

## **Tips for an Effective Legislative Meeting With Members of the General Assembly or Their Staff**

Personal meetings, either to discuss a specific issue or to introduce yourself as a constituent, are the most effective means of political communication. Given a legislator's busy schedule, meetings are sometimes difficult to arrange; however, making personal connections plays a vital role in building relationships with the individuals that make the decisions affecting our profession. If you are unable to schedule a meeting with the legislator, do not overlook the opportunity to meet with their legislative staff, as they are the experts in their field and they inform and influence the legislators' views on particular issues.

To help ensure a successful and productive meeting and to deliver a powerful, unified message for your workforce in health and human services, follow these basic guidelines:

### DO

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- Greet them with a handshake and formally introduce yourself (and all others present).
- Thank them for taking the meeting, as you know their schedule is busy and hectic.
- Obtain information about their depth of knowledge and understanding of human service issues.
- Limit your meeting agenda to three or four topics/issues.
- Present your information in a direct, organized, and timely manner.
- Cite specific bills, titles, and issues to ensure clarity. Contact [Jack Phillips](#), Director of Government Affairs, if you require this information.
- Relate the information directly to the legislator's constituents (you and the individuals you serve) using personal stories, which helps translate the issues into tangible, realistic problems.
- Demonstrate why this issue is important to you and your legislator.
- Be attentive to the legislators' positions, comments, and feedback.
- Prepare a packet to leave with your legislator, including information on specific topics or requests.
- Offer to provide any additional information or follow-up on any questions they may have.
- Ask when a good time would be to follow-up with them and the best method of communication.
- Follow up!

### DO NOT

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- Arrive late for your meeting. Be professional by arriving on time and prepared.
- Get discouraged if your legislator is late to the meeting or if you end up meeting with a legislative assistant. Legislators' schedules are unpredictable and can frequently change at the last minute.
- Assume the legislator knows about the fields in health and human services.

- Assume that the legislator is familiar with your issue(s). Thousands of bills are introduced during the session, and legislators and staff will not be able to remember them all.
- Discuss numerous bills or address unrelated issues. This will make it difficult for your legislator to understand what your priorities are, as discussing side issues diminishes the importance of key issues.
- Maintain a narrow-minded perspective. Be attentive and open to different views and feedback, as this will give you a better understanding of what is driving that particular office's decisions.
- Demonstrate angry, threatening, or confrontational behavior. Leave the office with a positive feeling and desire for future collaboration.
- Treat the meeting as a one-time event. Develop a working relationship with your legislator.