

girls
inc.

of Greater Houston



**COMMUNITY
ADVOCACY
TOOLKIT**



**girls
inc.**

of Greater Houston

Table of Contents

<u>3</u>	Girls' Bill of Rights
<u>4</u>	Advocacy
<u>8</u>	Discover
<u>13</u>	Prioritize & Research
<u>14</u>	Community
<u>15</u>	Trauma, Compassion Fatigue, Healing, & Coping
<u>18</u>	Meet the Team
<u>19</u>	Contact

Girls Inc. Girls' BILL OF RIGHTSSM



GIRLS HAVE THE RIGHT TO
**BE THEMSELVES
AND TO RESIST GENDER
STEREOTYPES.**



GIRLS HAVE THE RIGHT TO
**EXPRESS THEMSELVES
WITH ORIGINALITY AND
ENTHUSIASM.**



GIRLS HAVE THE RIGHT TO
**TAKE RISKS TO STRIVE
FREELY AND TO TAKE
PRIDE IN SUCCESS**



GIRLS HAVE THE RIGHT TO
**ACCEPT AND
APPRECIATE
THEIR BODIES.**



GIRLS HAVE THE RIGHT TO
**HAVE CONFIDENCE IN
THEMSELVES AND BE
SAFE IN THE WORLD.**



GIRLS HAVE THE RIGHT TO
**PREPARE FOR INTERESTING
WORK AND ECONOMIC
INDEPENDENCE.**

WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

Formal Advocacy: Advocacy is the deliberate process of directly and indirectly influencing decision makers, stakeholders and relevant audiences. Advocacy addresses problems by bringing them to the forefront of the agenda for decision makers, and by building visibility and public momentum behind an issue.

Self-Advocacy: Talking about yourself isn't the easiest thing to do! Advocating for yourself is the process of speaking up for yourself and communicating your needs to others. Who are the 'others'? You may use self-advocacy in the classroom, in your community, at your job, or even with your friends and family.

This toolkit will be used as a guide to help you advocate for yourself and your community.

GIRL-LED ADVOCACY

Girls Inc. is committed to centering our advocacy in the lived experiences of girls. We aim to lift up girls' voices because we believe all girls have the capacity to be effective advocates.

We aim to empower girls with the tools necessary to be change agents in their communities and beyond, and to develop into civically engaged individuals.

TYPES OF ADVOCATES

Advocating for yourself or your community can be a scary thing to do.

You might be thinking: *what if I'm not good at speaking in front of people?*

What if people won't listen to me? Good news! There are many types of roles you can assume as an advocate:

Researcher	This role is for the thinkers! You may be a person who likes to investigate what social issue is happening and why. You may research people in your community and see how they can help bring positive change.
Spokesperson	Do you like to talk in front people? You may share your ideas and people listen to you! You are the leader of your cause, and you create change in your community by using your voice.
Proposal Writer	Hey, maybe you don't like to research or speak in front of large crowds, but you are an excellent writer. You can tell a story that people can connect with. You are a powerful tool in the advocacy process.

Which role is right for you?

Find out more by visiting the [Youth Advocacy Resources Hub](#)

LEADERSHIP

What does a leader look like?

Leadership is an essential part of being a member of a community. Leadership involves recognizing and accepting the unique talents of each community member to play a role in that community. It's an important facet for a leader to have a sense of responsibility for their community. This sense of responsibility translates into recognizing both what is good and what needs changing within the community.

Why is it important for women and girls to acknowledge their leadership skills? For girls to realize that they are the experts on issues that influence their lives, and they have the power, ability, and desire to make their communities better places for themselves and for others.

- Organizing
- Decision-making
- Communication
- Creativity
- Planning
- Building Relationships

Skills of a Leader

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Effective communication means speaking clearly in words others can understand and listening carefully when someone else is talking.

You must be able to communicate well if you are able to help others. You're only likely to make a difference in people's lives if they cannot hear you and understand what you are saying.



Tip: communicating is not just about speaking; it's also about listening.

A large part of how you communicate with others is through your facial expressions, body language, tone, and speed of speech.

Communication Skills

- Concise
- Clear
- Coherent
- Concrete

Communicating What You Need



DISCOVER



 **Know Your Why**

 **Where Can I Start?**

The basics of Federal, State, and Local Advocacy

 **Be Informed**

KNOW YOUR WHY

“Nobody will listen to me. My voice doesn’t matter.”

These are questions youth ask themselves when change is needed.

Understanding the reason why you see the need for change in your community is the first step. Here are some questions to start with:

- **WHAT?** What is the issue you want to address?
- **WHY?** Why is it important that others engage in changing this issue?
- **WHERE?** Where will you find information to help you understand the issue better?
- **WHO?** Who will listen to you?
- **HOW?** How will you begin your advocacy journey?

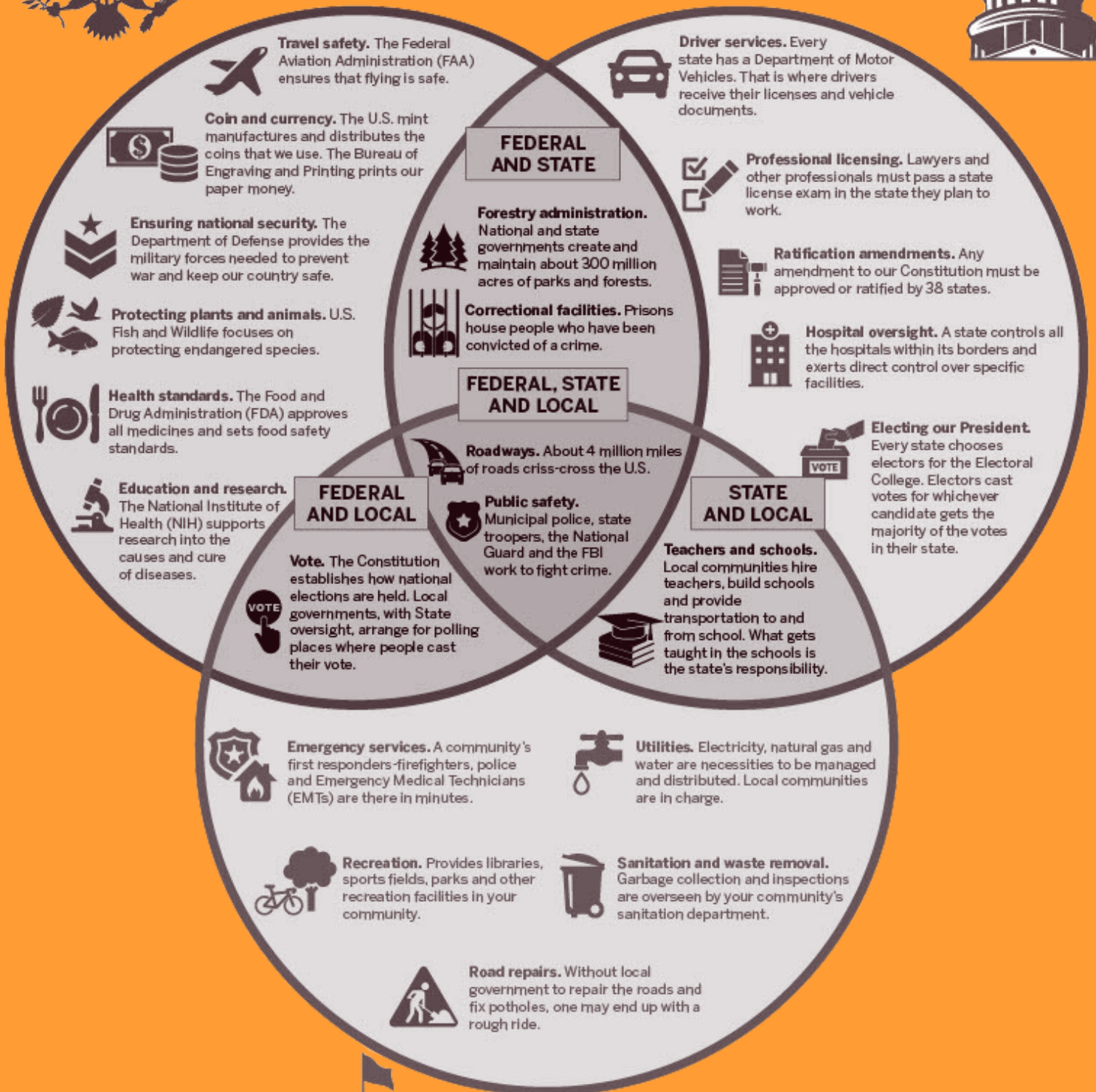
Find out more about Knowing Your Why.





FEDERAL

STATE



LOCAL

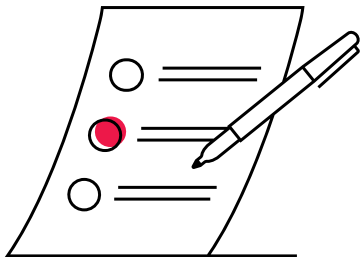
BE INFORMED



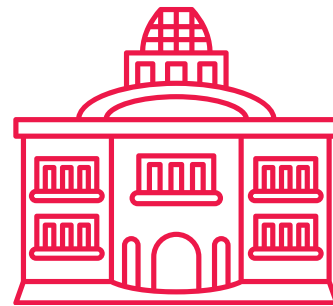
[Voter Registration](#)



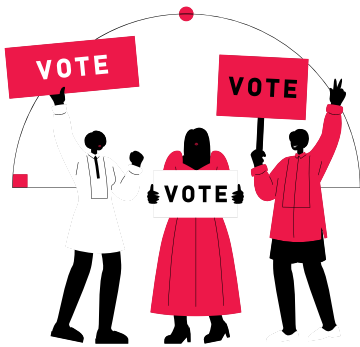
[Houston Districts and Precincts](#)



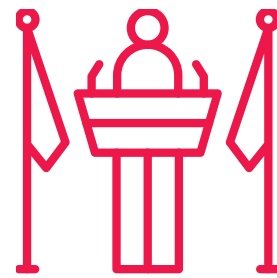
[Houston Elections Administration](#)



[Find My Representative](#)



[Become a Student Election Worker](#)



[Houston Mayor's Office](#)

BE INFORMED

Period Poverty

Menstrual Equity Legislation



PRIORITIZE & RESEARCH

All advocacy efforts require a lot of research! Yes, *research*. This is not your typical type of research.

First, we establish who the stakeholders are.

What is a stakeholder?

A stakeholder is someone, or a group of people, who hold authority in the decision-making process.

Who are the stakeholders?

- Individual (*you are a stakeholder!*)
- Communities
- Community leaders (*think teachers, school board members, principals, youth leaders at religious congregations, clubs or after school programs*)
- Mayor, Senators, Council Members, State Representatives

How do I identify the stakeholders? Ask yourself these questions:

- Who is directly impacted by the issue?
- Who has tried to address the issue in the past?
- Who has the influence to make change?



Advocating for yourself and your community is hard work. *Don't do it alone!*
The more voices you have behind your cause, the more you can impact change.

WHERE DO I START?

After you find out who represents you on a local, state, or federal level, you will begin searching for bills, policies, laws, and community work that are directly related to your cause.

Refer to [Be Informed](#) in the Toolkit to find out who represents you!

EXAMPLE:

2190 North Loop West, Houston, TX 77018

[Harris County Address Lookup](#)

Congressional Representative: Sheila Jackson Lee, District 18

State Representative(s): John Cornyn & Ted Cruz

Harris County Judge: Lina Hidalgo

Harris County Commissioner: Rodney Ellis, Precinct 1

Refer to the [legislative chart](#) to understand the overlap between federal, state, and local levels!

FEDERAL

[Congress Activity: Sheila Jackson Lee](#)

[Senator Activity: John Cornyn & Ted Cruz](#)

STATE

[Texas House Representative: Penny Morales Shaw](#)

[Texas Governor: Greg Abbott](#)

LOCAL

[Harris County Judge: Lina Hidalgo](#)

[Harris County Commissioner: Rodney Ellis](#)



HOW DO I WRITE ABOUT THE ISSUE I CARE ABOUT?



Tip: refer back to [Effective Communication](#) in the toolkit!

Dear (local/state/national elected official's NAME),

INTRODUCTION

Include your name and grade (if still in school). State the purpose of your letter.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Explain what your concern is and include facts and statistics about the issue you care about.

PERSONAL CONNECTION

Share why the issue is important to you and how it affects you and your peers. Include a personal story about you, or someone close to you, who has experienced [X] issue.

ASK

State your call to action. What do you want your local/state/national elected official to do?

CONCLUSION

Thank you for the opportunity to share my experience and perspective on [X]. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

[SIGN YOUR NAME if this is a printed letter to be mailed]

[Your first and last name as it appears on your government ID or school ID, and your preferred name if it is different]

[Grade]

[School]

COMMUNITY



After you have identified your **stakeholders** and **informed** yourself about the needs of your community, you must actively engage with the community itself!

How will you engage with the community? You may use face-to-face conversation, social media, or conduct virtual meetings on Zoom or Facetime.

Tip: ask the community members what communication style works best for them. Remember, you're all in this together.

Build partnerships in the community! This takes a lot of time. Relationships do not develop overnight.

Creating a timeline will help you determine how long it will take to get the community engagement effort off the ground.

[Download an interactive Youth Advocacy Workbook](#)



**TRAUMA, COMPASSION FATIGUE,
HEALING, & COPING**



ADDRESSING TRAUMA

What does trauma look like?

Trauma is extremely complex and can affect people in a variety of ways. Adolescents can be exposed to a variety of traumatic events or trauma types. Here are some ways you may be affected:

- Bullying
- Community Violence
- Physical and Emotional Abuse
- Grief



Understanding the Types of Trauma

During your advocacy journey, it is normal to feel personally impacted by issues you care deeply about. Recognizing your limitations and possible past trauma can help you navigate the issue you are advocating for.

Mental Health Resources

- [Tips for Anxiety](#)
- [Helping a Friend in Need](#)
- [Staying Safe Online](#)

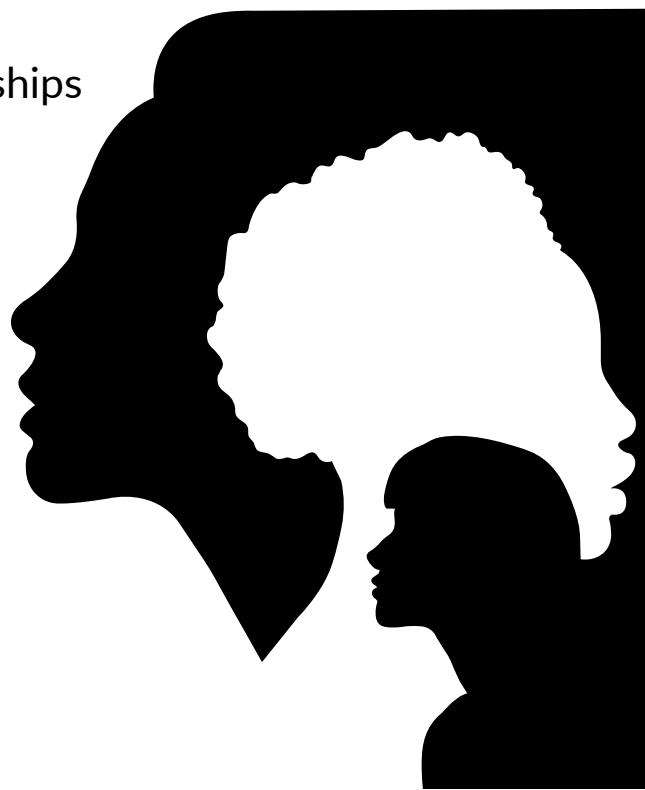
COMPASSION FATIGUE & EMOTIONAL TRAUMA

Compassion fatigue is described as the physical, emotional, and psychological impact of helping others. Those that work in fields that provide support to others may experience compassion fatigue as time continues. Emotional exhaustion due to handling other individuals needs is understood and, in some cases, expected.

Signs of Compassion Fatigue:

- feelings of helplessness and powerlessness in the face of suffering
- reduced feelings of empathy and sensitivity
- feeling overwhelmed and exhausted by school/work demands
- feeling detached, numb and emotionally disconnected
- loss of interest in activities you used to enjoy
- increased anxiety, sadness, anger and irritability
- difficulty concentrating and making decisions
- difficulty sleeping and sleep disturbances like nightmares
- physical symptoms like headaches, nausea, upset stomach and dizziness
- increased conflict in personal relationships
- neglect of your own self-care
- withdrawal and self-isolation

[You are not alone](#)



HEALING & COPING

You might feel overwhelmed with a lot of information, right? You might be wondering how you can heal yourself in a world that is constantly stimulating your senses.

SELF-CARE ACTIVITIES:

- Meditation
- Deep breathing
- Allow time to sit in quiet
- Take a nap
- Listen to music
- Go for a walk



Engaging with technology and social media can be exhausting!

USE TECHNOLOGY FOR SELF CARE:

- Turn your device on **Do Not Disturb** to silence notifications when you need time to yourself
- Limit your screen time and social media engagement
- Download apps designed for stress reduction
- Play puzzle games on your phone or tablet
- Read, draw, or write (be creative!)

BUILDING CONFIDENCE

Girls are more likely to put themselves down when comparing themselves to their peers.

STRONG

Accepting yourself for who you are. Accept your strengths and weaknesses. Recognizing your weaknesses and setting reasonable goals for yourself to strive in the future. Praise your strengths!

SMART

Seek new opportunities (even if they're scary or intimidating). Learn a new skill that is outside of your comfort zone! Join a club or a group that shares your interests.

BOLD

Speak up for yourself and others in the classroom, at home, or with your group of friends. Be a part of decision-making processes and share your ideas! Model positive and healthy behavior around others.



MEET THE TEAM

STAKEHOLDER TEAM

Chief Executive Officer
Treopia Cannon

Chief Program Officer
Rebecca Cox, LMSW



TOOLKIT TEAM

Advocacy & Policy Manager
Marlena Grooms, MSW

Digital Marketing Manager
Simone Williams

Executive Administrator
Hilary Pircher

Master Social Work Interns
Lauren Radcliffe
University of Texas Arlington

Lauren Williams
Walden University

Ja-Niah Dupree
University of Texas Arlington

**girls
inc.**

of Greater Houston

**REACH
OUT.**

Contact Us



713-802-2260



programs@girlsinc-houston.org



girlsinc-houston.org



**2190 North Loop West
Suite 105
Houston, TX, 77018**