

FIRST FOCUS: A RISING RESOURCE

GROWING IN INFLUENCE

First Focus is a bipartisan advocacy organization that is committed to making children and their families a priority in federal policy and budget decisions. Children's health, education, family economics, child welfare, and child safety are the five core issue areas around which First Focus is working to promote bipartisan policy solutions.



As an organization recently emerging in the federal policy arena, First Focus was eager to gauge its effectiveness in making children and families a priority in federal policy and budget decisions.

As a result, First Focus recently hired a team of independent evaluators to determine its effectiveness as an advocate for children at the federal level.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Evaluators collected the data for this report using "bellwether" methodology, an evaluation approach that consists of structured interviews with nationally influential individuals who are closely involved in federal policy relating to children and families. Those individuals, or "bellwethers," consisted of knowledgeable thought leaders whose opinions about federal policy issues carry substantial weight and predictive value in the federal policy arena. The bellwethers were interviewed to determine their awareness of First Focus and the policy issues in which they are involved.

The bellwether interviews were conducted with four types of bellwethers: federal policymakers, advocates, associations, and researchers/think tanks.

Interviews were conducted from May through September 2007, and followed standard survey protocol. Bellwethers were guaranteed confidentiality and assurances that their comments would not be directly connected with their names.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

◆ **Early on, First Focus has established itself as a leading advocate for children and families.**

Bellwethers indicated their familiarity with the work of First Focus, particularly given the organization's recent emergence in the policy arena.

When asked to identify the main advocates or voices on policies related to children and families - specifically tax and budget issues - First Focus ranked second among all advocacy groups, think tanks, and policy centers currently working on children's issues at the federal level.

◆ **A bipartisan voice for children.** When asked which children's advocacy organization was seen as a bipartisan voice for children, respondents most often identified First Focus as filling this role.

In addition, a plurality of individuals identified First Focus as bipartisan in their advocacy.

◆ **Early credibility as advocates and as a resource.** A majority of respondents have identified the work of First Focus as "credible," with one leading policymaker noting "First Focus has increased its visibility in the last 6-8 months as a source of information I look to."

BELLWETHER IMPLICATIONS

This evaluation is a strong indication of the increases in awareness and influence First Focus has achieved in a reasonably short period of time. As the survey indicates, First Focus fills an important void at the national level, working to create a lasting legacy for children and their families by encouraging bipartisan federal policy solutions and investments in children.

This was First Focus's first administration of the bellwether survey, and therefore the data compiled represent baseline results. First Focus will conduct another bellwether survey following a period of one to two years, using the same sample breakdown and many of the same questions to determine the changes which may occur.



FIRST FOCUS

MAKING CHILDREN & FAMILIES THE PRIORITY