

Tips for Speaking In-Person with Your Legislators

Adapted from NASP's Tips for Becoming an Effective Advocate: How to Educate Lawmakers

<https://www.nasponline.org/research-and-policy/advocacy-tools-and-resources/general-advocacy-resources>

- Due to the busy schedule of many legislators, it is not uncommon for in-person meetings to be conducted with members of their staff including legislative assistants, legislative directors, or interns. These meetings are equally as important as legislators rely on these staff members to help them make important public policy decisions.
- While meeting with a legislator or staff member, it is important to build rapport. Attempt to make personal connections (Were they previously an educator? Do they have a family member in education? Did you grow up in the same area?)
- Find out what issues your legislator/policy maker is concerned about, offer help when appropriate, and connect your issues to what concerns them.
- Use OSPA's Hill Day fact sheet to guide questions about supporting specific proposals, vote for certain bills, or champion specific issues.
- Offer to be a local resource person if the legislator has questions about education or school-employed mental health issues. Legislators like to know professionals they can call on to discuss specific issues. Provide the OSPA postcard with our contact information. You may also provide a business card with your professional contact information, if you have one.
- If the legislator or staff member says something you disagree with, practice good active listening skills, and politely offer facts (if you have them) to rebut the statement. A polite, positive approach is always best.
- After you leave, you may think of a point or find relevant information to support your argument. This gives you a perfect opportunity to follow up with the legislator and restate your point. The more they hear from you (without being annoying), the more you will make the issues known and they will consider you a resource. Sometimes it takes years to correct faulty information or beliefs... be patient, polite, positive, and persistent.
- Use their names and keep in touch throughout the legislative session to remind them of your issues and ask about progress on specific bills addressing school mental health services.
- Be sure to send a follow-up "thank you" email or card. In your "thank you," include a brief summary of your visit. Assure the legislator that you will stay in touch and then periodically follow up with the legislator regarding any specific bills that address comprehensive school psychological services. Contact OSPA for more information regarding relevant bills as needed.
- Keep a record of contacts made with your elected officials, including meetings (date, time), issues you discussed, and any other personal tidbits that help personalize and prioritize your issues.