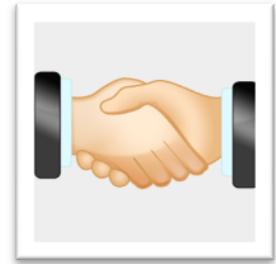


Tips for Making Advocacy Visits

A personal visit is the most effective means of communicating with a legislator. It provides you with the opportunity to build a relationship with your elected official. The best time to make a personal visit is either when the legislator is home in his/her district office or when you are at the Capitol visiting his/her office. You should attempt to make your visit timely. Visits prior to a hearing by the committee on a bill concerning your issue or interest area are particularly effective. Visits prior to a vote by either the full Senate or House are also helpful.



Before the Visit:



Be sure to make an appointment in advance to see your legislator. This is always important, especially during session. Although constituents can generally be worked in to see a legislator, if you drop in the office without an appointment you will most likely speak with staff, not the legislator. When you call to make an appointment, ask to speak with the scheduler and let them know you will like about 15 to 30 minutes to discuss the issue. Be sure to mention what issue you would like to talk about with the scheduler so the appropriate staff person is made aware of your visit.

During the Visit:

If you do not have an appointment, it is likely that you will have only five minutes. Legislators are always very busy during sessions, so make the most of the time you have available. As always, be professional, concise, clear and respectful. Introduce yourself by giving your name, address, and the organization you are affiliated with (if that applies). Remain focused and briefly mention the bill or issue you are here to talk about. Limit your comments to only one or two issues or concerns per visit. Explain why the issue is important to you. You can share your personal story, but be sure to practice it in advance and keep it focused. Allow time for questions, and if you don't know the answer to a question, offer to follow up later with the information. Explain how the legislator can help you by talking about the action you want him or her to take. Offer to be a resource on your issue and other issues related to developmental disabilities. Leave a one-page fact sheet with the legislator highlighting the most important facts about your issue and be sure to include your contact information on the document.

After the Visit:

Always follow up with a thank-you letter. A note is fine, but you may want to write a thank-you letter to summarize your issue and remind the legislator of the actions you asked him/her to take. You can also include the responses to any questions that may have come up during your visit.



Introduce Yourself

Write down three things you are going to say when you introduce yourself. Remember to give your name and address, and mention that you are a governor-appointed member of the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities. You may also add information about the personal reasons you are concerned about your issues.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Explain the Issue

Write down three things related to the issues that you would like to discuss with your legislator. One statement should be an explanation of a problem you would like your legislator to address. Explain how the legislator can help by talking about the action you want him or her to take. Offer to be a resource on your issue and any other issue related to developmental disabilities.

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

Remember to write down any questions you may be asked and offer to follow up with the information if you do not know the answer. TCDD staff will also follow up with the office.