

MESSAGE DELIVERY TECHNIQUES

The background features a complex, abstract design. It is composed of several overlapping, semi-transparent geometric shapes. A large green shape occupies the upper left and middle sections. A blue shape with a hexagonal grid pattern is in the upper right. An orange shape with a similar hexagonal grid pattern is in the lower middle and right. A solid blue shape is at the bottom left. The overall effect is a layered, crystalline structure.

Making a Phone Call

Tips for Advocate Phone Calls

When calling about a particular issue, always be ready to provide basic information, such as a bill number and title, if you are asking for support for a specific bill. ISMPP will have this information available to you through action alerts.

Be prepared to explain your position in your own words. It is always clear when constituents call as part of a coordinated campaign and aren't really sure what they are talking about. Remember to ensure the message you are delivering is your own, not anyone else's. The following tactics will help you put together a winning call!

- Keep Your Call Brief and to the Point.
- Identify Yourself as a Constituent and the Issue about Which You are Calling.
- Express Your Opinion and the Reasons You Feel the Way You Do.
- Be Specific About What You Wish the Official to Do.
- Be Courteous and Understanding of Reasonable Differences of Opinion.
- Always Ask for a Response.

Writing an Effective Letter / E-Mail

Format for Advocate Letters

The following format is recommended to ensure that advocate letters effectively communicate the medical publication professionals' message.

First Paragraph

Identify yourself as someone who either is a constituent or who provides services to the opinion leader's constituents.

Identify the reason for writing and the issue(s) you wish to address.

Highlight any relevant expertise you have on the services issues.

Include information about medical publication services (i.e., journals, clients, studies).

Second Paragraph

State your views on the issue in your own words.

Include a statement about the impact specific policies or funding have on your the services.

Third Paragraph

Clearly state what you would like the official to do.

Closing Paragraph

Thank the official for his or her attention to this matter and offer to be available for any questions.

Effective Meetings

Plan Your Visit Carefully

Decide in advance what you hope to achieve and who you need to meet with to achieve your goal. Pay close attention to the legislative calendars in your state and in Washington, DC. For example, when Congress is in session, members are in Washington; during recess, most members are in their home districts or states.

Effective Meetings

Make an Appointment

When attempting to meet with an elected or appointed official, begin by sending a written request via fax or letter to the appointment secretary or scheduler. Because your request will go through many hands, they need something in writing; and who better to explain what you want in a meeting than you? Explain your purpose, whom you represent, and most important your connection to the elected official's district. It is easier for staff to arrange a meeting if they know what you wish to discuss and your relationship to the area or interests represented by the official.

After sending the letter, follow-up with a phone call to be sure it was received and to answer any questions. Be prepared to resend your request. With the thousands of pieces of paper coming into the office everyday, they may have lost your letter or it may never have arrived. When calling, be prepared to briefly explain the purpose of the meeting, the estimated amount of time you will need, and the names and affiliations of the attendees. If you are planning to visit an official in Washington, DC, let them know you are from their district and state and will be visiting. Be flexible; the official may prefer to meet with you in the district office. If he or she is unable to meet with you, ask to meet with the staff member responsible for your issue.

Effective Meetings

Understand Your Issue

Prepare for the meeting in advance. Bring copies of any fact sheets and position papers that help explain or support your position, and be prepared to leave these materials with the official and his or her staff.

Be Prompt and Patient

When it is time to meet with an official, be punctual, patient, and flexible. Policy makers have hectic schedules, so it's not uncommon for a meeting to be interrupted, delayed, or canceled. If the official is unable to have a full discussion, continue your meeting with the staff.

Be Direct and Personal

Be clear on what you are requesting and ask directly for his or her support. Don't just recite the issue paper or fact sheet. It is better to describe the *personal* impact of policy issues on you, your work and the policy maker's constituents.

Effective Meetings

The Five-Minute Rule

You must prepare to deliver your message powerfully and effectively in no more than five minutes. With the possible interference of votes, schedules running late, and last-minute emergencies, that may be all the time you'll have.

Summarize the Meeting

If any commitments are made, summarize them up at the end of the meeting to ensure that everyone understands what has been decided: Keep future developments in mind by offering to provide further information. Before the meeting ends, confirm who on the official's staff will be handling these issues.

What to Leave Behind

If you ask the average elected official or their staff whether they need more information on anything the answer will be a resounding "no." Elected officials receive an astounding amount of unsolicited material. The key to leaving behind effective information is to make it useful, short, and easy for the staff person to keep.

AT HOME STRATEGIES

The background features a vibrant, abstract design. It is composed of several overlapping, semi-transparent geometric shapes. A large green shape occupies the upper left and center. Below it, an orange shape curves across the middle. In the bottom left corner, there is a blue shape. On the right side, there are blue hexagonal patterns that resemble a honeycomb or molecular structure, partially overlapping the other colors. The overall aesthetic is modern and digital.

Social Media Approaches

- Like / Follow your legislators on Facebook
- Comment (positively) on their blogs
- Follow legislators on Twitter
- Use Linked-In to find potential partners in your efforts to reach out (search on the legislator's name to see who already knows them)
- Subscribe to legislators' YouTube channels

All these approaches will help you learn more about the elected officials you're seeking to influence. With this background information you'll be able to craft messages that resonate.

Attend a Townhall Meeting

One of the most effective ways to gain the attention of elected officials and their staff is to attend a town hall or community meeting. Members of Congress arrange these meetings to hear from people in their districts and states. They occur whenever legislators are home, such as on weekends or during district work periods. You can learn more about the congressional schedule here: <http://www.house.gov/legislative/>. To find out about the meetings in your area, simply call your legislators' local office.

- **What happens during a town hall meeting?** Although the format varies from state to state and member to member, usually, the member of Congress makes some opening remarks and introduces his or her staff. There may be local leaders in attendance as well who wish to make remarks. Then, the floor is opened up to comments from the audience – that's where you come in!
- **Before you attend a town hall meeting, take a moment to learn a little about the member of Congress hosting the event.** You can learn about bills they've introduced and the specifics of their district through the US Congress website at www.congress.gov as well as individual member sites accessible through www.house.gov and www.senate.gov

Attend a Townhall Meeting

Should you decide to attend a town hall meeting (and we strongly suggest you do!) prepare a minute or two of comments about the value medical publication professionals bring to the community and then be prepared to ask a question, such as:

- “Do you have any information on Congressional plans to increase transparency in medical publications?”
- “How do you think proposed cuts to federal funding will impact medical research?” or
- “Will you support continued funding for NIH research as Congress moves forward?”

Some of your most important interactions at a townhall will come behind the scenes. It’s always a good idea to find a few minutes before or after the event to speak directly with the legislator or staff person. This offers a great opportunity to invite them to visit your office, school, center or group you may be working with. In addition, if you attend more than one meeting, they’ll see you’re serious about making a difference, which always makes a good impression.