

Meeting with State Legislators

Please contact CAHSAH prior to meeting with state or federal legislative officials for assistance with planning a successful meeting. There are several key components to having an effective meeting. First, you must familiarize yourself with the Legislator and their staff. Then, you must be sure that you are adequately prepared for the meeting. Make sure you have the necessary background materials, and that you know your issue inside and out. Once you have had a successful meeting, it is important to follow-up with both CAHSAH and the Legislator's office.

Get to know your Legislator and their Staff

To find out which legislators represent you, [click here](#). Enter your zip code to search for your representative. Once you identify your legislator, it is important to familiarize yourself with him or her. Obtain a copy of the legislator's biography which is available on-line or from the legislator's office. You may also request the legislator's vote history on issues related to home care. Find out which committees the member serves, and whether or not the legislator holds a leadership positions. You can find most of this information on CAHSAH's website under Grassroots.

Once you are familiar with your Legislator, begin to familiarize yourself with your legislator's staff. Call the Capital or district office to and inquire the names of the Legislator's key staff members: Chief of Staff, Scheduler/Secretary, and the Legislative Aides. Find out which staff person handles the issue that you are interested in-- Medicare, Medi-Cal, health, home care, etc. It is important to get to know staff because you may end up meeting with the staff member if the Legislator is unavailable.

Background Essentials-- Being Prepared is the Key to Success

CAHSAH can help you get prepared for the meeting. CAHSAH will have pertinent supporting information, such as fact sheets, graphs, spreadsheets, and historical data about your issue. Request these materials from CASHAH in advance, so that you can disperse them to the Legislator and their staff in your meeting.

It is important to know your issue well and be familiar with how it impacts your business, your industry and your community. Being prepared and confident in your issue will give you credibility. Make sure that you are familiar with all sides of the issue—this will require you to research any opposition. Finally, the better prepared you are, the better you will be able to answer the Legislator's questions. If the Legislator asks you a question and you do not know the answer, offer to do some research and get back to the legislator later. Do not guess the answer, or provide an answer that you are not sure is true. Telling the Legislator that you will follow-up on their question also allows for continued communication with the legislator and staff once the meeting has ended.

Make the First Contact—Request a Meeting

Call the legislator's district or Capital office to introduce yourself, indicating that you are a constituent. Briefly describe your industry and ask for an appointment with the legislator. Be sure to explain the purpose of your meeting. For example, you can tell

the office that you would like to meet to discuss a particular bill-- identify the issue or specific bill by number, title, and author. When scheduling the meeting, tell the office how many people will be attending the meeting (no more than three people). Finally, confirm the meeting appointment with a letter. In the letter, include the issue to be addressed, a fact sheet about the issue, and the names of the people who will be in attendance. The Legislator may be unavailable when you call, but ask to speak with the staff person who handles your issue. Inquire if the staff person is familiar with your industry-- if the answer is no, offer to fax or mail a brief information or fact sheet directly to them. If the legislator is unavailable to meet with you, and your issue is time sensitive, ask for an appointment with the staff person who handles the issue that you wish to discuss. A staff person can indicate the legislator's point on view on most issues. Be sure that the people that you bring to the meeting support your issue, and that they do not have their own agenda. Their purpose at the meeting should be to add credence to what you are presenting. If someone has nothing to add, they should not be attending the meeting.

Constituents and Legislators Come Together—Meeting Day

During the Meeting there are several things to keep in mind:

- Dress professionally, and show courtesy and respect
- Arrive a few minutes early, allowing time to compose yourself. This also demonstrates that you respect the Legislator's time and busy schedule
- Greet the legislator and everyone present, and introduce members of your group
- Bring multiple copies of your business card
- Be focused in your presentation; concentrate on your issue. You may only have 15 minutes of the Legislator's time.
- Do not be antagonistic or argumentative during the meeting
- Allow the legislator to respond to your presentation, and ask questions
- Present the legislator with facts, not opinions
- If you do not know the answer to a question, offer to do some research and get back to the Legislator later with an answer. If you say this, you must follow-up.
- Offer to be available to the Legislator/staff to answer future home care questions
- Ask for the Legislator's support on your issue-- this is the primary goal
- Get the business cards of the staff members and the Legislator so that you have their contact information for the future

Post Meeting Follow-up with Legislator and CAHSAH

Once you have had a successful meeting, immediately send the legislator a letter or card thanking him or her for the meeting. In the letter, reiterate key points of the meeting.

If you offered to follow-up on questions or said that you would provide more information, include the additional materials in the letter. Remember to send a copy of the letter to legislative staff members who were present at the meeting. If any of the legislator's staff were particularly helpful to you, mention them by name in the letter. Keep the letter to one page, using the business format, and printed on your

own letterhead. CAHSAH can provide tips on writing letters, or see the sample letter in the appendix. It is very important to also follow-up with CAHSAH once you have had your meeting. Contact CAHSAH to communicate any developments or information resulting from the meeting. Complete and fax or mail a legislative debriefing form to CAHSAH. [Click here](#) for a sample debriefing form.