



## ADVOCACY TOOLS: PROCLAMATIONS

A proclamation is an act that formally declares to the general public that the government has acted in a particular way. It is a written or printed document issued by a superior government executive, such as the president or governor, which sets out such a declaration by the government. Proclamations are typically signed and issued by federal officials, governors, state legislators, or other government officials at the local level. The methods to request and acquire proclamations vary from city, state, region, or entity.

Proclamations are also used ceremonially, as an official announcement that publicly recognizes an initiative, a special event or occasion, such as Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. A proclamation is a great way to build credibility for your issue, raise awareness and promote it.

### **PRESIDENTIAL PROCLAMATION**

Presidents “define” situations or conditions on situations that become legal or economic truth. These orders carry the same force of law as executive orders – the difference between the two is that an executive order is aimed at those inside government while proclamations are aimed at those outside government. Presidential proclamations do have important political and historical consequences in the development of the United States, including President Washington’s Proclamation of Neutrality in 1793 and President Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. Other more recent policy-based proclamations have also made a substantial impact on economic and domestic policy, including President Clinton’s declaration of federal lands for national monuments and President Bush’s proclamations issued related to the areas affected by Hurricane Katrina. In recent years, more proclamations have been issued to spotlight important awareness campaigns. In 2014, President Obama issued 150 proclamations.

For the past five years, childhood cancer has been included among the proclamations issued thanks to the national collaborative advocacy effort of recent years. The Presidential Proclamation recognizes the importance of raising awareness, advocating for research, remembering the children we’ve lost and advancing the plight for those fighting and surviving.

NATIONAL CHILDHOOD CANCER AWARENESS MONTH, 2015

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BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

Pediatric cancer affects thousands of young Americans each year. It is the leading cause of disease-related death for children, and this year, more than 10,000 of our Nation's youth will be diagnosed with this tragic disease. Every September, America honors all those who have been affected by this life-threatening illness: young girls and boys whose childhoods have been cut short, the loved ones who

know the pain pediatric cancer causes, and the communities across our country that rally to support their friends and neighbors during difficult times. As a Nation, we come together to stand with those who have experienced devastating loss, and we renew our commitment to advance research, improve treatment, and ensure a brighter, healthier future for all young Americans.

Over the past 35 years, mortality rates for some types of pediatric cancer have declined by more than 50 percent, and thanks to major advancements in research and treatment efforts, our Nation has significantly improved its understanding and response to this disease. Today, innovative studies are leading to real breakthroughs -- reminding us of the importance of supporting scientific discovery and moving our Nation closer to finding cures. Despite these gains, the specific causes of pediatric cancer remain largely unknown, and much work still remains to be done.

My Administration is committed to advancing the fight against childhood cancer by supporting the vital studies that will continue to build on this progress. Last year, I signed the Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act, which established the 10-Year Pediatric Research Initiative Fund, and I will keep urging the Congress to continue investing the millions of dollars available in this fund to support medical innovation and life-changing breakthroughs. I was also proud to appoint a pediatric oncologist to the National Cancer Advisory Board earlier this year. And this past January, I announced my Administration's Precision Medicine Initiative, which invests in research to better understand cancer and other diseases, helping the United States lead a new era of medicine -- one that delivers the right treatment at the right moment.

Childhood cancer is devastating, and as families face the enormous burdens it brings, they deserve the security that comes with access to quality, affordable health care. Under the Affordable Care Act, children cannot be denied health insurance due to pre-existing conditions such as cancer. Provisions in the law also eliminate annual and lifetime dollar limits on coverage and prohibit insurance companies from denying participation in an approved clinical trial for cancer or another life-threatening disease.

Pediatric cancer limits the dreams of too many of our Nation's daughters and sons and deprives our country of their enormous potential. During National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, we remember the many children who have been taken from us too soon, and we extend our support to all those who continue to battle this illness with incredible strength and courage. Let us honor those on the front lines -- the health care providers, researchers, community organizations, and advocacy groups -- who work tirelessly to ensure our Nation's youth have every opportunity to grow and thrive, and let us renew our commitment to forging a future free from cancer in all its forms.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim September 2015 as National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. I encourage all citizens, government agencies, private businesses, non-profit organizations, and other groups to join in activities that will increase awareness and prevention of childhood cancer.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this thirty-first day of August, in the year of our Lord two thousand fifteen, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and fortieth.

BARACK OBAMA

### **LOCAL PROCLAMATIONS**

By encouraging local government officials to sign proclamations in support of Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, it demonstrates to the local community a commitment to raising awareness about the vulnerabilities of children in your area diagnosed with childhood cancers, access to quality treatment, and the lifelong challenges for survivors.

The information below includes tips to help draft and promote a local Childhood Cancer Awareness Month proclamation.

#### **What To Do**

Contact Public Officials... before drafting a proclamation to designate September as Childhood Cancer Awareness Month in your area. Research current interests and support to emphasize current support, or to educate on the importance of such a proclamation. It is best to engage someone who is passionate about this issue, if possible, or try to generate passion for the issue as a result of your outreach.

Remember that many public officials can issue a proclamation, including:

- Governors
- Senators and Representatives
- State Legislators
- County/City Council Members
- Mayors

#### **Lead Time**

With Childhood Cancer Month in September – and since many legislatures and city governments are not in session during the summer months – it is best to contact public officials at least three months in advance, *as most will require at least a month prior to your targeted event to publicize the proclamation.*

## **How to Request a Proclamation**

Two key methods:

- Look on the website of the office, which often outlines the procedure you will need to follow.
- Write a letter or send an email to initiate correspondence with an official's communications office, and follow up with a phone call.

In either case, it is good to include an explanation for the critical need to observe Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, and when possible detail scheduled local activities, and discuss the importance of the office's support for this annual event. Explain that it's a simple way for the government to recognize the impact of the number one disease killer in the country.

Once the office confirms that the official might support Childhood Cancer Month and issue a proclamation, it's time to start writing.

## **Writing the Proclamation**

Two main styles are commonplace in today's proclamation: traditional and modern.

*Traditional proclamations* begin with a series of statements starting with the words "whereas," which detail the current state of affairs and suggest the reasoning behind the proclamation. Each clause notes the problems or issues being addressed and is followed by a concluding phrase beginning with "therefore," which specifically requests the support or action needed.

*Modern proclamations* are written in a letter format. They highlight the same points as a traditional proclamation, but are written as statements. Samples of both formats are included at the end of this document.

You can request a copy of a local proclamation from the mayor/government office. It may be helpful to review how others have incorporated local info.

Use the following checklist when drafting and submitting a proclamation:

- Determine the official's preferred writing style (traditional or modern), examine other proclamations by the office and cater to the style.
- Offer a draft of your desired proclamation.
- Insert local information or statistics that will resonate with community members. If any local press has been generated in the past year, include copies of the articles.
- Follow up with relative frequently to check the status of the proclamation.

## **SAMPLE LETTER REQUESTING A PROCLAMATION**

[Date]  
Honorable [Name]  
[Official Title]  
[Mailing Address]

Dear [Name]:

September is National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. This month provides an excellent opportunity for our [City/County/State/School] to demonstrate its support in recognizing that childhood cancer touches the lives of those who live in our community. Of those diagnosed, approximately 20% of our children will die and 60% will survive challenged by life-altering conditions. Childhood cancer doesn't discriminate by race, economic level, or region.

Currently families in our area are struggling with this reality, with even more families providing aid and support for our families in need. We cannot ignore the #1 disease killer of our children. Recognition of this month is a wonderful opportunity to educate the public [or students] of the reality of childhood cancer and its impact on our children, our families, our community.

[Your organization] would be honored if you would sponsor an official proclamation to recognize September as [City/County/State/School] National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. Your proclamation would lend official recognition to the important work of educating the public, as well as emphasize your personal commitment to help support your constituency. I have enclosed a sample proclamation which may help your office compose the appropriate proclamation for our [City/County/State/School].

[Insert the following paragraph if you are sponsoring a public awareness event.]

[List of organizations] are sponsoring [describe event] on [day] at [time] at [location]. We hope you will attend this special event to present your proclamation. If you are unable to attend, we ask that you or your official representative read the proclamation to our supporters on [day of the event].

If you, or your staff, have any questions concerning the request, the sample proclamation, or National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, please call me at [telephone number]. I will follow-up with your office on this request in the next few days. As always, we appreciate your support of National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month and helping care for our children in need, to help them to survive, and help them to thrive throughout their lives. Thank you for consideration on this special request.

Sincerely,

[Name]  
[Title]

Enclosure

**SAMPLE LOCAL PROCLAMATION:**

**PROCLAMATION CHILDHOOD CANCER AWARENESS MONTH SEPTEMBER 2015\***

- Whereas In the past year, more than 18 Northwest Indiana children have been diagnosed with cancer and in the past year, 3 children have lost their lives to cancer.
- Whereas Childhood Cancer is the #1 disease related killer of kids in the U.S. 1 in 5 children are terminal at diagnosis. 3 in 5 suffer life altering impacts of treatment that significantly alter their quality of life. 1 in 285 children will be diagnosed with cancer before the age of 20.
- Whereas Childhood cancer is on the rise. Childhood cancers and adult cancers are different, yet we continue to use the downsized adult cancer protocols on kids with many times devastating effects. The lack of childhood cancer research has tremendous impact to kids and significant costs to society, now and in the future.
- Whereas Despite these facts, childhood cancer research is vastly and consistently underfunded. Less than 4% of the National Cancer Institute's Budget is solely dedicated to childhood cancer research. In 25 years the FDA has initially approved only two drugs for any childhood cancer and half of all chemotherapies used for children's cancers are over 25 years old.
- Whereas The incidence of childhood cancer is on the rise with an estimated 15,700 children diagnosed every year (43 per day) in the United State alone. Of those 43 children per day, 8 will die.
- Whereas The incidence of cancer among adolescents and young adults is increasing at a greater rate than any other age group, except those over 65 years of age and an estimated 2,900 children die each year of cancer in the United States alone. The average age of death for a child with cancer is 8, causing a child to lose 69 years of expected life.
- Whereas Many adult cancers can be diagnosed early, in 80% of kids, cancer has already spread to other areas of the body by the time it is diagnosed.
- Whereas The causes of most childhood cancers are unknown and at the present, childhood cancer cannot be prevented, and families who are or have been in treatment work tirelessly to change these alarming statistics.

\* NICK Northwest Indiana Cancer Kids Foundation

**Publicize the Proclamation**

Publicizing the proclamation will bring more attention to an awareness campaign, and generate momentum for the national campaign locally. Inquire to see if your event can be announced at city/county meetings that take place prior to the event. If possible, arrange for a press conference or town-hall meeting and have local officials sign or present the proclamation. At times, the press event can be accompanied by a roundtable discussion on issues related to childhood cancer. Ideas for

panelists include medical professionals and service providers, families touched by childhood cancer, children currently in treatment, young adult survivors.

Once the proclamation is approved, it is best by the first week in September, to visit government buildings, local businesses, health clubs (especially if they have a kids center), libraries, hotel lobbies, schools, hospitals, urgent care facilities, pediatrician offices, daycares to see if they will allow you to display copies of proclamations and other awareness materials.

Arrange for a proclamation to be featured in a local publication or local area news Facebook page to increase awareness. Distribute electronic copies of the document to the local or metro desks of local newspapers, along with a press release to announce the signing of the National Childhood Cancer proclamation and include a sample of a short article that can be used.

Remember to post any event on the CAC2 calendar: <https://cac2.org/events/> Cumulative recognition across the country in this way speaks a very loud message of the national concern for this important issue.

If you are denied a proclamation, always write a letter of gratitude for consideration. Set goals during the upcoming year to have influential persons in your area prepare letters of support for a proclamation for you to submit with next year's request. These types of letters can communicate the level of awareness and concern in your area, which can pique an official's interest.