



Ten Steps toward Effective Meetings with Your Members of Congress

- 1. Request a personal meeting with your Member of Congress or U.S. Senator.** For information on how to contact Congressional offices, go to www.aahomecare.org and see the bottom of the page. Call the scheduler or chief of staff in the Congressional office to arrange the meeting. When Congress is not in session during months like August, try to schedule a meeting when the Member is back in the home district. A meeting with a Congressional staffer from the Members' office who handles healthcare issues can be very productive if the Member is not available for the meeting.
- 2. At your meeting, briefly and succinctly describe the key issue.** Focus on only one or two key issues. Your time may be limited to 10 or 15 minutes. Include points about how the issue affects the Member's constituents, including your patients and employees. Always prepare a solution for every problem you present. (See www.aahomecare.org for position papers.)
- 3. Bring written materials to leave with your Member of Congress.** Include a brief cover memo with attachments expanding on your key issues. For your own use, develop talking points and stick with your message.
- 4. Tell your Member of Congress how important your organization is.** Describe the population you serve, the types of services you provide, numbers of patients and employees served, areas you provide services in, the cost-effectiveness of homecare, and the difference that your services make in your patients' lives.
- 5. Put a face on homecare consumers.** Include patients or their family members in your meeting, if possible. Provide testimonials. Mention patients' situations and how homecare affects their lives.
- 6. Stick to the facts.** Tell a compelling story and provide good information. But do not exaggerate.
- 7. Be diplomatic.** Do not disparage your competitors, other modalities of care, or CMS.
- 8. Ask for a commitment regarding how your Member of Congress will help.** For example, depending on what the issue is and how it can be resolved, you might want to ask him or her to cosponsor a specific bill, write about your concerns to the CMS Administrator, talk to the Chair of a committee that handles the issue, or go on a site tour or home visit with you. Check the American Association for Homecare website for specific "asks."
- 9. Ask what you can do to help your Member of Congress.**
- 10. Follow up, and follow up again.** Within a few days of your visit, send a letter thanking the Member of Congress for his or her time and briefly restate your issue and request. Follow up a week later with a phone call to see if you can provide any additional information.

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