

Legislative Visit Orientation 101

*Thank you for joining us today to meet legislators to advocate for policies for the **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex (LGBTQI) community!** Below you will find tips and tricks on how to conduct a successful advocacy visit with an elected official or staffer.*

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Pre-Meeting Preparation

1. Review the Coalitions Policy Priorities

1. Make sure to read the **Policy Agenda** outlining the policies we are advocating!
2. If you are not sure about something, refer questions to others in your group.

2. Assign Roles

Before your visit you will have an opportunity to meet with your group and **assign roles** for during the meeting and after the meeting.

1. Facilitator

- o The facilitator should be someone who has conducted an advocacy visit in the past and be able to keep the meeting on track—especially if the legislator or staff drift off topic.
- o The facilitator will open and close the meeting including,
 - At the start, ensure that introductions highlight who are the constituents in the group
 - At the end, summarize the key points, provide fact sheets and contact details and thank them for their time

2. Educator

- o The Educator will provide a brief overview of the issues (max 3) salient to the group and state their position
- o The Educator will discuss 2-3 bills/policies and provide statistics and data on the issues relevant to these

3. Storytellers (1-2)

- o Storytellers (1-2 people) will be able to explain how these issues personally affects them, their family, friends and/or neighbors.
- o Storytellers will talk about how and why this bill/policy will make a positive change

4. The Asker

- o The Asker will make the ask such as: What we asking them them to do? For instance:
 - “Co-Sponsor a specific bill”
 - “Undertake a specific task”
- o The Asker will press a verbal commitment.
 - A nod is not enough

5. Note Taker

- o The Note Taker (1 person) will be taking notes in order to hold legislators accountable to their commitments/promises made during a lobby visit.

Preparing to share your story (optional)

There is power in sharing your story. The better prepared you are, the more effective you can be during the visits, including, identifying and practicing your **Personal Experience Story** on the issue.

When you share something that is tangible, specific and personal that happened to you or someone you know, it is very powerful. However, unlike data, no legislator can argue with it—**it is your lived experience**—and it can change hearts. The legislator or staff may not remember every policy argument we make, but they will not be able to forget your compelling, personal story.

1. If you can, practice with a friend; if not, practice in the mirror at home.
2. Time yourself as you tell the essence of your experience and how it affected you in no more than 2 minutes.
3. Ask a friend to listen and tell you what moved them the most. What specifics do they think will be remembered a week from now?
4. Switch roles, have your friend tell their story in 2 minutes.
5. Let your friend know what moved you most and what part was the most memorable.
6. Then tell the same stories again, but this time in only 1 minute—focusing in on the most powerful details.

You are ready to tell your story to a legislator!

Day of Meeting Structure

1. Overview of a Meeting

Introductions, 2 min ⇨ **Educate, 3 min** ⇨ **Storytelling, 5 min** ⇨
Ask, 4 min ⇨ **Thank you and follow up, 3 min**

2. Example Meeting Scenario

1. Introductions, 2 mins

- **Facilitator**
 - Introduce self and wider group
- **All Members**
 - Introduce self and include where you reside

2. Purpose of the visit (Educate), 4 minutes

- **Educator**
 - Introduce the policies/bills (include numbers/references) and current status. Provide highlights of the policies/bills and explain why it is important

3. Personal experiences, 5 minutes

- **Storytellers**
 - 1-2 people provide a personal story of how these policies impact their family/friends/community/self

4. The Ask for support, 4 minutes

- **The Asker**
 - State the actions the group wishes the legislator should make
 - Confirm the actions the legislator will make

5. Thank you and follow up, 3 minutes

- **Facilitator**
 - Thank the legislator and confirm next steps, such as a follow up call/meeting
- **All members**
 - Thank the legislator/staffer for their time

3. Appeal to their HEAD, their HEART and their GUT.

1. We reason with Senators and Assembly members using facts and figures and legal arguments.

2. We move their hearts with personal stories from our lives that show the urgent need for this policy change.
3. We speak to their “political gut”—their sense of the power of that we, as constituents, might have to impact their future in elected office. This power needs to be demonstrated repeatedly, through lots of letters, calls, and visits.

4. Tips to remember during the meeting

1. Don't underestimate meeting with a staff person because they may be a major help in shaping the policy-maker's opinions and positions on issues or legislation.
2. Be prepared to answer questions about your position. If asked a question and unsure of the answer – admit it and offer to find out the answer.
3. Use Assertiveness: The direct, honest, comfortable and appropriate expression of feelings, opinions and beliefs through which one stands up for his/her own rights - without violating the rights of others.
4. Actively listen to what others have to say and don't assume that you know what another person is thinking until you have heard them out.
5. If you do not understand something, ask questions until you understand. Asking questions is another way of showing respect for the ideas and suggestions of others and your openness to learn other ideas.

Post-meeting Follow-up

1. A member of your group should be certain to follow up the meeting with a letter or note thanking the policymaker and their staff for their time. This letter should also confirm any commitments that were made along with proposed next steps inclusive of any additional information you may have promised or that may be relevant to your issue.
2. If the policymaker takes action on your behalf, always follow up with a thank you note.

3. When possible, call or write to your policymaker regularly to provide input on other issues you may be concerned with. This will help maintain contact with the policymaker and keep the lines of communication open.
4. Whenever possible, attend the local town hall meetings, fundraisers, and/or conferences that the policymaker might attend to maintain your visibility.

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Prepared by the 2018 LGBTQI Advocacy Coalition Training Committee