



Sponsored by Abbott Laboratories

What is *Kids Speak Up!*

Children with epilepsy and their families converge annually on Capitol Hill to take part in the Epilepsy Foundation's *Kids Speak Up!* campaign. Through this unique program, young people with epilepsy learn the importance of speaking up about their rights, they learn *how* to speak up to their elected representatives, and they receive the chance to actually meet with their representatives on behalf of the almost 3 million Americans—including 350,000 children—who have epilepsy.

During *Kids Speak Up!* participants are available for interviews with journalists in order to discuss the program and their battles with epilepsy.

Kids Speak Up! takes place in conjunction with the Epilepsy Foundation's annual Public Policy Institute.

What is epilepsy?

Epilepsy is a generic term used to define a family of seizure disorders. When a person has two or more unprovoked seizures, they are considered to have epilepsy. Epilepsy is the most common neurological condition in children, affecting 350,000 people under the age of 17 in the United States, and the third most common in adults after Alzheimer's and stroke. Despite modern therapy, about one million people continue to experience seizures or significant side effects from treatment.

What is the purpose of the program?

Kids Speak Up! brings young people with epilepsy between the ages of 7 and 16 to personally petition congressional leaders for aid in assuring better access to care, improved public education and greater research toward a cure for epilepsy. Like all Foundation programs, *Kids Speak Up!* is designed to ensure that people with seizures are able to participate in all life experiences; and to prevent, control and cure epilepsy through research, education, advocacy and services.

How many children will be selected to participate?

Funding is available for up to 40 children, plus one parent for each child.

How are children selected to come to Washington, D.C.?

Nearly 60 affiliates across the country nominate local children and their families for the program. The selection committee then considers the geographic location (there are certain congressional districts and members of Congress that are key to our legislative agenda), the family's experience in advocacy at the state and federal level, the family's involvement in community outreach, if the child has had previous experience in representing the epilepsy cause and the overall diversity of program participants to make their decisions.