

# EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

*Communicating with your elected official doesn't have to be complicated or include every last detail or piece of information. Effective communications are clear, concise, honest, and to the point. Elected officials depend on constituents and advocates like YOU to inform them on issues and help guide their decisions.*

## GETTING STARTED

- Select the best communications approach. Communication isn't just about sending a press release, making a phone call, or responding to an email. It's about all of that, and more! When communicating with your elected official, "what" you communicate is as important as "how" you communicate.
- Think about the best way to tell your story, share your information, and ask for the support of your elected official as clearly and succinctly as possible.
- Remember that talking with an elected official is no different than speaking with one of your peers. Speak clearly, thoughtfully, and always with respect.
- Before any meeting, carefully plan out what you are going to say so you can maximize your time spent with your elected official. Clearly layout your goal for the meeting and stick to your objectives.

## DURING A MEETING

- **Be Polite:** Avoid personal criticism and always be polite. You may not agree with your elected official on all the issues, but you need to maintain a positive and respectful relationship – remember you will NEED to work with them for the duration of their term.
- **Always Say THANK YOU:** Thank your elected official for their time and attention and express appreciation for past or future support.
- **Offer Yourself as a Resource:** Offer to act as a resource for more information on the issues. Always include your name, telephone number, and/or email address in case your elected official would like to get in touch with you. Encourage them to be in contact with any questions or if they need additional information.

## FOLLOW-UP AFTER THE MEETING/HEALTH CENTER VISIT

- **ALWAYS follow up your conversations with policymakers and their staff with a "Thank You" note via email and/or handwritten letter.** This should be done within two weeks of your meeting. In your follow-up note, it is appropriate to briefly restate your issue and your main points.
- **Share Information:** Provide feedback on your meeting to your state association and NACHC so that they may also follow up with your elected officials if needed.
- **Keep a Record:** Let NACHC and your PCA know about the success of your meeting and what you discussed.