



## **Down Home Advocacy: Meeting Members of Congress at Home**

**August 2017**



While legislators spend much of their time in Washington, D.C., they travel home regularly to meet with and stay connected to constituents. In fact, members of Congress have staff and offices throughout the district/state. It can be just as affective to meet with members of Congress and their staff at home as it is to meet with them in Washington, D.C. When you develop a relationship with your members of Congress at home, you create many options for meetings and visits!

### **Step 1: Finding Your Members of Congress in their Home Office**

Depending on the size of your state and your district, your members of Congress might have more than one district office. You can find district office locations and contact information on CEC's Legislative Action Center! Use the "Find your elected official" tool on [the Legislative Action Center Homepage](#) and simply enter your zip code to find access your Congressional delegation and their contact information

### **Step 2: Scheduling and Attending a Meeting (No matter what kind of meeting it is)**

Meeting with your members of Congress at home provides great benefits for you. For one, these meetings can be much closer to where you live, making travel easier and less expensive. For another, you have access to all the comforts of home. You can meet with your members of Congress in their home offices, or you can invite them to your school or to events in your area.

A site visit to your school, classroom or program is a great way for your members of Congress to see the results of their legislation, to see first-hand the great work that you are doing and what is happening in their state and/or district. School site visits also give them a chance to see the children and youth, the families and the professionals that could benefit from more funds, allocated by Congress. It can be emotionally resonant for your members of Congress to have faces and names, to put with the dollar amounts that come around during the appropriations process every year.



Scheduling a meeting with your members of Congress is a great way to build your relationship with them. It helps them put a face to your name and your issues, and makes you a more memorable resource for them on issues related to children and youth with exceptionalities, their families, and the professionals who work with them. Here are some tips and tricks to scheduling a meeting.

1. When you arrange a meeting with your member of Congress offer to invite them to an event or site visit at your school/program. Meeting you and having a name and a face to tie to the event can help. If you can't, and you can only submit the invitation through email or postal service, be sure to follow up with a

phone call.

2. Tie your invitation to an event or issue that has been in the news recently. If your school has a program that might have to be cut due to funding losses, showcase that program during the visits of your members of Congress. If you have a student who will be presented with an award during a Congressional recess, invite your member of Congress to the ceremony and ask them to offer congratulations to the student.
3. Check the schedule to see whether your members of Congress are at home or in Washington, D.C. If you want to schedule a meeting in your home district, remember, August is almost always a full month of recess so that's a great time to meet with your members of Congress. For the House of Representatives, see [this calendar](#). For the Senate, see [this calendar](#).
4. Be persistent! Sometimes it can take a few phone calls before your meeting can be scheduled. Don't give up! It's important that your members of Congress hear from you.
5. Prepare ahead of time – read over materials, current news, and the position of your member of Congress on your issues. Be sure to know where they stand and any recent public remarks they've made on the subject. Know what materials you want to bring with you – no matter what kind of meeting it is, it will likely be on the shorter side. CEC has a variety of materials that you can use that will help give your members of Congress background on the issues to be discussed in your meetings
6. Be professional and courteous. That includes dressing professionally, maintaining a courteous demeanor, even in the face of disagreement, and being on time.
7. Always follow up! Thank your member of Congress for the meeting, and keep the line of communication open. Make sure you provide any information you were unable to at the meeting, and remind your member of Congress of your contact information. If you are asked any questions and you aren't sure of the answer, let the person know that you will be happy to get back to them. Don't try to answer any questions that you aren't sure of the answer to. CEC Policy and Advocacy staff will be happy to help you follow up on any of these questions.

### **Step 3: Meeting with Your Members of Congress: What to Discuss??**

Meeting with your members of Congress at home has some great benefits, as it allows you to really connect with your legislator and discuss important issues to your home state.

CEC is always working on many legislative initiatives, including federal budget cuts and investments in education; new assessment and accountability systems, new teacher evaluation systems; expansion of early learning initiatives; school safety and mental health in schools – to name a few. Check the [CEC Policy and Advocacy website](#) for more information.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please email us at [katieg@cec.sped.org](mailto:katieg@cec.sped.org) or give us a call at 703-264-9498.