

In-District Meetings & Site Visits

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Setting Up In-District Meetings

Our elected officials may spend most of their time in DC or our state capitols, but one thing is true: it's the issues happening in their home districts that matter most to them. Giving them and their staff a firsthand look at your facilities will enhance their understanding of your work and its importance in securing funding for providers. Moreover, during election season, Members of Congress are particularly keen on connecting with constituents like community providers and the individuals they serve. Given the importance of advocacy at both the federal and state levels, inviting your representative or senator to participate in these visits is also a good idea.

Sample Congressional In-District Meeting Request

Dear _____,

As a constituent of your district/state, I am writing to request a meeting with Representative/Senator [INSERT NAME] between [DAYS/TIMES YOU ARE AVAILABLE DURING IN-DISTRICT PERIOD] when they are home. My organization, [YOUR ORGANIZATION] provides services to [NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS] with intellectual and developmental disabilities and is a member of the American Network of Community Opportunities and Resources (ANCOR). For this meeting, we wish to speak to the Member about the crucial need to invest in community-based services. I hope you will be able to accommodate this request and look forward to hearing back from you on the Representative's/Senator's availability.

Sincerely,
[Your Signature]

Planning a Successful Site Visit

Tips for a successful site visit:

- **Plan ahead:** Visits typically last about an hour. Consider how to utilize this time to showcase your services. Determine what you're most proud of and where you have the most challenges that you can highlight within the hour. Also, consider providing snacks and ensuring you have handouts ready in advance.
- **Schedule in advance:** Ensure that staff or consumers whose voices you wish to amplify are available during the visit.
- **Communicate objectives clearly:** Share the visit's goal, messaging, and itinerary with colleagues and partners to ensure everyone is aligned and stays on message.
- **Document the visit:** Designate someone to take notes during the meeting for follow-up purposes. Pay attention to the accompanying staff of the elected officials, as they are likely to specialize in specific issues and will be particularly interested in learning about your organization. Remember to capture photos to share on social media with ANCOR and the visiting offices.
- **Follow-up:** Extend gratitude to the offices that visited, along with any materials promised during the tour. Keep the relationship active by sharing awards or upcoming events in the following weeks and months.

Sample Invitation for Site Visit

Dear _____,

On behalf of [YOUR ORGANIZATION], I would like to invite [ELECTED OFFICIAL TITLE AND NAME] to visit our program when (s)he is back in the district during the next recess. [IF THEY HAVE DONE ANYTHING TO HELP YOUR COMMUNITY OR I/DD PROVIDERS, PLEASE THANK THE ELECTED OFFICIAL HERE.] We are very proud of the vital services we offer to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in [AREA YOU ARE BASED IN] and would love to share them with the [ELECTED OFFICIAL].

We participate in the Home and Community Based Settings (HCBS) Medicaid program, which allows people with disabilities to live full lives in the community, instead of in institutions away from their families and friends. Currently, we serve [NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS] by [DESCRIBE YOUR SERVICES.] We also employ [X name of people in your state, e.g. "Ohioans"]. [IF YOU HAVE MULTIPLE SERVICES, BRIEFLY DISCUSS THEM HERE.]

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) rely on Medicaid community-based services to live independent lives in the community across their lifespans.

Due to the nature of Medicaid as our primary payor and reimbursement rates at the state level that have not kept up with inflation, we experience high turnover and vacancy rates among the direct support professionals (DSPs) who provide these critical supports. The workforce crisis in our industry has accelerated to the point of forcing providers like us to close programs and services, threatening access to HCBS [OR DESCRIBE OTHER CHALLENGES].

We would love an opportunity to further exhibit our services to [ELECTED OFFICIAL.]

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request. We hope to see the [ELECTED OFFICIAL] and your colleagues this summer and look forward to hearing of any opportunities that might arise in their schedule.

Sincerely,

[Your Signature]

Attending Townhalls and Community Meetings

Attend your Members of Congress' town halls and ask a question about funding our services.

August, particularly this election year, will be when Members of Congress will actively seek out their constituents. One particular venue that will make it easy for you to interact with your Members of Congress will be the town hall. The typical town hall format is that a Member of Congress will start with a speech, and then hold a question-and-answer session. This will give you an opportunity to interact directly with them and bring this issue to their attention.

Members of Congress usually list their next town hall location on their websites. You may have to sign up for their newsletter to receive alerts on their next events.

If the information the Congressional office shares about the town hall meeting does not make it clear how to ask questions, please either call their office to find out or arrive early to sign up to ask a question. If there is no sign-in sheet, please find a staff member to ask them how to ask a question. Make sure you follow all instructions.

Think about your question in advance. You will want to be succinct, polite, and make what you are asking for clear. If you can add a short sentence about why the topic is important to you, it will make your question more compelling.

When asking your question, state your name and city of residence. Thank the Member for hosting the event, and once they have responded to you, thank them for answering your question.

Members of Congress often stay on after their town halls have ended to talk further with their constituents. As such, consider bringing hand-outs.

Sample Script for Addressing Democratic Members of Congress

"My name is [SAY NAME] and I serve people in [SAY CITY] with intellectual and developmental disabilities. I appreciate you coming to speak to us, and thank you for taking my question. I want to ask you about Medicaid services for people with disabilities. The challenge my organization and many like it have is that while we want to pay our employees more, we are almost entirely funded by Medicaid, which means we are limited by Medicaid as the sole payer of our services. Because our hands are tied financially, we are very concerned that without more funding, it will affect the quality of our services or our staff's wages. Would you be willing to support legislation that would increase Medicaid funding so we can pay our staff and keep services intact for the people who depend on us?"

Sample Script for Addressing Republican Members of Congress

"My name is [SAY NAME] and I serve people in [SAY CITY] with intellectual and developmental disabilities. I appreciate you coming to speak to us, and thank you for taking my question. The challenge my organization and many like it have is that we need to recruit quality employees for our difficult work, but we are almost exclusively funded by Medicaid. We operate on fixed rates, so inadequate funding in addition to unfunded mandates from the federal government makes it hard to keep our organization afloat. This could affect the quality of our services or our staff's wages, which will harm our ability to remain competitive employers and service providers. Would you be willing to support fiscally responsible legislation that would increase Medicaid funding for people with disabilities so we can pay our staff and keep services intact for the people who depend on us?"