Tips for Effective Telephone Calls

- Identify yourself as a constituent and specify the topic you are calling to discuss.
- Ask to speak to the aide covering hunger and nutrition issues if the policymaker is not available. They are in close contact with them and often have more knowledge and details about the issues you are calling about anyway.

   "Hello, my name is Linda Lavin. I am an Elmira resident and I would like to speak with the hunger and nutrition legislative assistant."

- Don't be surprised if you're asked to leave a message or receive voicemail
- Be clear in what you are asking the policymaker to do.

   "I am concerned about proposed cuts to the Food Stamp Program. It is a crucial part of the federal safety net that helps feed millions of low-income individuals. I urge the policymaker to vote no on any budget bills proposing cuts."

- Know what you want to say and make a few brief points. You may want to keep notes, statistics and other information in front of you to keep yourself calm and to the point.
- Don't bluff. If they ask you a question you can't answer, tell them you can find out and will get back to them. Then make sure you get back to them with the answer.
- Keep the phone call under 5 minutes unless the aide is prolonging the conversation.
- Leave your contact information and ask for a written response. Keep a record of the date and time of your calls as well as the person you spoke with.
- **If you receive voicemail**: Leave a brief clear message providing your name, contact information, the nature of your call and your request. Be clear if you would like a return call and/or a letter on the topic you are calling about.

Always:
- Be polite and respectful, even if you are frustrated, angry or disappointed
- Demonstrate your personal experiences and commitment
- Deal with reality, not ideology
- Focus on specific issues rather than vague goals
- Identify how you or people you know will be affected by what is being proposed
- Say thank you

   Thank you to the Food Bank of Central New York for this resource.

A regional agency of Catholic Charities and a member of Feeding America