

Do's and Don'ts: Tips for Meeting with Elected Officials

Do

- ... make appointments.
- ... be on time for your scheduled visit.
- ... be positive and friendly.
- ... clearly state the reason for your visit.
- ... personalize the issue in your life.
- ... provide reliable information.
- ... provide a “leave behind” document briefly outlining your issue.
- ... give the names of people who can be a resource for additional information.
- ... be sure to get back to them with more information, if needed.
- ... Write a “thank you”.

Don't

- ... get upset if your legislator can't see you personally.
- ... be late for the visit.
- ... be confrontational or threatening.
- ... try to discuss too many different issues.
- ... ignore the legislative assistant (LA).
- ... talk only in acronyms.
- ... give incorrect information.
- ... try to answer questions with guesses.
- ... forget to write a “thank you” letter.
- ... ignore legislators the rest of the year.

What You Don't Know Won't (*necessarily*) Hurt You

Sometimes, a legislator or aide may ask for information that you do not have (such as data or charts). Not only is it okay to say you don't know, it is the very best response you can give!

As a constituent, it's not your job to understand or have access to information that agencies and professional advocates have.

Stick to what you know best – your life. You are the expert in telling your story and how it relates to decisions being made by lawmakers.

Instead of guessing, say you don't know; or find someone who does. You will greatly increase your credibility and strengthen your legislative relationships!

Contacting your Legislator

Handout # 9

- Schedule appointments with your legislator during their time in the district offices.
- Be on time.
- Dress appropriately.
- It is ok to meet with staff or an aide.
- Introduce yourself and why you are there.
- State your objective.
- Thank him or her for previous support- if applicable.
- Explain how this issue effects you and your community.
- Personal stories help the legislator relate to the human side of the issue.
- Ask for legislative support.
- Ask what you can do to help the legislator.
- Leave fact sheets or other written materials regarding your issue, 1 or 2 pages.
- Thank the legislator for their time and send a written thank you as soon as you get home.