



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS®

Toolkit for Hosting In-District Visits and Meetings with Members of Congress and Their Staff

*A step-by-step guide
with resources and templates*

**National Association of
Community Health Centers**

www.nachc.org

Why In-District Meetings Matter

Meeting with elected officials while they are home in their districts is the perfect opportunity for Community Health Centers (CHCs) to showcase their programs and services, along with their impact that saves lives and taxpayer dollars.

[Use this form](#) to notify NACHC of upcoming in-district meetings with your elected officials, and provide feedback after the meeting. Please reach out to the following teams for additional support:

- NACHC's Federal Affairs Team - federalaffairs@nachc.org
- NACHC's Grassroots Advocacy Team - grassroots@nachc.org



Congresswoman Dr. Alma Adams (NC - 12th District), attending the reopening of C.W. Williams Community Health Center.

Legislative Assistant to Congressman Tom Cole (OK - 4th District), meeting with The Clinic of Central Oklahoma.



Requesting a Meeting/Visit with Elected Officials

Before making contact, know whether the elected official has visited your health center or its staff in the past.

Contact the member of Congress' Washington, D.C. office and ask to speak with the scheduler. [Find your member of Congress here](#). Be prepared to make your scheduling request 3-4 weeks in advance. ***Be clear if you plan to invite media or press to the event – the elected officials will ask.***

After you speak with the scheduler, you send a formal letter of invitation from the CEO and/or Board Chair, or a board member who has a personal relationship with the legislator. Ask the scheduler how they prefer to receive the invitation, and if the letter should be sent to the D.C. scheduler or to someone in the District Office.

If your member of Congress is currently running for re-election, be clear in your invitation that you are requesting an official visit and explain that as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization your health center is not allowed to have any campaign affiliation associated with events, media or other promotion.

If you haven't heard back after a week, follow up with a phone call to the scheduler.



Recommended Itinerary of Health Center Tour

If your goal is to have a member of Congress visit the health center, be sure to have a proposed itinerary when reaching out to the scheduler. This will be helpful for them during your conversation.

Below is a sample itinerary for a health center tour, which can be modified based on the interests of the elected official and their staff.

- 20 minutes touring CHC facility – could be a specific floor, mobile unit, dental clinic, etc.
- 20 minutes with staff – preferably a mix of clinical, nonclinical, dental, behavioral health, pharmacy, etc.
- 20 minutes with CHC /consumer board members and/or patients.

Coordinate with the elected official's team about possible press availability and invites.



*It is highly recommended to schedule **one hour** for the health center tour. This allows enough time for elected officials and their staff to see the health center and engage with meeting participants.*



Preparing for the Meeting with Elected Officials

- **Compile packets with key materials.** Provide an annual report or fact sheet that highlights your CHC's services, number of employees/trainees, patients/demographics, visit counts and payer mix.
- **Your primary care association may have specific resources developed** with state-level data. These resources demonstrate the impact of health centers in your state and district. NACHC has the following resources to support you:
 - [Policy Papers & Supporting Documents](#)
 - [State/District Fact Sheets & Economic Impact Reports](#)
- **Leverage NACHC's current advocacy campaigns to align meeting/visit with specific ask.** In-district meetings are a powerful way to bring to life a specific ask to advance health center priorities.
- **Invite community partners to show cross-sector collaboration.** For example, if your CHC operates a food is medicine program, invite your local food bank to demonstrate the impact/value of community investments in their district.
- **Prepare to convey the purpose of your meeting with patient stories or examples.** Invite 4-6 people from your health center to attend the meeting who can tell those stories. Assign roles in advance, such as meeting facilitator, timekeeper, speaker(s), and notetaker/photographer.
- **If the meeting takes place at the health center, walk the tour ahead of time** to make sure everything is in order and that you deliver your intended message.



Notify NACHC and your state/regional primary care association about the visit or meeting. Your state association can provide background information about the elected official and help you compile data to illustrate your CHC's priorities.

[In-District Meeting Form](#)

Tips for Meeting an Elected Official or Candidate

- **Be prompt but be patient if the member of Congress is running late.** Schedules and availability can change at the last minute.
- **Make introductions.** Just like any interaction or conversation, first impressions set the tone of the relationship and meeting. Introduce yourself and members of your group, stating where you are from and each of your roles at the CHC. Decide in advance who will lead the discussion and what points you want to make.
- **Provide background.** Start with some background and basic information about CHCs. Never assume that your elected official is already aware of what a CHC is and the impact on their constituents and the community.
- **Stay focused.** Once you have provided basic education on CHCs, shift the discussion to your objective. Succinctly outline the case for your position on a particular piece of legislation or the issues that prompted your meeting. Stay focused on two or three key messages you want to emphasize with the legislator.
- **Make a personal connection.** Show how your issue connects with your elected official. Give a local example about the impact of the issue on your CHC and the elected official's constituents. You can also integrate a patient story as well.
- **Answer any questions to the best of your ability.** If you don't know an answer, that's okay—don't try to fake it. Tell them you will find the answer and get back to them--this provides an excellent opportunity for follow-up.
- **Meeting with staff is key.** Don't be disappointed if you end up meeting with district office staff, rather than the elected official. Legislators depend on advice from their staff because it is impossible for them to follow all issues themselves. Staffers are key advisors and are sometimes the real driving force on an issue.
- **Provide relevant materials.** Distribute packets/folders with relevant materials that were outlined on the previous page.
- **Take photos of the visit.** Coordinate with your organization's communications team. Send the elected official and their staff copies of any photos taken.

Follow-Up After the Meeting with Elected Officials



With permission, post photos of the visit on social media. Include a message thanking the elected official for visiting and tag their official social media accounts (not campaign accounts) with #ValueCHCs. [Visit this current list](#) of official social media accounts for members of Congress.



- **Provide feedback about your meeting.** Use the [In-District Meeting Form](#) to share the outcome of your meeting and what you discussed. NACHC will partner with PCAs to follow up as needed.
- **Send thank you emails to the elected official and/or staff who attended the meeting.** This is a good time to provide answers to any questions that may have been asked or recap topics of interest that were discussed.
- **Stay connected.** Establish routine communication with elected officials and their staff. This may include adding them to your health center's email list, sharing press releases/news articles, or inviting them to future events, such as [National Health Center Week](#). You want them to continue learning about your CHC and your impact in caring for their constituents and the community.
- **Offer to act as a resource for more information on key 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.

[In-District Meeting Form](#)



Resources and Templates

List of Resources and Templates

- **Sample Phone Script to Schedule Meeting/Visit**
- **Sample Meeting Checklist**
- **Sample Meeting Invitation Template**
- **Sample Health Center Talking Points for Meeting with Elected Officials**
 - **Funding Talking Points**
 - **Medicaid Talking Points**
 - **Executive Orders/Funding Freeze**
- **Tips for Media Engagement**
- **Optional Worksheet - Engaging with Elected Officials**
- **Sample Thank You Letter Template**
- **Sample Social Media Messages**



Sample Phone Script to Schedule Meeting/Visit

- Hello, my name is [NAME] from [NAME OF CHC], calling to [START or FOLLOW-UP] on a meeting request with SENATOR/REPRESENTATIVE [NAME].
- I [EMAILED/CAN EMAIL] a scheduling request for them to visit our health center during the district work period on [DATE].
- We would like to talk with them about issues that affect Community Health Center patients in CITY or STATE.
- What is the best way for me to confirm an in-district scheduling request?

Sample Meeting Checklist

- Confirm date, time, and location of meeting
- Send formal invitation as instructed by scheduler
- Contact NACHC and state/ regional primary care association
- Invite meeting participants and confirm availability
- Provide names, roles, and addresses of CHC meeting participants to scheduler
- Prepare packets/folders for elected officials and their staff that will participate
- Schedule planning meeting(s) to outline meeting roles and talking points
- Reconfirm meeting date, time, and location with scheduler/point of contact (day before)
- Do a pre-visit walk through if the meeting will be at the health center
- Ask permission to take photos before the meeting begins
- Send thank you letter and any information that was requested
- Provide meeting feedback to NACHC and state/ regional primary care association



Sample Meeting Invitation Template

[Downloadable link here](#)

Subject Line: District Meeting Request - [Name of CHC] - Proposed Date XX/YY/ZZZZ

The Honorable [First Name] [Last Name]
U.S. House of Representatives/ U.S. Senate
Washington, DC [20515 for House, 20510 for Senate]

Dear Representative/Senator [Last Name]:

[Name of CHC] is pleased to invite you to visit our Community Health Center (CHC) during the upcoming in-district period.

[Our health center] serves [X number] patients by providing comprehensive primary care services. The evidence shows that expanded access to primary care reduces healthcare costs by improving health outcomes and lowering rates of emergency department visits and unnecessary hospitalizations. More than half of our board comprises patients from the health center itself, making us uniquely responsive to our community's primary care needs.

During a visit to our CHC, you will see firsthand the dedication of our physicians, dentists, nurses, pharmacists, and other staff to providing high-quality care to our patients. Our CHC also creates jobs in the community by employing [Y number] full-time employees. We offer career opportunities and pathways for advancement so that all of our employees can see themselves in a rewarding career in primary care.

We are grateful for the long-standing bipartisan support for our mission. During your visit, we would like to discuss [the need for long-term, sustainable funding] so that we can continue to meet the demand for affordable primary and emphasize the importance of [protecting access to Medicaid]. These issues are critical to protecting our patients' access to cost-effective primary care.

We hope witnessing Community Health Centers' impact on your constituents' lives and communities will provide valuable insight into your important work on Capitol Hill. Please reach out to CONTACT NAME to schedule a visit. We look forward to welcoming you soon!

[Community Health Center Name] is located at:

Address _____

City, State, ZIP _____

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Title]

[Community Health Center Name]

[Community Health Center Website]

Sample Health Center Talking Points

Funding Talking Points

- Our health center has ___ sites serving constituents in your district and we provide comprehensive primary care services to ___ patients annually. That number has grown dramatically over the past decade, even though our funding has remained relatively flat when compared to inflation.
- We know that it is a top priority to make the health care system more efficient and cost-effective. Community Health Centers like ours save money by keeping people out of emergency rooms and managing chronic disease.
- We are required to care for anyone who walks through our doors, whether they are insured or not. This means that we face unique challenges other providers do not, both from a financial and workforce perspective.
- We are a small business that operates on minimal (and sometimes negative) margins. Like everyone else, inflation has hit us hard, yet we cannot simply raise prices or turn away patients.
- The repeated uncertainty caused by continued short-term funding resolutions has created problems for recruiting providers, borrowing money, and making the long-term plans any business must make.
- We appreciate your willingness to learn about the value of our work and look forward to your support in securing long-term funding so we can continue providing services to your constituents.



Sample Health Center Talking Points

Medicaid Talking Points

- Roughly ___ of our patients are covered by Medicaid and we are excellent financial stewards of this important program.
- Nationally, Community Health Centers serve over 18% of Medicaid beneficiaries but receive only around 2% of Medicaid spending.
- Dramatic cuts to Medicaid could threaten our ability to keep doing what we do best to care for your constituents who are most in need.

Executive Order/Funding Freeze Talking Points

- Community Health Centers rely on multiple federal grant programs to provide primary and preventive care to patients of all ages.
- On top of the challenges we normally face to carry out our mission, any pause in funding creates a financial strain that has already caused some Community Health Centers to cut back or eliminate services and see fewer patients.
- When Community Health Centers have service interruptions, diabetic patients miss appointments, pregnant women miss prenatal visits, children miss routine check-ups, and behavioral health patients miss life-saving therapies.
- We know from experience that if access to primary care is shut down, patients will likely crowd already overwhelmed hospital emergency departments, especially in rural areas where accessibility is already limited.

Tips for Media Engagement

NACHC is grateful to Jonathan Watson, Chief Executive Officer of the Minnesota Association of Community Health Centers, and his team for sharing the following tips and lessons learned around media engagement.

- Engaging media/press can be an effective tool to raise awareness and support on CHC priorities at the local, state, and national levels.
- Once a CHC and their elected official have **discussed and agreed** to invite press to a health center event, it is important to collaborate and coordinate on press releases and contact with media.
- Host a prep call ahead of time with CHC and PCA meeting participants
 - Prepare for “gotcha” questions
 - “What would you say to the President right now?”
 - “Isn’t the Administration basically saying....”
 - **Never say “No Comment”** - reach out to NACHC and/or state/regional PCA for coaching/ suggestions on navigating tough questions
- Be ready to pivot and rely on key messages about CHCs
 - Access to care, up-stream investments/lack of primary care funding, cost-effectiveness
- Prepare for the “anything else you’d like to say” question
 - Reiterate a point or provide a theme-adjacent response
- Send a note to the reporter post-publication, can pitch your next story
- Distribute to “friends” - legislators, funders, etc.
 - Exposure can “snowball” to other media outlets

From the CHC perspective, use the following approach when engaging with press:

1. Data Points

- CHC model
- CHC finances
- Small business/FTEs
- Funding impact



2. Real World Impact (micro to macro)

- CHC example
- Patient example
- Impact on CHC and community
- Larger impact

3. Call to Action

- Explicit ask - legislation, policy, etc.
- Implicit ask - support CHCs

Engaging with Elected Officials

All Three Are Essential to Deepen Understanding
Storytelling is part of a process, not the end.



What is the focus area?



Why is this important?



How can they support?

NACHC's 2025 Health Center Focus Areas



Funding

Increase and sustain long-term funding for Community Health Centers (CHCs)



Workforce

Invest in programs that help CHCs train and hire health professionals



Telehealth

Extend flexibilities, allow for audio-only coverage, and reimburse at the same rates as other providers



340B

Stabilize the program and protect access for CHCs in underserved areas



Medicaid

CHCs provide cost-effective Medicaid services, and Medicaid funding assures financial sustainability of CHCs



Preparing Talking Points



Funding

- Provide care to uninsured patients on a sliding fee scale.
- Health centers detect and treat health conditions before they worsen.
- Current funding doesn't match growing demand.

Workforce

- CHCs train the next generation of providers in areas with limited primary care.
- National Health Service Corps helps CHCs hire providers since this loan repayment program is a recruitment benefit that attracts them.

Telehealth

- Expands access to care in rural areas that have limited options to primary care.
- Audio-only option is necessary when patients do not have computer or technology for video visits.

340B

- Patients get prescribed medications at discounted rates.
- CHCs reinvest 340B savings for patient transportation, care coordination, and health education programs.

Medicaid

- CHCs provide cost-effective services that keep Medicaid patients healthy, and reduce the need for costly specialty care.
- Adequate Medicaid payments are critical for financial viability of CHCs.

WHAT

What is your focus area and how does this impact your CHC and community?

WHY

Why is this important and how has your CHC addressed this?

HOW

How can elected officials and their staff support your CHC and community?

In this space, pull ONE key point from each box that you want to share with elected officials and their staff. This phrase will outline how your elected official can support your CHC.



Sample Thank You Letter Template

Subject Line: Thank You for Visiting [Name of CHC] on Date XX/YY/ZZZZ

The Honorable [First Name] [Last Name]
U.S. House of Representatives/ U.S. Senate
Washington, DC [20515 for House, 20510 for Senate]

Dear Representative/Senator [Last Name]:

Thank you for touring our Community Health Center (CHC) during such a busy time on Capitol Hill. It was a pleasure to discuss the primary care needs in our community. We also appreciated the chance to learn more about your priorities for the 119th Congress.

CHCs are grateful for the long-standing bipartisan Congressional support for their mission of providing primary care in underserved communities. We are so proud of the dedication of physicians, dentists, nurses, pharmacists, and other staff members to our patients and the health center mission. They were honored to share their experiences and discuss their patients' needs with you during your visit.

If you have additional questions about federal policy matters, we encourage you to contact our national association by emailing federalaffairs@nachc.org. Thank you again for your visit and we look forward to seeing you again in the district or at your Washington DC office.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]
[Your Title]
[Community Health Center Name]
[Community Health Center Website]

Sample Social Media Messages

Use this campaign with pre-generated social media messages:

<https://hcadvocacy.quorum.us/campaign/55658/>

- Thank you to @[MEMBER] and their staff for touring @[YOUR_CHC_LOCATION] today! They know the importance of supporting small businesses, and we were able to share the many ways we provide affordable, high-quality care to patients in this community. @NACHC #ValueCHCs
- I support health centers in my community - it's time for Congress to come together and extend funding for health centers, the NHSC, and THCGME programs for the long haul. RT if you agree! #ValueCHCs
- Thank you, @[MEMBER], for visiting our health center during this in-district period. Health center leadership, staff, and patients shared the impact of [PRIORITY TOPIC] on the sustainability of our health center's operations. @NACHC #ValueCHCs
- Health centers are thankful for @[MEMBER] support for expanding access to high-quality, patient-centered primary health care for all Americans! @NACHC #ValueCHCs
- Hi @[MEMBER], your support is essential for at least 34 million (up to 52M) patients whom we serve nationwide, incl 1 in 5 (up to 1 in 3) rural patients, 9.8 million children, and 428,000 veterans. @NACHC #ValueCHCs



Do You Need More Help?

NACHC and primary care associations are ready to support you and your CHC team meet with elected officials and their staff.

Please reach out to the following teams for additional support:

NACHC's Federal Affairs Team - federalaffairs@nachc.org

NACHC's Grassroots Advocacy Team - grassroots@nachc.org

