

Tips for Meetings

Scheduling

Schedule two to four weeks in advance, and try to be flexible.

To schedule your meeting:

- Call the person directly (school board member, city council member, doctor's office, insurance commissioner, etc), or,
- Call the legislative assistant for a state legislator, or,
- Call the scheduler for a federal legislator.

You will most likely have to provide a written request, too, with the following information:

- your identity (name, address, contact information)
- purpose of the meeting
- names of others who will be attending with you

Planning

Decide if you will attend as an individual or as a group.

- Decide on one or two issues you wish to address and link them to personal stories.
- If you attend as a group, who will be the spokesperson? Will someone be a note taker? Who will provide supporting personal stories?
- Plan for the meeting to be no more than 15 minutes.
- Prepare fact sheets and personal stories to leave at the meeting (be sure your name and contact information is on every piece).
- Practice, practice, practice! Make sure your presentation is less than 15 minutes long.
- Have directions to the meeting and know where to park. If a person with a disability is attending, determine where the building's handicapped access is located.
- On the day before the meeting, confirm your appointment. Schedules sometimes change. Calling will save you a trip and provide an opportunity to re-schedule.

On Meeting Day

- Arrive 10 to 15 minutes early.
- Introduce yourself. If you are there as a group, the spokesperson introduces him or herself first and then the others in the group.
- Before the meeting, try to connect with the legislator or staff member with some pleasant small talk. Ask them if they have children or how long the staff member has worked for the legislator, etc. You may want to write down the staff person's name for future reference.
- Present your issue and personal story.
- Answer any questions. If you don't have the answer, let them know that you don't know the answer, but will get them an answer within a specified time period.
- Ask them specifically what their position is on an issue.
- Be respectful and thank them, even if they don't support your issue.
- Leave your contact information and any material you've prepared for the meeting.

After the Meeting

- Send a "thank you" note within three days of the meeting.
- Follow-up with any answers to questions.
- Ask yourself or your group:
 - What went well?
 - What didn't go well?
 - How could I develop this relationship?
 - What would I do differently in future visits?