’t blend in.
● Solid colors or fine patterns are preferred over busier stripes, dots, and patterns that may be distracting.

**Lighting** is important for creating mood and emphasizing certain details.
● Record in a bright room, in the shade outdoors, or under cloud cover.
● Avoid bright sunlight as it creates harsh shadows.
● Avoid lighting that comes only from directly above or behind you.
● If recording indoors and using natural light, be sure to sit or stand opposite the windows rather than having your back to the windows to avoid being backlit.

Always shoot in **landscape mode**. Portrait mode will often give you borders in your final video clip.

![Portrait vs. Landscape](image)

Don’t use the zoom function. The zoom on your iPhone is digital zoom, not optical zoom, which is no good for detail or image quality. Using it will likely make your video look grainy.

If using a smartphone, put it in **Airplane mode**. This is to avoid getting unnecessary interruptions and sounds from notifications while you’re shooting.

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**Recording and Submitting Your Video**

There are a number of ways you can record your video, including:
● **On your smartphone or tablet**, using the video feature on your camera app.
● **On your computer with a webcam**, using a video recording app.
● **On a traditional videorecorder**.

Once you record your video, you should edit out any sections that you do not want to be submitted to the office of your members of Congress. **NASP will not be editing/altering your videos**, so you must submit it to NASP exactly as you would like your member of Congress to see it.

Once you have edited the video as you’d like, simply submit to NASP using [this form](#).
II: Sending your Letters

Sending Letters through NASP’s Advocacy Action Center

During the week of July 20th, we are also asking our members to send letters to members of Congress through our Advocacy Action Center. Doing so takes just two minutes; after you click on the link to the letter you want to send, a form will populate, asking you to fill out information about yourself that allows the system to identify your congressional representatives. Once you click “submit,” a template form letter will be displayed. Feel free to edit the letter as you’d like and add any personal anecdotes. Then, click submit!

III: Posting on Social Media

Tips for Advocating on Social Media

If you are new to using social media to advocate, Part I, Section 4 of NASP’s Policy Playbook has a number of specific tips that will be helpful to you. For this week of action, we recommend the following:

- Post the video you created and tag your members of Congress on Twitter. You can find a full listing of every member of Congress’ Twitter handle here. This may also be especially effective on Instagram, where legislators don’t receive as many notifications.
- Use the hashtag #NASPadvocates so we can find and share your message!
- Share NASP’s Action Alerts to encourage your colleagues to participate and send their letters to Congress.
- Share your own social media advocacy messages throughout the week. Some examples are listed in the section below.

Sample Social Media

- I made this video for my representatives in Congress (tag representatives - @SenTimKaine, for example) to urge them to support legislation to put more school psychologists in classrooms. #NASPadvocates
- In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the social unrest due to police brutality and racism, mental health in schools is more important than ever. I hope my representatives in Congress (tag representatives) agree and will support legislation to put qualified mental health professionals in schools! #NASPadvocates
- As a school psychologist who works with kids every day, I have seen firsthand the toll that the COVID-19 pandemic and unrest has taken. The need for more of us is serious and must be met. I urge my congressional representatives (tag representatives) to pay attention to this issue! #NASPadvocates
- Our schools that need our support the most continue to be underfunded, year after year. Enough! We need Congress invest funding into Title I, Title IV-A, and IDEA so we can finally provide a quality public education for our kids. #NASPadvocates
● 1 in 5 students will experience a mental health disorder, but 80% of students who need support do not receive it. We need more school mental health professionals to identify and help our kids. Help me help kids (tag representatives)! #NASPadvocates