



## **Tips for Your Meeting with an Elected Official**

- When you arrive for your meeting, introduce yourself to the receptionist. If you have a business card, you can give one to the receptionist.
- When you meet the legislator (or staff person representing the legislator), introduce yourself and the group you are representing. If you are a constituent – living in the legislator’s district – be sure to mention that. Thank him/her for their service to our community.
- If you are part of a group, identify ahead of time who will be the leader for the group and the leader can ask each person to introduce themselves.
- Each member in the group should BRIEFLY state their connection to disability issues: “My son has Down syndrome and depends on The Arc for his job.” – “I live in a house with Arc staff to help me.” – “I help people with disabilities get to their landscaping jobs every day.”. Again, these statements should be BRIEF. Remember, you are never sure how much time you may have with the legislator.
- State the reason for your visit concisely and accurately. Review the top speaking points on the position papers for the funding/legislation you are supporting or opposing. Ask if he/she will support/oppose this funding/issue.
- If your legislator has already publicly supported your position, express your thanks. If they have not yet committed, state your reasons for supporting your position, and let him/her know you would appreciate his/her support. If your legislator is NOT supportive of your position, ask them to carefully review the papers you will leave and politely ask him/her to reconsider the issue.
- Have a picture taken with the official if possible. Afterward, send the picture to staff from The Arc and the legislator if possible. This can be useful for social media and newsletters.
- Thank the legislator for his/her time and leave promptly.
- If possible, after the meeting, drop a note to the legislator to thank them again for the visit, summarize points from the visit and follow-up with any information requested.

<b>DO</b>	<b>DON'T</b>
Be on time for your visit.	Get upset if your legislator can't meet personally
Be positive and friendly.	Be confrontational.
State the reason for your visit.	Try to discuss issues outside of DD.
Provide reliable information.	Give incorrect information or guess an answer.
Provide names of who can provide more information.	Forget to say thank you.
Send a thank you note if possible.	

## **Tips for Writing Letters to Elected Officials**

- Identify yourself and your reason for writing.
- If you've been provided a form letter, it's very important to personalize it so that it carries more weight. Use the form letter as a guide and include the technical aspect on the legislation or policy, but let the legislator know why this is important to you – his/her constituent.
- Refer to legislation by its bill number or title. If you don't know the number or title of a bill, describe the issue in enough detail to enable the legislator to respond thoughtfully and appropriately.
- It is not necessary for you to type the letter. Hand-written letters are perfectly acceptable.
- Keep a copy of your letter. If possible, send a copy to your contact at The Arc.
- If your letter is only conveying a thank you, that can leave an important impression. Most elected officials work very hard and they appreciate knowing they helped a constituent in some way.

## **Tips When Telephoning Legislators**

- Identify yourself and your reason for calling. If you are not able to speak to the legislator, it can be equally effective to speak with the staff and know that your message will be relayed to him/her.
- Be prepared! Have your message ready, preferably written out in simple and concise language. Practice what you want to say so you will be comfortable when you make the call.
- Keep the message simple and concise. Ask for specific action on the part of the legislator, and if possible, make sure you know the legislator's position on your issue.
- Leave your name and address, and ask for a response from your legislator regarding your call.
- Be courteous. Legislative staff work long hours and have many demands and pressures on their time. They are there to help you, but are more likely to do so if you are respectful and polite.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions. Staff can be a wealth of information.

## **Tips When Sending E-mail to Elected Officials**

- Identify yourself and your reason for writing. Be sure to include your mailing address in your signature.
- Refer to legislation by bill number or title if possible.
- Do not be negative or critical. If you disagree with the legislator, tell him/her why, but be courteous and respectful.
- Keep e-mails brief and concise – and thank them for their time.