



How to conduct a Congressional meeting

Tips for making your midwifery advocacy meeting as effective as possible.

Personal meetings, either to discuss a specific issue or to introduce yourself as a constituent, are the most effective means of political communication. Given a legislator's busy schedule, meetings are sometimes difficult to arrange; however, making personal connections plays a vital role in building relationships with the individuals who make the decisions affecting our profession. If you are unable to schedule a meeting with your members of Congress, don't overlook the opportunity to meet with their staff, as staff are the experts in their field and inform the legislator's views on the issues.

Don't take our word for it, read this [article from *The Hill* on making 10 minutes with a lawmaker count](#).

When you meet with Members of the Senate or House of Representatives—or their staff—use these 5 key steps for an effective meeting.

5 key steps to a successful meeting

Target: 30 minutes maximum

1. **Introduce everyone present.**

- Briefly give your name, where you live, and where you work. State that you are a national representative for ACNM and a constituent.
- If you have a large group of people, appoint representatives to discuss each issue.
- This should be no more than four people—one to make introductions, and up to three to discuss your chosen issues.

2. **State the issues.**

- Indicate the overall issue you wish to discuss (e.g., funding for midwifery education, addressing barriers to CNMs under the Medicare program, federal recognition of the CM credential).

- Share why the issue is important to you (e.g., what kind of work you do, the type of individuals you work with, and the situation as you see it).
- State why the issue is important to the Member of Congress (e.g., what impact it has in his or her district).

3. Highlight particular issues.

- Detail two, or at most three, critical issues you think the Member may be interested in or in which you have expertise or experience.
- Support your arguments with personal stories, which help Members understand the people side of problems in their own states or districts.

4. Ask for the Member's position on the issue.

- Determine their views.
- Ask if they can support ACNM's position.

5. Thank the Member and/or staff for their time.

- Express hope that this is the beginning of a useful relationship.
- Tell them that you would like to continue a dialogue on the issue; ask if you may write or call about the issue in the future.
- Ask to be added to the Member's mailing list for health or other events in the district or state.
- Ask about the best way to follow up on the meeting.

Remember to leave them with the packet of information that ACNM has provided you.

Dos and don'ts

To help ensure a successful and productive meeting and to deliver a powerful, unified message for midwives and midwifery-led care models, please follow these basic guidelines:

Do

- Greet the Member and/or staff with a handshake and formally introduce yourself (and all others present).
- Thank them for taking the meeting, as you know their schedule is busy and hectic.
- Obtain information about their depth of knowledge and understanding of midwives and midwifery in the United States. Make sure the member and/or staff knows that May 5th is International Day of the Midwife.

- Limit your meeting agenda to three topics or issues.
- Present your information in a direct, organized, and timely manner.
- Cite specific bills, titles, and issues to ensure clarity (ACNM has provided you with this information and it will be included in the leave behind folders).
- Relate the information directly to the legislator's constituents (you and the individuals you serve) using personal stories, which helps translate the issues into tangible, realistic problems.
- Demonstrate why this issue is important to you and your Members of Congress.
- Be attentive to the legislators' positions, comments, and feedback.
- Make sure to leave the ACNM packet with your legislator, as it includes information on specific topics or requests.
- Offer to provide any additional information or follow up on any questions they may have.
- Ask when a good time would be to follow up with them, and the best method of communication
- Follow up!

Do not

- Arrive late for your meeting. Be professional by arriving on time and prepared. If you are running late, please contact the office to let them know you're on your way. The contact information for each office will be provided to you by ACNM along with your meeting schedule.
- Get discouraged if your legislator is late to the meeting or if you end up meeting with a Legislative Assistant—legislators' schedules are unpredictable and frequently change at the last minute.
- Assume the legislator knows about midwives or midwifery care.
- Assume that the legislator is familiar with your issue(s). Thousands of bills are introduced in each Congress, and legislators and staff will not be able to remember them all.
- Discuss numerous bills or address unrelated issues. This will make it difficult for your legislator to understand your priorities, as discussing side issues diminishes the importance of key issues.

- Maintain a narrow-minded perspective. Be attentive and open to different views and feedback; this will give you a better understanding of what is driving that particular office's decisions.
- Demonstrate angry, threatening, or confrontational behavior. Leave the office with a positive feeling about midwives and midwifery care and a desire for future collaboration.
- Treat the meeting as a one-time event. Develop a working relationship with your legislator.