

## Taking an Elected Official on a Home Care Visit

A home care visit with an elected official is a “meeting” between the elected official and one of your patients in the patient’s home. Conducting a home care visit with an elected official is an excellent way to promote the benefits and advantages of home care while providing an opportunity for both the legislator and your company to receive media coverage. Elected officials are better equipped to support home care after having first hand knowledge of its benefits. Setting up a home care visit is not difficult; here are our suggestions to help you.

Meet with your Administrator or CEO and key managers to determine the strategy and agenda for the visit. Answer the question, “What do we want to achieve?” Remember that the visit does not necessarily have to focus around any specific legislative issue. The purpose could be to highlight home care, its benefit to the community and educate your elected official about the vital industry.

- Get patient’s agreement to bring an elected official to their home.
- Consult with CAHSAH to ensure you have the most current industry statistics and policy information.
- Make personal contact with aide in the elected official’s office, to extend the invitation, identify a suitable and convenient time for the visit, discuss strategy, and obtain biographical information on the legislator including a photo. (Note: Do not plan on presenting your legislator with a token gift as most are no longer accepting them. If you wish to make a presentation, please check with the elected official’s office first.)
- Send the elected official advance information about home care and its role in the health care delivery system, as a courtesy, to prepare him or her for the visit.
- Get clearance from the elected official’s office to have media present.
- Write a news release giving details about the home care visit: who, what, where, when, why
- Prepare a precise schedule of the event for the legislator

Obtain a media kit from CAHSAH, which will include the following (agency should add the name and phone number of the agency’s contact person, who should be readily available at all times):

- Cover letter to the media contact person
- Introducing CAHSAH fact sheet
- Summary of state issues
- Summary of federal issues
- Copies of several recent news articles that have been published about home care.
- If possible, bring a photographer for photos in case the news photographer does not show up.
- Take the time to find a patient who is interesting and newsworthy

Notify CAHSAH of the home care visit, and send a copy of the press release, as well as copies of, or information about, any resulting media coverage.

- Obtain photo releases from patients and staff.
- Schedule the news media to arrive in advance of the visit. Keep in mind that the elected official may arrive late.
- Make sure to follow up on all details. Continuous communication with the staff of the elected official, as well as with your Administrator or Chief Executive Officer, manager and staff, is essential to ensuring a successful outcome. Try to anticipate all contingencies.

- Use the media coverage from this visit for future press kits and media events, such as a radio panel on home care, feature story, or news article on home care.
- Afterwards, write thank-you letters to everyone who participated or assisted, including the elected official or official staff; agency or company staff; media; and the patient and family.
- Send CAHSAH a brief report about the visit, along with any available photos.

### **How to choose a patient for a home care visit**

When setting up a home visit, remember the following.

- Be mindful that most people have never visited a home care patient before, and that what you consider an everyday experience may be brand new and exciting to them.
- Look for patients who make for a compelling story because they:
- Demonstrate home care's best benefits, such as remaining at home with family rather than living in a nursing home or hospital at a much higher cost.
- Have an interesting personal history. Does the patient have a special claim to fame? Did he or she do something while receiving care that might be considered extraordinary? Is special technology being used to make the patient's life better?
- Can speak about how much they love their home care, or have family nearby who can say how important their child's, spouse's or parent's home care is to them.
- Do not choose patients whose medical conditions maybe the result of the patient's own life choices, such as drug or alcohol abuse. These patients receive little sympathy from the public and can cause people to ask why they should receive care at the taxpayers' expense.
- Do have the patient's nurse or aide and supervisor available for the visit. Elected officials and reporters always want to ask providers about the care they give the patient.
- Do not wait until the last moment to find a patient. Keep a running list of current patients who would be interesting for legislators or reporters to meet, and who you have confirmed would be willing to meet them.
- Consider how the patient's case is relevant to key issues affecting the home care industry. Does he or she require long term care beyond the beneficiary limit cap? Is he or she at risk for losing care at home because the agency is no longer able to afford to provide the necessary care due to inadequate reimbursement rates? As you explain how the patient is helped by home care, also show how deficiencies in the system may put the patient at risk.
- Do not feel as if you are "exploiting a patient" or unnecessarily exposing him or her to attention. Remember that you and the patient are helping to educate others who might not know what home care has to offer.
- Try to help everyone – elected officials, the media, the patient and even you - enjoy the visit. Encourage the patient to laugh and express how he or she feels about his or her caregivers. A positive feeling in the room generally means a positive impression of home care.
- Pre-visit troubleshooting suggestions
- Do a dry-run to ensure you know how to locate the patient's home.
- Check in with the patient on the morning of the visit to ensure that the patient is at home.
- Speak to the patient regarding the purpose of the visit so that he or she can be supportive of home care when questioned by the elected official or aide