

YOUTH-FRIENDLY CHILD IMPACT STATEMENT TOOLKIT



for every child



Ready to make a difference?

Let's get started!



CHILD IMPACT STATEMENT TOOLKIT

This Toolkit—**created by young people, for young people**—was developed to help you use a **child impact statement** to identify how decisions being made in your community might affect children and youth and develop a plan for how you can use your voice to make a difference. Whatever it is you care about, this Toolkit will help you take action.



What is a Child Impact Statement?

A child impact statement is a research and advocacy tool that helps you build a robust case about a social issue you are passionate about using a youth lens. It's a simple document built around [seven questions](#). These questions help you explain how a policy or program impacts children, youth, and families, especially those who are often left out of decision-making. By working through these questions, you'll not only describe the impacts but also suggest ways to strengthen the policy or program so it better serves young people.

Why Use it?

No matter where you are in your advocacy journey—from just learning about an issue, to launching a campaign—child impact statements are a powerful tool to help shine a light on the real-world impacts of policies on children and families that might otherwise go unnoticed.

At UNICEF USA and Kids Impact Initiative, we believe that decisions made about you should include input from you. **And using this tool turns awareness into action!**

Find out how youth in Colorado [used an impact statement](#) to raise nearly \$18 million annually for needed staff and programs in their school district.

A Tool Built by and for Young People

This Toolkit is the result of months of hard work and creativity by young people across the country. These young people have helped us create it and test it. They've even used child impact statements to spark conversations and drive change in their schools, cities, and states. **Now, it's your turn!**

What's Inside the Toolkit?

Inside the Toolkit, you'll find everything you need to create a child impact statement, including tips on how to:

- Choose a topic
- Research your topic
- Draft a full impact statement
- Use your completed impact statement to spark change
- Ask for support from adult allies

Thank you for being a champion for youth voice and children's rights!



This helps you move from caring about an issue to creating thoughtful credible advocacy that decision-makers will actually take seriously.



UNICEF USA National Youth Council Member



The Toolkit is a partnership between [UNICEF USA](#) and [Kids Impact Initiative](#). Reach out to [UNICEF USA](#) and [Kids Impact](#) for more info.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

How to use This Toolkit

Step One: Get to Know Child Impact Statements

Step Two: Develop a Project Plan

Step Three: Identify a Topic

Step Four: Research Your Topic

Step Five: Answer the Child Impact Statement Questions

Step Six: Finalize Your Impact Statement

Step Seven: Create a Final Presentation

Step Eight: Create an Advocacy Plan (Optional)

Wrap Up: Let Us Know What You Think

List of Resources



“ This is probably one of the best projects I’ve been a part of. ”

UNICEF USA National Youth Council Member

How to use this Toolkit

Before you jump in, take a few minutes to flip through the whole Toolkit. A quick read will give you a sense of the journey ahead and the different steps involved. Keep a few things in mind:

- **Don’t go it alone!** This Toolkit is meant to be used by a small group of young people, like a UNICEF club, youth council, or any group of peers who care about making change. If you come across this Toolkit on your own, invite a few friends to join you or connect with an existing group at your school or in your community. Working together will make the process easier, more fun and more impactful.
- The Toolkit is designed to guide you from start to finish, **so follow each step in order.**
- At the end of most steps, you’ll find a **short checklist.** Use that to make sure you’ve covered everything you need before moving on.
- **You don’t need to know everything!** Adults in your school, community, or network can be great sources of information and support. Let them know what you’re working on and invite them to be part of the process.
- Most young people find it takes about **8-10 weeks to complete this project from start to finish.**

When you’ve finished your child impact statement, make sure to upload your final statement, presentation, and advocacy plans (if you have them) using the QR code at the end of the Toolkit. Your work will help us improve this Toolkit and inspire other youth leaders across the country!



Find all of the links and resources in this Toolkit on page 14.

STEP ONE: Get To Know Child Impact Statements

Before choosing a topic or starting research on your topic, it can be helpful to get a sense of what a child impact statement looks like and how you can use it to make change.



Read the Questions

[Go through the seven questions you'll need to answer for the child impact statement.](#)

Review Completed Impact Statement Examples

Check out examples of [completed impact statements](#). These include real-world examples from UNICEF Clubs across the country, as well as examples created just for learning.

Explore Case Studies

Look at [case studies](#) showcasing how young people in different parts of the country and all over the world have used child impact statements to make real change!

Practice Exercise: Try it Out!

One of the best ways to really understand child impact statements is to practice using them. Work with your project team on a real-world scenario and practice analyzing it using this [practice exercise](#).

STEP TWO: Develop a Project Plan

It's important that everyone has a clear role and that the work feels fair, manageable, and matched with people's interests and strengths.

That's where a project plan can come in handy! It helps you break work into steps, assign tasks, and set timelines so everyone stays on track.

We've included a [template](#) with suggested timelines based on what's worked for other youth groups. Adjust it to fit your group's goals and schedule.

Your group may decide you don't need a project plan until after you've selected your topic. **Whenever it feels right for you, come back to this step** and make sure you have a clear outline for managing your group's work.



Before moving on to the next step, ask yourself the following questions:

- Does everyone working on this project understand their role and next steps?
- Do you have a clear timeline?
- Is the distribution of work fair and does it take into account everyone's capacity and interests where possible?
- Have you clearly established meeting dates, how/when/where you will meet, and how you will work together to get each step finished?

STEP THREE: Identify a Topic

Before you can dive into writing a child impact statement, you need to choose a topic.

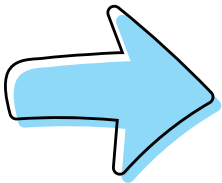
You can use child impact statements to analyze any decision that could impact children and young people. These decisions could be school-related, community-based, statewide or national. Not every topic will seem like a “kids” issue, but lots of things affect children and young people even if they don’t seem like it right away.

What Counts as a Topic?

It could be a proposed policy or program (something that’s been suggested but not officially adopted yet) or something that already exists.

Here are a few examples:

- A proposed new bus route in your neighborhood
- The opening of a new public park
- State legislation to expand free school lunches
- The mental health program at your high school



Looking for more examples? Get inspired by [topics from UNICEF clubs](#) across the country or check out [this resource](#) that provides a list of sample topics.

Important Tools and Tips for Choosing a Topic

Ask yourself these questions when considering a topic for your child impact statement:

- Is there a proposed policy or program that connects to something you care about?
- Alternatively, is there an existing policy or program that isn’t working well or that you’d like to see change? Maybe it’s not reaching all youth.
- Does the policy or program impact a large number of young people? Does it have a significant impact on marginalized youth?

- Is there enough data to back up your arguments?
- Could you gather your own data through surveys or discussions with your peers?
- Can you determine who is responsible for overseeing or implementing the policy or program?

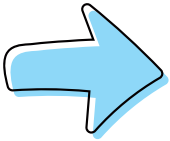


Make sure that your topic is specific and ideally addresses only one policy or program. For example, instead of focusing generally on how social media impacts children’s mental health, you could look at your school’s current policy on smart phones.

Use these resources to identify policies and proposals:

- For local proposals or policies, visit city or county websites and search for legislation, council or school board meeting agendas and minutes, or policies.
- For state proposals or policies, start by visiting this [database](#).
- For federal proposals or policies, start by visiting [congress.gov](#). You can also visit the website of the author of the legislation you are interested in here: [search legislators](#).
- Try searching online using key words like “Atlanta school lunch policy,” “Iowa mental health legislation,” or “Nebraska housing policies.”





Have too many ideas and need help choosing? Check out our tool to support [group decision-making](#).



Ask an Adult for Help

A trusted adult can help you think through a topic, look for specific policies or proposals related to your interests, and figure out who is responsible for overseeing a particular program or policy.

You could reach out to a teacher, advisor, mentor, an expert in the field, or other community leaders and ask them if they can connect you with adult allies who could help you answer questions like:

- Who could I ask about any local policies that impact youth mental health?
- Can you help me see if there's something coming up at the school board or city council that affects students?
- I found this bill online; can you help me figure out who sponsored it and how to contact them?
- Do you know of any organizations or departments working on [topic] that I could connect with?



Once you've picked a topic, fill out this [topic selection form](#).

“ This Toolkit turns advocacy from something that's abstract to a step-by-step process. ”

UNICEF USA National Youth Council Member



Before moving on to the next step, ask yourself the following questions:

- Could someone unfamiliar with your topic read your topic selection form and understand the focus of your impact statement? Consider asking a friend, parent, or teacher to review it.
- Does your chosen topic clearly address one issue, either a proposed or existing policy or program?
- Have you accurately identified who is responsible for developing or changing the policy or program you chose (for example, a school board, city council, or state legislature)? This can be tricky. If you're unsure, ask an adult for help!



STEP FOUR: Research Your Topic

Now that you've chosen a specific policy or program to focus on, it's time to learn more about it. It's important that you understand the basics of your issue and have a few key facts or data points that help you tell the story of why your topic matters.

Before you start researching or collecting data, [carefully review all the child impact statement questions](#). This will help you clarify exactly what information you will need to answer each question.

You'll want to back up your ideas with data wherever you can. This means looking for facts, numbers or quotes from experts that support your statement. For example, if you say "a lot" of youth are affected, include the actual numbers that prove it.

How Much Is Enough?

A few well-chosen facts can be more powerful than a long list. Try to include **at least three strong data points** that highlight the need for or impact of the policy or program you're analyzing. Choose data that helps others understand the issue and care about it.



Aim for local data when possible. It often helps make your impact statement more personal and relatable.

If you can't find the data you need to make your case, consider using quotes from experts. This could include examples or stories from those with lived experience.

You can also conduct a simple survey of other young people in your community, especially those most impacted by the topic you are researching.



COMMENT

Designing Your Own Survey

Ask other youth in your school or community what they think by using a simple survey.

3 Steps to Get Started with a Survey:

1. Talk to a Trusted Adult

Adult allies can help you plan, including figuring out if parental consent is needed. This is important because schools or communities may require permission before you ask other young people questions.

2. Choose Your Questions

Pick 1-3 clear questions that help you understand the issue better.

Example: "Do you know who to go to in our school to get mental health services?"

3. Ask Your Peers

Talk to a small group—in person, over text, or with a quick online poll. If you're going online, use trusted platforms and ask an adult for help.

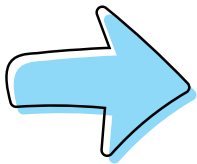
Some Important Things to Keep in Mind

- Keep your survey anonymous. Don't collect names or info that could identify people who respond.
- Respect privacy. Don't pressure anyone to answer.
- Keep questions simple and easy to understand.
- Avoid asking personal or sensitive questions unless adults have helped design the survey and manage consent.
- Keep it brief. The fewer questions you have, the more likely someone is to finish.

Who Is the Decision-Maker?

A critical part of your research is identifying who has decision-making authority over the policy or program you are analyzing. For example, if you are looking at a school policy, the decision-maker might be your principal, superintendent, or school board members.

Knowing who you are trying to influence will help you identify what data and information you want to include. This is because you will want to share data that your decision-maker cares about and can easily understand.



Research Resources

These sources can help you get started with finding data and information:

Community and Youth-Focused Data Sources

- U.S. Census Bureau, [American Community Survey](#)
- [KidsCount Data Center](#)

Data Sources for Analyzing Conditions for Children and Youth by Race and Ethnicity

- [Diversity Data Kids](#), including [Child Opportunity Index 3.0](#)
- [National Equity Atlas](#), including the [Racial Equity Index](#)
- [The Opportunity Atlas](#)

Don't Forget to Include Your Sources.

Whenever you present data, facts, or quotes, make sure to cite your sources. You can do this by hyperlinking directly to the source or using a formal citation style (check out [Purdue OWL](#)).

Remember, research is an ongoing process.

Once you have enough information to get started, begin drafting your impact statement. As you write, you may have additional questions or see gaps in your analysis. These are great clues for what research to do next.



Ask an Adult for Help

Adult allies can help you figure out what kind of data is available, where to find credible sources, and how to make sense of what you're reading.

Here are some examples of things you might ask an adult ally:

- Can you help me find local data on this issue?
- Do you know anyone who could help me find research or reports on [topic] in our city or state?
- Does this look like a reliable and well-respected source to you?



Before moving on to the next step, ask yourself the following questions:

- Does your data help tell a compelling story?
- Do you know who the primary decision-maker(s) is for your topic? Have you picked the data points that will be most convincing?
- Do you have at least three sources of evidence to back up your claims?
- Have you accurately provided the sources of your facts, data, and information?

STEP FIVE: Answer the Child Impact Statement Questions

Now that you've gathered evidence, you're ready to begin writing your child impact statement. Use your findings to explain the issue clearly and make strong recommendations.

Decide whether team members will answer different questions or work together. Either way, allow time for discussion and review to ensure answers are consistent and reflect a shared understanding.

Keep your analysis and recommendations tied directly to the proposal or policy at hand. Ideas outside its scope should not be included.

Remember to back up your answers with evidence. Refer to [Step Four](#) for more information on how to research your topic.



Before you get started

- Review [this guide](#) with examples and helpful information on each question.
- Use your [topic selection document](#) to fill out the overview section.
- Use the editable [Child Impact Statement Template](#) to draft your responses.
- Use the tips to the right to make sure you answer each question appropriately.



Quick Tips!



Questions 1-3

Define the problem clearly and explain why it matters, using data or evidence (e.g., research or surveys).

Question 4

Check if youth were consulted in developing the policy or program. If it's unclear, say so, and consider recommending in Question 7 that youth be included in the process.

Question 5

Review funding details. Does the policy explain how it will be funded and for how long? If funding is missing or unclear, note that and consider making a recommendation about needed funding in Question 7.

Question 6

Look at accountability. How will you know the policy is implemented effectively for youth? Identify who is responsible, what happens if it fails, and whether stakeholders (including youth) are involved in monitoring.

Question 7

Provide actionable recommendations. Go beyond pointing out problems by suggesting solutions. Use bullet points to make them clear and easy to act on.

STEP SIX: Finalize Your Impact Statement

You are almost at the finish line! Now it's time to pull everything together and make sure your child impact statement is clear and compelling.

Start by reviewing your answers to all of the child impact statement questions.

This is also a good moment to check for gaps. Are there places where your argument could be strengthened with more data or evidence? If so, go back and fill in the gaps.

Keep your audience in mind—whether it's a school leader, local official, state legislator, or community-based organization. Think about what will grab your audience's attention and help them care about your issue.

Remember, editing is an important process!

Brief, clear sentences are the most compelling. And you don't have to get it perfect on your first try. You'll likely revisit these answers a few times, especially as you learn more and get feedback from teammates or adult allies.

Finally, take a look back at the list of impact statement questions in Step Five, and make sure you've answered all of them fully.

Checklist

Before moving on to the next step, ask yourself the following questions:

- Will the decision-maker you are trying to influence understand your impact statement?
- Is your writing clear, focused, and easy to follow, even for someone who might not be familiar with the topic?
- Are your recommendations clear and actionable?
- Did you fully answer each question? Use the [instructions document and guide in Step Five](#) to help you.
- Do you have at least three strong data points? Did you include their sources?
- Does your data help explain why the issue matters and how it affects youth?
- Have you edited for clarity and conciseness? Did you remove any repetition or extra information that doesn't add to your argument?

Quick Tip!

Ask someone who hasn't been involved in the project to read your draft. A fresh set of eyes can help spot anything that's unclear.

Help!

Ask an Adult for Help

Asking a trusted adult to review your work can help you make sure your points are clear, your evidence is strong, and your message will land with your audience. It can be helpful to choose someone who isn't as familiar with your topic.

Here are some examples of things you might ask an adult ally:

- Can you read through my draft and tell me what parts are strongest, and where I could be clearer?
- Do you think a decision-maker would understand what I'm saying?
- Did I miss anything important or leave any big questions unanswered?

STEP SEVEN: Create a Final Presentation

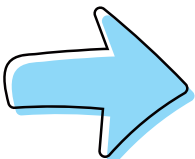
Once your child impact statement is finalized, you have a powerful product you can share with school leaders, elected officials, community members, and others.

In many cases, your written statement will be strong enough to stand on its own. Often, it's also helpful to have something more visual, engaging, and conversational that can help people really understand what you recommend and why it matters. A short presentation can highlight the most important parts of your work and bring it to life.



Your presentation is a chance to:

- Share why you chose your topic and what made it meaningful to you.
- Highlight the most relevant parts of your research.
- Explain how you believe the policy or program impacts children, youth, and families.
- Offer your suggestions for improving the policy or program.



You can use this [customizable slide deck](#), which suggests what to include in your presentation and gives you space to put your own spin on it.

What Your Presentation Should Cover

- **Introductions:** Share your names, school or club.
- **Explain What a Child Impact Statement Is and Why You Used It:** The customizable slide deck includes some suggested language, but you can also explain it in your own words. Be sure to say why you thought child impact statements were helpful tools.
- **Describe Your Topic and Why You Chose It:** Start by talking about the broader issue you care about, then explain the specific policy or program you decided to analyze. Why does it matter to you?
- **Summarize Your Key Findings:** Walk your audience through what your child impact statement revealed.
 - How would the proposal impact children, youth, and their families?
 - Would it affect some groups of young people more than others?
 - What data or evidence did you find that supports your points?
 - What surprised you?
 - What recommendations do you have?
- **Name Your Key Decision-Makers and Your Main Message:** Who has the power to act on this issue? What's the most important thing you want them to know?



This is your chance to share your message in your own voice.

Keep it focused, make it personal, and don't be afraid to speak with passion. Your perspective matters.

STEP EIGHT (Optional): Create an Advocacy Plan

By finishing your child impact statement and final presentation, you've already accomplished something big! You've done the research, analyzed an issue, and created thoughtful recommendations.

For many of you, however, this is just the beginning of a longer-term effort to make change in your community. A child impact statement is a tool, and it becomes more powerful the more you use it.

Build Your Advocacy Plan

- **Set Your Goal:** What change do you want to see, and how will you know it's a success? You can use the recommendations from your child impact statement as a guide.
- **Find Your Decision-Maker:** Who has the power to make it happen? That's your audience.
- **Connect With Other Advocates:** Look for people or groups already working on similar issues, share what you've learned, and team up to make your impact even stronger.
- **Choose Your Strategy:** Will you meet with them directly, organize your community, or build public support? Pick what best fits your goal.
- **Plan Your Outreach:** How will you connect with your audience? Through a meeting, public presentation, hearing, or community action?

Here are a few examples of advocacy tactics to get started:

- **Present your findings directly to Relevant Decision-Maker(s):**
 - Offer written or spoken testimony at a public hearing or meeting (like a school board or city council meeting).
 - Schedule an appointment with an elected official or policymaker at their office or present your findings to a school principal.
 - Write a letter to decision-makers.

- Ask for a follow-up meeting so that you can discuss your recommendations and ask how they will act on them.
- **Raise Awareness about Your Issue Through a Social Media Campaign:** Use key findings, quotes, and data to spark conversation.
 - Give viewers opportunities to take action, like calling their policymakers.
- **Create a Petition or Pledge Campaign:** Incorporate your findings into messaging and outreach materials to build support.
- **Submit an Op-Ed or Letter to the Editor:** Share your findings in your local or school newspaper, and provide a way for readers to follow up or take action.
- **Host a Community Event or Town Hall:** Present your findings and invite local youth, families, and decision-makers to engage.
- **Educate Aligned School Clubs or Other Youth Groups:** Inform others about policies and programs that affect youth.



Reach Out for Support: Start with who you know. Teachers, student groups, and local leaders can be great first stops and can help you connect with allies working on similar issues.



You've already done something powerful. How you use this to make change in your community is up to you.

WRAP UP: Let Us Know What You Think & Share Your Success

Congratulations on completing your child impact statement! This is meaningful work, and you should feel proud of the time and effort you've put into it. What you've created has the power to influence real change in your community, and by sharing it with us, you'll also help strengthen this Toolkit so that youth leaders across the country can build on your example.



Before you go celebrate, finish the last few steps:



- **Upload Your Work:** Use this QR Code or [click here](#) to share your final work product with us and help create a resource library for youth leaders following in your footsteps.



- **Share Your Feedback:** Use the QR code to the left or [click here](#) to complete a short survey. Your input will help us make the Toolkit even better for other young people who follow in your footsteps.



- **Take Credit and Spread the Word:** Once you've submitted your documents and feedback, you'll get access to custom social media shareables—including options for LinkedIn—so you can show off your hard work and inspire others.

Consider including this experience and what it meant to you in one of your college essays, mention it in a job interview, or share this experience with other youth leaders who want to make change.

Love

We can't wait to see how your child impact statement sparks change in your community and beyond.

YOU'RE FINISHED!

HERE'S WHAT YOU DID...

- 1 GOT TO KNOW CHILD IMPACT STATEMENTS
- 2 DEVELOPED A PROJECT PLAN
- 3 IDENTIFIED A TOPIC
- 4 RESEARCHED YOUR TOPIC
- 5 ANSWERED YOUR CHILD IMPACT STATEMENT QUESTIONS
- 6 FINALIZED YOUR STATEMENT
- 7 CREATED YOUR PRESENTATION
- 8 CREATED YOUR ADVOCACY PLAN
- 9 SUBMITTED YOUR STATEMENTS AND LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THOUGHT!



Summary of Resources: Quick Links by Step

[Child Impact Statement Questions](#) ([editable template](#)).

Step One: Get to Know Child Impact Statements

- [Sample completed impact statements](#)
- [Case studies](#) showcasing how child impact statements have made real-world impacts
- [Practice Exercise](#)

Step Two: Develop a Project Plan

- [Project plan template](#)

Step Three: Identify a Topic

- [Examples of topics from UNICEF clubs across the country.](#)
- [Sample topics list](#)
- [Resources to support group decision-making](#)
- [Topic selection form](#)
- Resources to identify policies and proposals:
 - [State proposals or policies](#)
 - [Federal proposals or policies](#)

Step Four: Research Your Topic

- Community and youth-focused data sources:
 - [U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey](#)
 - [KidsCount Data Center](#)
- Data sources for analyzing conditions for children and youth by race and ethnicity:
 - [Diversity Data Kids](#) including the [Child Opportunity Index 3.0](#)
 - [National Equity Atlas](#) including the [Racial Equity Index](#)
 - [The Opportunity Atlas](#)
- Citation resources: [Purdue OWL](#)

Step Five: Answer the Child Impact Statement Questions

- [Instructions and tips on answering the questions](#)

Step Seven: Create a Final Presentation

- [Customizable final presentation slide deck](#)

Upload Your Work



QR Code ([link here](#)) to share your final work product with us and help create a resource library for youth leaders following in your footsteps.



QR Code ([link here](#)) to complete a short survey and let us know how it went!

Any questions?
Email volunteer@unicefusa.org



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