



SENIORS COUNT 2018

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL ADVOCACY VISIT

Scheduling a Meeting

- Find your Legislators (State Senator and Assembly Member) and their office phone numbers here: <http://findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov/>.
- Call the Legislator's office, ask for the scheduler, identify yourself as a constituent and state the name of the organization(s) you represent. You have the best chance of meeting directly with Legislators in their District Offices on Thursday afternoon or Friday, when they are out of session and home from Sacramento. Many Legislators have only one scheduler who schedules for both the Capitol and the District Offices. You will likely be asked to submit your meeting request to the scheduler via email. Don't hesitate to follow-up with a phone call in a week if you haven't heard back.
- Ask for 20-30 minutes of the Legislator's time to discuss aging and long-term care issues. State how many people you will be bringing to the meeting.
- If the Legislator is not available, request a meeting with the staff person responsible for Seniors, Aging and Long-Term Care, or Budget issues. If you do meet with a Legislator, a staff person will likely also be in the meeting.
- Do not be offended if you are scheduled to meet with a staff person only. This will likely enable you to go into greater depth on the policy issues.
- If meeting in the State Capitol, make sure the advocacy team includes at least one person from the Legislator's district and tell that to the scheduler.

Preparing for the Meeting

- The advocacy team should select a Leader to facilitate introductions and the discussion and a note-taker to record how the Legislator/staff person responded to the issues and any follow-up required.
- All advocacy team members should read and be familiar with the documents in the packet. (*Bring two copies per meeting to leave behind*).
- The Leader and team members should also peruse the Legislator's website to see what committees they sit on and what kind of legislation they have introduced. You can also research their votes on aging legislation in the past. You can find all this information on the Assembly.ca.gov and Senate.ca.gov websites.
- Team Members should think through in advance what story they can tell from their own experience that helps communicate the challenges seniors face today.

The Meeting

- The Leader opens by thanking the Legislator/staff person for the opportunity to meet. Members of the advocacy team should then introduce themselves and state the organization they represent.
- The leader explains that the group is part of a coordinated, statewide movement, known as Seniors Count, that is working to make sure elected officials are aware of the issues affecting seniors and the serious implications the growth of this population has for human wellbeing, the California State Budget, and the state's economy.
- The leader gives the Legislator/staff person the packet (s), quickly summarizes each document, and **clearly** articulates that the group is asking for their commitment and support on senior issues. *Do not read the documents verbatim, just touch on the highlights. Practice this in advance.*
- Team members should each speak on a topic touched on in the documents by relating an experience of their own, a family member, or someone they know.
- The Leader or any appropriate team member should reply to any questions the Legislator/staff ask.
- If the team doesn't have the answer, write the question down and say, "we'll get back to you."
- If the Legislator/staff person expresses disagreement on any of the issues, politely ask what other information they need to reconsider their position. Don't be demanding or rude.
- If the Legislator/staff person expresses support, thank them and offer to be a resource for any further information or assistance they may need including:
 - Letters of support for their seniors-related legislation
 - Testifying as a witness in support of their legislation
 - More detailed information on senior issues
 - Access to experts on aging and long-term care
- Invite the Legislator to visit a senior services site (e.g., day care center) or residential facility and speak with the seniors there. If agreeable, follow-up ASAP with an invitation to a specific facility.
- At the end of the meeting, thank the Legislator/staff person for their time.
- Give the Legislator/staff person a business card or information for any further contact. Ask for the staff person's card.
- A day or two after the meeting, email the scheduler and the staff person with whom you met and thank them for the visit.