

what?	Introducing Pediatricians to Child Advocacy
who?	Voices for Illinois Children Contact: Amy Hume, Program Associate, ahume@voices4kids.org
why?	IL Voices is engaging and developing a new group of allies who will speak up for children and families. First-year pediatric residents at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago can intern at Voices for Illinois Children to learn about advocacy, become familiar with IL Voices' legislative agenda, explore resources and gain contacts on issues matching their interests.

Background:

IL Voices' Start Early: Learning Begins at Birth campaign provides advocacy training on child care and early education issues throughout the state. Rush invited Voices to give a presentation on child advocacy to its first-year pediatric residents. The initial session led to subsequent training requests with residents expressing great interest in learning child advocacy skills. In September 2001, both parties agreed on the creation of an intern program through which pediatric residents would learn more about child advocacy.

"The time residents spend at Voices for Illinois Children exposes them to another way to help their patients and families. Residents take away the importance of and their role in speaking up for children. They are more likely to be actively engaged as an advocate."

--- Latresa Hines, M.D., Pediatric Chief Resident at Rush University Medical Center.

Key Elements:

- Communication between the advocacy organization and the pediatric chief resident is key to insure coordination of schedules, deadlines, and expectations.
- IL Voices staff meet with residents individually to identify specific areas of interest.
- IL Voices provides a group orientation before residents begin their required advocacy rotations
- During rotations, residents visit a number of social service organizations as well as Voices for Illinois Children.
- At the end of the program, residents prepare and present a paper describing their child advocacy experiences, enabling their clinic co-workers to understand how health systems and policies affect children and their families.
- Residents also prepare a fact sheet on an issue, such as the state budget, child abuse, parent education, etc., which is made available to parents visiting the clinic.

Staff Time:

- Over the course of one year, from eight to eleven residents each spend 2 hours per month at Voices.
- An IL Voices staff member holds a one hour introductory meeting with each resident and follows up with any information requested by the resident via e-mail.
- An IL Voices staff member provides the contact information requested by the resident. The resident then contacts the specific person and arranges the visits to the sites.
- Subsequent meetings differ depending on the resident's project or interest. Residents attend policy team meetings or arrange meetings with a staff member, who shares the same interest.

Outcomes:

- Pediatric residents widen their horizons, learning how to help their patients and families in a different way and learning how to advocate on their behalf.
- Pediatric residents contact their legislators, share their experiences with policy makers and encourage families to do the same.
- IL Voices establishes positive relationships with future community pediatricians. As the residents gain a better understanding of policy issues, they can become part of the outreach arm of Voices for Illinois Children.
- The residents' insight and research bring new ideas to the policy table.
- The residents spend time researching and developing their projects, which ultimately benefits both the resident and their colleagues.
- After their internships, most residents opt to sign up for IL Voices' action alerts. Some send letters, e-mails or make calls to their legislators.

Costs:

- The cost of working with Rush pediatric residents is basically from staff time and the provision of materials about the organization.

Related Organization: DOCS FOR TOTS

Docs for Tots is a nationwide network of doctors advocating for young children. It was formed to encourage more doctors to fulfill their important role as active advocates for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers on the national, state, and local levels. Docs for Tots is co-housed with Voices for America's Children.

For more information visit www.docsfortots.org.