



Personal Visits with Legislators

One of the most effective ways to communicate with legislators is a face-to-face visit, either in Washington or in the district office. Here are some tips to making your visit run smoothly.

Before the Meeting:

- If you don't know your Member of Congress personally, try to learn a bit about his/her background and previous occupation. See the Federal Affairs section of the AAP's Member Center, www.aap.org/moc (Member Login required), and click on Federal Affairs. From this main page you can enter your home or institution's zip code to determine your Members of Congress, and see a bio and photo of him or her. Additional biographical information about your Senators and Representatives can be found at <http://bioguide.congress.gov/>, or at <http://www.congress.org/congressorg/home/> (for non-AAP members)
- Find out, if possible, where the Member stands on the issues you will be discussing.
- If your Member of Congress is unavailable when you arrive at the office, ask to meet with the Legislative Assistant (L.A.) who handles child health issues.

During the Meeting:

- Be organized. Know the key points you need to make and try to make them in one or two minutes. You may only get a few minutes of the Member's time.
- If there are several of you in the same meeting, plan beforehand what each person is going to say. Or, one person can be designated as the primary spokesperson.
- Let the Member know if you are a constituent. If you have any family, social, business, or political ties to your legislators, or are active in your community, share that as well.
- Be clear about what your position is and what you would like your legislators to do. Identify the bill by name and number whenever possible.
- If you can, use examples of how the issue impacts the pediatric community – especially your patients, clinic, hospital, etc. After all, what the Member really wants to know is how the issue will impact his or her constituents.
- Leave fact sheets or issue papers with the Member or staff, and offer to follow up with the staffer with supplementary information and further assistance. Be sure your business card or other identifying information is attached.
- Always be courteous in dealing with your legislators, and be sure to be on time.
- Report back on the results of your meeting, especially if he or she expresses strong opinions about an issue, using the attached debriefing form.

After Each Meeting:

- Send the Member of Congress a thank-you letter. (Thank staffers by name, too, and your letter is likely to end up on the Member's desk.) In your letter, re-state your position and the action you want the Member to take, and attach any information you promised to provide during the meeting. Consider inviting the Member/staff to speak at an upcoming meeting, visit your institution or office, or attend Grand Rounds.
- Become a resource for your Member on child health issues in your Congressional district.
- Touch base with the staffer from time to time, but don't be a pest.