



## Arranging Meetings in your Member's Home District or State

Every Member has at least one office in his or her home state or district. Those from large or rural states often have more than one office. It is worthwhile to develop a relationship with the staff of those offices and with the Member directly. To find that office click on Locate Your Senator. Locate Your Congressman/woman

Call the home state or district office and say that you would like to set up a meeting -- preferably with the Senator/Congressman/woman directly or with the appropriate staffer who handles issues related to developmental disabilities. Let them know that you want to discuss the important work that your State Developmental Disabilities Council does.

Other ways to develop relationships with your Member in the home state or district:

- Be in touch with home office staff. Ask them when the Member will be there. Consult the Legislative Calendar to see when the Member will be in Washington, DC rather than at home.
- Ask the home office staff if the Member will be speaking at any public events/meetings– including **town hall meetings**.
- Show up at public meetings. Introduce yourself to your Member. Explain your connection to your State DD Council and say you'd like to set up a meeting to talk about the important work your State DD Council does. Find out who on his/her staff to contact to set up a meeting.
- If your Council or other disability group is hosting or participating in an event, meeting or summit, invite your Member to attend. If they come, they must have an opportunity to say a few words or to be the lead speaker. They like to be included in gatherings where they are able to interact with their constituents.
- If you know anyone who has a personal connection with your Member, ask them to introduce you. In person is best. It's also useful for that person to send an email to the Member explaining who you are and why you would like to meet with the Member. Then you can follow-up on the email and ask for a meeting.
- In your newsletter, include a photo and article on your Member, especially if s/he has supported a position that is helpful to people with DD or spoken at a Council event. Send a copy to the Member.

- For example, Deborah Swingley of the Montana Council arranged a meeting with Senator Jon Tester (D-MT) who serves on the Senate Appropriations Committee. Even though Senator Tester was at home, Montana is a big state, so the meeting was by video. She first spoke with his aide for about 15 minutes and then the Senator came in and visited with her for another 15 minutes or so. It was a perfect opportunity to describe the accomplishments of the Montana Council and how it has improved the lives of people in Montana.

For example, people related to the Louisiana DD Council recently met with Congressman Rodney Alexander (R-LA) who is on the House Appropriations Committee and its Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee. Council Chair Sam Beech and her son Silas, who has developmental disabilities, Council Member Laura Head, and self-advocate Duane Ebarb made quite an impression. They talked about the goal of the son working in the community when he graduates, about how the DD Council is building the capacity of the community to employ people with developmental disabilities, and how much cheaper and better it is to support someone in the home and community than in an institution. The meeting went well. Though he did not make any promises, it's a good bet that the Congressman will remember this meeting when considering funding for the DD Councils

