

# Putting the *Collective Caregiving* Frame Into Action:

## A Guide for Youth-Advocates and Parent-Advocates

The following guide is a practical companion to FrameWorks' Strategic Brief entitled Collective Caregiving: A Frame for Talking About What Kids and Families Need to Thrive. Reach for this resource when you want to draw on your own lived experience—as either a young person or a parent/direct caregiver—to call for collective action and needed policy change.

Broadening our shared understanding of what constitutes caregiving *beyond* interpersonal relationships and one-to-one interactions is key to bringing children into the center of our policy conversations. Through shared adoption of the *Collective Caregiving* frame, we can inspire the public to take civic and political actions needed to meet our societal responsibility to support and care for all children.

The *Collective Caregiving* frame extends the concept of caregiving in three ways:

- *Who is responsible for caregiving?* We all are. Caregiving takes many different forms and can look a lot of different ways, but it is a shared societal endeavor. **Caregiving is collective**. It's something we can and should do together.
- *Who do we owe care to?* Children of every race, ethnicity, background, and identity. We need to ensure care for all children—not just the ones we interact with personally or who walk down the same streets we do. **Collective caregiving must be inclusive**.
- *Where do opportunities for collective care exist?* Everywhere we can make our voices heard—for example, at public hearings, city council meetings, town halls, and the ballot box—as well as in systems and policy redesign. **Collective caregiving is expansive**. It encompasses all the decisions we make as a society.

In short, by communicating that caregiving is *collective*, *inclusive*, and *expansive*, we can stretch how we understand our society's relationship to child wellbeing and usher in a future where we prioritize children in decision-making on all social issues.

This guide is divided into two parts.

In Part I, you'll find annotated sample communications featuring framing tips that can help you advance the long-term goal of centering children in public policy.

In Part II, you'll find a checklist you can use to ensure that your communications are on frame.

For additional inspiration, we recommend checking out the guides for Child and Family Advocates and Social Change Advocates.

# Part I: Sample Communications

## Sample Communication #1: Student's Speech

The following sample communication is a speech delivered by an eighth-grade student to parents, family members, teachers, and school administrators at a family-school engagement meeting. It uses the *Collective Caregiving* frame to connect one child's personal experiences with school lunch to the broader social issue of child hunger.

“

It doesn't take a straight-A student to know that you can't learn when you're hungry. At the beginning of my sixth-grade year, my younger brother, Damian, and I started receiving school lunches through Ridgetown's Eat Smart program. Our dad and grandmom had pushed hard for the program to be brought to our school because they knew it would improve our grades and test scores—and it did. Damian even made student of the month twice in a row! Other kids gave us funny looks once in a while, and probably wondered why we got something they didn't, but mostly it just felt good to know we were being taken care of by our school.

Earlier this year, my dad got a promotion at work. We're all really proud of him. But now he earns too much for us to qualify for school lunches, but still not enough for us to eat in the cafeteria. I'm sharing my story because I want school lunches to be an option for *all* kids. Then we could just eat together without getting any funny looks or questions. We would all be able to concentrate in class and have energy for sports after school. And we would all know that our community is looking out for our best interests.

I hope everyone who is listening now will do whatever you can to bring free meals into our schools. Call Principal Jacobs's office, or send an email to lawmakers. My dad already wrote a letter to the school board, and my grandmom is asking her church friends to spread the word. Damian and me, the other kids at Ridgetown, and students across our state are counting on all of you to be caregivers and role models.

”

Naming a specific policy or program is more effective than calling for "government action" in the abstract, or referring to "the role of government" in a generic way.

Featuring parents and other direct caregivers as collective caregivers too, who take action on behalf of all kids, helps reduce the scrutiny and unfair blame placed on parents by society.

Using the language of care, and the word "care" itself, whenever possible helps reinforce the *Collective Caregiving* frame.

Reflecting on an individual family's access (or lack of access) to key programs and services helps the public connect private troubles to social issues.

Storytelling for social change involves drawing on insights gained through personal experience to inform collective decision-making.

Rather than encouraging people to make small changes within their own households or families, this communication offers ways for community members to coordinate their efforts and leverage their actions to advance social change.

This is a reminder that caregiving is a shared responsibility, and that we are all collective caregivers.

## Sample Communication #2: Instagram Post

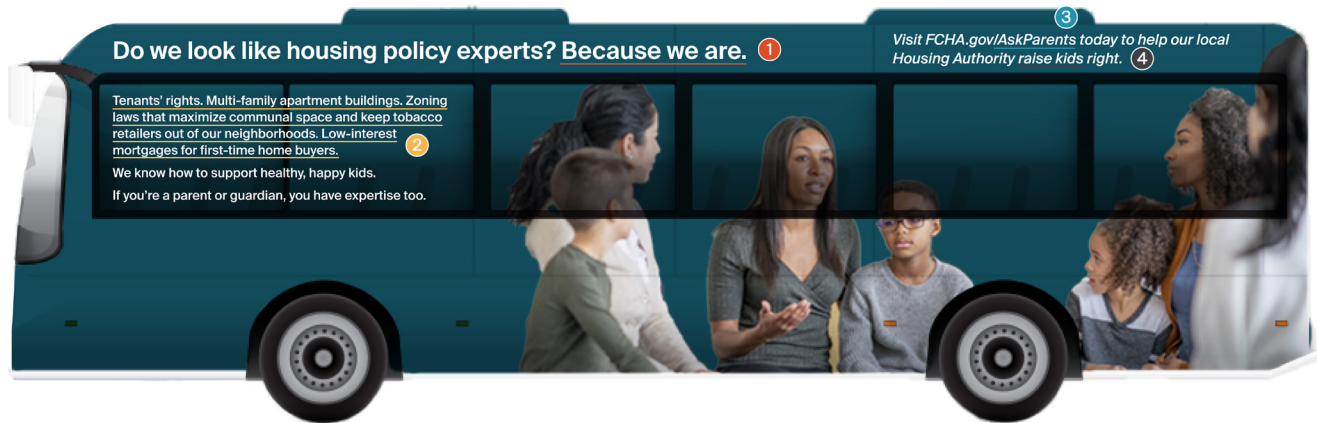
Sometimes an image really is worth a thousand words. The sample Instagram post below uses a collection of images to articulate the concept of *Collective Caregiving* and expand people's thinking about the kinds of resources, policies, public facilities, and community activities that constitute care for kids.



- 1 This image shows young people as active participants in collective caregiving, engaging with one another and brainstorming ways to elevate the standard of their own care.
- 2 This image reminds us that policies that increase kids' access to fresh produce and healthy meals, while reducing kids' exposure to empty calories and ultra-processed foods, are all forms of collective care.
- 3 This image highlights the need to care for kids by ensuring the water we drink, brush our teeth with, bathe in, and use to keep cool in the summer heat, is always safe and clean.
- 4 This image depicts thoughtfully designed and well-maintained public infrastructure, like sports facilities and playgrounds, as an important component of collective care.
- 5 This image portrays caregiving adults, including parents and non-parents alike, coming together to make collective decisions about the future of their community and the best interests of all children.

## Sample Communication #3: Bus Wrap


The sample bus wrap below makes the case for better housing policies—ones that are more supportive of children’s health and wellbeing—through the voice of parents and other interpersonal caregivers.



- 1 Portraying parents as experts who hold valuable knowledge and informed perspectives on society helps curb the widespread cultural practice of questioning parents' choices and judging their behaviors.
- 2 Beyond making the assertion that parents have expertise, it's helpful to share what they know and how it's relevant to society. Identifying specific policies that parents know from experience will support children's wellbeing is especially effective.
- 3 It helps to sprinkle reminders about the importance of listening to parents throughout communications wherever opportunities can be found—in this case, in a URL.
- 4 The *Collective Caregiving* frame involves making regular use of the language of care and caregiving, especially to refer to public policies and community-level actions.

## Sample Communication #4: Facebook Ad

Community events require promotional materials to get the word out, share details, invite attendees, and generate enthusiasm. These communications represent key framing opportunities and have the potential to shape public thinking about social issues. The sample Facebook Ad below illustrates how even short, informational materials can make effective use of the *Collective Caregiving* frame.



**Immigration Reform Day of Action 2024**

[EXPLORE NOW](#)

This is how I (and thousands of my neighbors) care for my son.

We're calling on Senators Kresge and Watts to stop neglecting kids and start making comprehensive immigration reform a top priority. **Outdated asylum laws and chaotic border policies are harming children and families in every community. It's time we live up to our responsibility to kids. Join us in East Park at 10 a.m. on 8/16.**

**We're caring for your children too.**

Framing interpersonal caregiving as part of, and integral to, collective caregiving builds public understanding about the critical role of parents in shaping society.

Connecting particular policy decisions to children's outcomes can help galvanize public action on social issues.

If you're a parent, talk about the different ways you join up with other parents and families to advocate for each other's children. This helps illustrate that collective action is an essential part of the care that all kids depend on.

## Sample Communication #5: PSA

The sample communication below is a script for a Public Service Announcement (PSA) that was created with two key aims: to raise awareness of past and current efforts to restrict voting access for people of color, and to increase voter turnout. The script illustrates how young adults can be effective advocates for social change that makes a positive difference in their own lives as well as for the broader society.

Hi, I'm Devonte.

Hi, I'm KC.

I turned 18 in April.

And I'll be 18 next month.

This November, we'll both be voting for the first time. **It's a significant milestone for us as young Black Americans, and it's important for our community too.**

A lot of our family members, neighbors, and loved ones feel like voting is more of a luxury than a right they already own.

My grandparents turned 18 during a time when racial discrimination was still encoded in law, before the 1965 Voting Rights Act was passed. They turned to community activism instead.

My grandparents are prevented from voting because they, like 1 in 4 Black Americans, don't have government-issued photo IDs.

Wage earners, like my parents who both work multiple jobs, typically don't get time off to vote.

The same is true for my older sister, who's raising two kids while putting herself through nursing school. She actually took her lunch break last November to walk to her local polling place, but our state doesn't allow same-day voter registration, so she was turned away.

Linking the wellbeing of young people to that of the broader society helps explain that the prosperity of children and adults, families, and communities is all intertwined.

An important component of the *Collective Caregiving* frame involves naming specific policies that impact certain communities, and therefore certain young people and children, more than others. This is needed to build public understanding of how the decisions we make together as a society can either exacerbate or alleviate social inequity.

Sharing various perspectives and real-world experiences helps illustrate that we can all listen and learn from one another, and draw on shared insights to improve our collective caregiving.

Telling your story doesn't need to involve just looking inward. It can involve making observations about the environment, relaying interactions with other people, and sharing interpretations of the world too. These experiences are all relevant, and they all reflect your valuable point-of-view.

Enough is enough. KC and I, and a growing network of our fellow advocates and friends, are demanding better for our generation.

**Better communication**, so that information about when, where, and how to register to vote is reliable and clearly posted in every neighborhood.

**Better leadership** from our officials, who should be continually working to increase voter participation through measures like **mail-in ballots and early voting**.

**Better policies** that eliminate barriers like strict voter ID laws and “exact match” name requirements, which led to more than 500,000 rejected ballots nationwide in the most recent primaries. (A majority of those rejected ballots belonged to people of color.)

And most of all, **better care** for our generation than our parents’ and grandparents’ generations got. We need to know that, as young Black Americans, our participation is valued and our voices are heard.

To make these changes, we’ll need **caregivers** of all kinds—including YOU—to do your part.

This is bigger than just age or race or even politics as a whole. It’s about all of us working together to shape young people’s opportunities, our society, and our collective future.

#YouthVote  
#CountTheBlackVote  
#ElectionDay  
#VotingIsCaring

See you at the polls!

It’s useful to convey that collective caregiving is a dynamic and ongoing process, which requires our continual engagement, rather than a finite task that can be completed.

Naming concrete policy solutions—especially when they directly address concrete challenges that have also been explicitly named—is a powerful way to counter fatalism about inequality and increase the public’s sense of hope and possibility for change.

Urging the public to see civic participation as a form of caregiving for children and youth—and to see all community members as caregivers—is at the heart of the *Collective Caregiving* frame.

Instead of talking about “government” in the abstract, it’s helpful to remind people of the public decision-making processes that exist to give average folks our say.

# Part II: Checklist

Work through each of the following questions, one at a time, to ensure that a specific piece of communication is on frame. (Don't worry if you aren't able to incorporate every tip below into every single message, but the more you include, the greater your potential for impact and the stronger your frame.)

- Does this communication **talk explicitly about collective caregiving**?

**Yes**      **No**

If **NO**, consider how the solutions you want to promote will “nurture,” “provide for,” “raise up,” “protect,” “support,” or otherwise care for young people. Then, look for opportunities to bring that language related to care—or even the phrase “collective caregiving” itself—into your communication.

- Does this communication evoke a sense of civic responsibility that **includes all members of society**?

**Yes**      **No**

If **NO**, consider how individuals who might be inclined to feel “outside” the issue could be encouraged to step in. Beyond voting and paying taxes, which are important but largely restricted to documented citizens, describe other ways that community members can lift their voices, coordinate their actions, demonstrate their support, and demand needed change.

- Does this communication explain what collective caregiving is, or **provide a concrete example** of collective caregiving?

**Yes**      **No**

If **NO**, think of a specific policy, shared practice, program, community-level decision, or civic action that you could mention to help illustrate the concept of collective caregiving and make the idea more concrete.

- Does this communication clearly connect the policy/action it names to **young people's wellbeing**?

**Yes**      **No**

If **NO**, describe the real-world impacts of a particular policy or action in your own life, or in the lives of your family members. Then put your first-hand experience into a broader context by making the link between collective caregiving and a healthier, happier, stronger community.



- Does this communication **avoid jargon**, technical terms, and vague or abstract phrases like “public policy,” “TANF,” or “lived experience,” which could cause confusion or invite multiple interpretations?

**Yes**      **No**

If **NO**, either swap out the jargon for a simple explanation using plain language or provide a clear definition and relevant context to accompany the specialized term.

- Does this communication **refrain from calling for “government” action in a generic sense**, and instead identify a particular mechanism for change, such as a policy adjustment or agency-level decision?

**Yes**      **No**

If **NO**, bump the word “government” to the end of your communication or consider omitting it altogether. Build people’s understanding of and appreciation for the public sector by *illustrating* (rather than merely claiming) that collective action is both feasible and necessary.

- Does this communication explain how **collective care is unevenly provided** in our country, particularly in terms of race and class?

**Yes**      **No**

If **NO**, reflect on your own (and/or your family’s) access to essential resources, key programs, critical services, or opportunities for political participation. Note any significant privileges you were afforded, or any you were denied, and how those mismatches in collective care impacted your own life experiences and outcomes as compared to the experiences and outcomes of others.

- Does this communication describe a **concrete solution for extending care** to kids in communities that have been denied it previously?

**Yes**      **No**

If **NO**, offer a path forward, or at least a first step in the right direction. Name an agency, organization, official, or entity with the decision-making power to address an existing inequality. Or mention a policy change that would produce a different result than what we have now.

- Does this communication keep the focus on caregiving as a collective endeavor, and therefore **shut down opportunities for individual parents to be scapegoated** for young people’s poor outcomes?

**Yes**      **No**

If **NO**, be sure to clearly attribute any poor outcomes or negative experiences to the policies that contributed to them. Don’t leave any room for overly simplistic and potentially harmful assumptions about “bad” parenting.

- Does this communication clearly attribute any disparities in children’s outcomes between demographic groups to *systemic failures*, and therefore **shut down opportunities for certain groups, especially people of color, to be characterized as culturally deficient?**

Yes      No

If **NO**, be sure to link any differences in perceived “performance” or “achievement” to the disparate levels of public funding, accessible infrastructure, and policy support made available to the various groups in question. Don’t leave any room for the toxic but all-too-common assumption that struggle is an indicator of inferiority.

- Does this communication **give direct caregivers a clear role** in collective caregiving?

Yes      No

If **NO**, *if you’re a youth-advocate*, consider featuring the caring adults in your life, and describing how they not only support you but serve the interests of young people across your entire community.

If **NO**, *if you’re a parent-advocate*, consider how your own direct caregiving experiences inform your collective caregiving efforts, and describe your participation in relevant civic actions.

- Does this communication position you as not only an individual with personal life experiences, but also an **expert who holds valuable knowledge** and an informed perspective on society?

Yes      No

If **NO**, describe how your formative experiences and unique insights (as either a young person or a direct caregiver) can and should be tapped to advance social change. Think of it as translating the understanding, skills, and expertise you’ve gained through your life to strengthen our collective decision-making processes, rather than simply relaying isolated stories of struggle or triumph.

- Does this communication build understanding about how **all different types of issues and policies impact young people?**

Yes      No

If **NO**, share your point of view. Describe how various policy decisions have shaped your immediate surroundings, neighborhood, relationships, and environment. Demonstrate that even the personal choices you’ve made in your life are, at least in part, a direct response to your surroundings and circumstances—and a reflection of the options available to you.

- Does this communication stress the ultimate goal of **ensuring that every young person is cared for** and able to thrive?

**Yes**      **No**

If **NO**, zoom out to the societal level to explain that collective caregiving and all its activities—*especially* those focused on stepping up care in certain under-resourced areas or for particular underrepresented communities—are ultimately aimed at optimizing health and wellbeing for all children, all young people, and all families everywhere.

- Does this communication provide a **vision for a future where we make young people more of a priority** in all our decision-making?

**Yes**      **No**

If **NO**, step back and help people see the bigger picture. What are we striving for? How could things be better than they are now? What will it look like when we get this right? Providing answers to these questions is critical to cultivating the public’s sense of possibility—as well as motivation to get to work.



## About FrameWorks

The FrameWorks Institute is a nonprofit think tank that advances the mission-driven sector's capacity to frame the public discourse about social and scientific issues. The organization's signature approach, Strategic Frame Analysis<sup>®</sup>, offers empirical guidance on what to say, how to say it, and what to leave unsaid. FrameWorks designs, conducts, and publishes multi-method, multidisciplinary framing research to prepare experts and advocates to expand their constituencies, to build public will, and to further public understanding. To make sure this research drives social change, FrameWorks supports partners in reframing, through strategic consultation, campaign design, FrameChecks<sup>®</sup>, toolkits, online courses, and in-depth learning engagements known as FrameLabs. In 2015, FrameWorks was named one of nine organizations worldwide to receive the MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions.

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