

M. Working with the Federal Delegation

For information about NH's senate delegation:

Logon to www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm?State=NH

For information about NH's house delegation:

Logon to www.house.gov

Writing to Your Members of Congress

In letters to your legislators present you agency's views on an issue in an organized and persuasive manner. In writing your letter, keep the following in mind:

- Include your position on the issue and examples of how the proposal will affect the Member's constituents.
- Establish your expertise on the issue. If you have been working in the field for many years let your Member of Congress know that you are an expert and have the experience from which to base your opinions.
- Reiterate your position in the final paragraph of the letter and request a response.
- Close the letter by thanking the Member of Congress for his or her time
- Include with your letter any pertinent editorials or stories on home care, as well as statistics, fact sheets and other background information.

When writing to your Member of Congress, use your own words and your own stationery or, if appropriate, your company's letterhead. Be brief, write legibly or type the letter, and be sure to use the proper salutation and address.

Senators

Honorable [full name]
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator [last name]:

Representatives

Honorable [full name]
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative [last name]:

Calling Your Member of Congress

A telephone call is an effective way to express your views on issues. To contact your Member of Congress in Washington, call the Capitol switchboard at 202-225-3121 and ask to be transferred to

the legislator's office. To contact the district office, refer to the blue pages of your local telephone book or refer to the current phone listings in this handbook. Once you have reached the Member of Congress' office, ask to speak with them. If he or she cannot speak with you – which is most often the case – ask to speak with the staff person responsible for health care issues.

Keep your call short, be specific about your reason for calling and have all relevant information handy. Be sure to provide your name, full address, name of your organization and your title, and the reason for your call.

Sample script

“Hello, this is [your name, organization, and title] and I am calling from [city, state]. May I please speak with [name of health aide]?”

“I am calling to let Senator/Representative [name] know that I am concerned about [describe the issue]. It is critical that the Senator/Representative [support or oppose this issue] because [provide reason(s) for your request].”

Follow up by sending a letter addressing the points discussed. When writing your letter follow the same instructions we provided under “Writing to a Legislator.”

Inviting Your Member on a Home Visit

Another effective way to influence a Member of Congress is to teach him or her about the benefits of home care through home visits.

Step One: Contacting the Member

Speak with the scheduler in the appropriate office. Find out when the Member of Congress is scheduled to be in his or her district. Explain that you are a constituent and are calling to arrange a meeting between the Member of Congress and a homebound constituent.

Do not be discouraged if you cannot get a firm commitment from the office on the first call. If the Member of Congress declines your invitation, ask for a more convenient date or see if a legislative aide – preferably the aide responsible for health care issues – would be available.

Once your plans for a tentative home visit have been confirmed, follow up by writing a formal letter of invitation. Include information about home care and a statement on the issue with your invitation.

Step Two: Organizing a Visit

When arranging for a Member of Congress to participate in a home visit:

- Select a patient who very much needs care or who may be at risk of losing home care services because of the new payment system. Make sure the patient is comfortable with having the legislator visit.
- Choose a patient who is highly supportive of home care and your agency and who is articulate of comfortable with answering potential questions. (If family members and friends are also interested in being present to show their support, all the better.)
- Make sure the patient is flexible. A home visit may be concealed at the last minute because of competing demands for the Member of Congress’ time.

- Decide whether you want the media to accompany the Member of Congress' visit. If so, select a patient who will consent to being photographed by the media.
- Make sure the patient lives in the Member of Congress' district.
- Choose employees to accompany you who are experienced, articulate, and comfortable speaking with the Member of Congress.
- Limit the number of people going into the patient's home out of respect for the patient's privacy and comfort.

Step Three: Preparing the Day before the Visit

Call the scheduler to confirm details about the legislator's visit – where, when, and who else may be attending. Provide information about the patient being visited. Call the patient and family to confirm. Have a case conference with the nurse, home care aide, therapist, or other caregivers to review policies and procedures for the visit and to discuss the interventions that will be performed and how to handle questions from the Member of Congress.

Step Four: Being Prepared the Day of Visit

If possible, travel with the Member of Congress to the patient's home. If that can't be arranged, leave the office early enough to get to the patient's home before the Member of Congress arrives. Have a list of points you want to convey to him or her about that specific patient's situation, about home care in general, and about any current policy issues. Keep the visit short – no longer than 30 to 45 minutes. Before leaving, ask the Member of Congress if he or she has any additional questions about home care. Don't miss the opportunity to take a picture of your Member of Congress on his or her visit.

Step Five: Following Up the Day after the Visit

Send a letter thanking the Member of Congress for his or her time. Include any additional information about home care. If the media accompanied the Member of Congress on the home visit, be sure to include copies or transcripts of all coverage. If media were not present for the visit, you may want to provide copies of photos you took while on the visit and other information to the media to encourage coverage of the visit.

(Source: National Association for Home Care)