

GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY



Legislative Breakfast

All politics are local. There is no more effective lobbying than grassroots advocacy. Be part of the process by connecting with your legislators and policy decision makers.

We can tell you how.

Grassroots Advocacy

Introduction

Each year New Hampshire's Legislature makes decisions that affect our industry, workforce, tax policy and our patients. It is critically important that we are involved in the process to develop positive working relationships with the 400 state representatives and 24 senators that represent the Granite State.

Be part of the process. Get acquainted early with your legislators early before you need to ask for a vote. A great way to do that is to invite legislators in, explain what you do for the community and how you can be partners in addressing the needs of their constituents. Hosting them at a "Legislative Breakfast" gives both you and the law makers time to meet informally before we need them to act on our behalf.

Know the members that serve your service area. Each legislator has contact information on the [state's website](#). It is important that you contact all the legislators in your service area. To find out who represents your area and to get their contact information, check the State's website. Contact us at the Home Care Association for help.

Legislative Breakfast

Inviting legislators to meet with you and your staff in a less formal, no stress setting is an excellent way to build and grow relationships, to tell them about the fine work you do for your patients and to let them know that you can be a trusted resource when they need information about home care.

Your goal: build relationships. Tell legislators what you do and who you serve. Most know less about home health than you think. Let them know that you serve patients from birth to death and everyone in between, that you are not just high touch but also high tech, and that you are on the cutting edge of health care reform, ready to work with them to keep health cost down because you provide high quality health care in the least costly setting. They should leave with just enough written information to be useful, but most importantly ***your contact information.***

Generally legislative breakfasts should start at 7:30 or 8:00 and end by 9:00- 9:30. It is best to hold them at your office if you have the space or at a nearby conference facility if not, and not in Concord. Just coffee and muffins or fruit are fine; getting too fancy can take away from your message.

GETTING STARTED –

CHOOSE YOUR SITE AND RESERVE A FEW AVAILABLE DATES AT LEAST A FEW WEEKS AWAY, DEVISE A GUEST LIST.

Call the one or two legislators you most want to attend and schedule your event around their availability. You can also ask them about any competing events.

- Pick a date, consider a Monday or Friday since the legislators don't meet in Concord those days. Print and mail invitations (see below) to both home and office addresses.
- Call a week after mailing to be sure they got it.
- Be persistent – keep calling every couple of days until you get an answer one way or another, even an "I'll try to make it" is fine.

WHOM TO INVITE

Get the list of legislative members and leaders that serve your service area- we can help.

Invite the legislators who serve your service area, executive councilors, and maybe local municipal leaders and congressional staffers. If you know of legislators who have paid special attention to health care in the past, or have served on committees important to our issues, you can make a note of it in your invitation. Your agency's leadership, including board of directors, should also be included. Be sure to include your lobbyist if you have one. Many agencies will decide to team up with other agencies and community coalition partners.

Fill the room. Be expansive in your guest list. Invite State legislators who represent your service area. HCANH can help you create this list. Invite staff from across program areas, and possibly volunteers and caregivers.

- State Representatives and Senators who represent your service area
- Executive Councilor
- Agency's leadership, including board of directors
- Agency volunteers make great advocates, possibly invite able patients and caregivers as well
- *Us.* Let the Home Care Association of NH know too!
- Optional:
 - Municipal leaders (Mayor, Town Councilors, Board of Selectmen, etc.)
 - Congressional leaders (district staff)
 - Community partners (other HCANH member agencies if you have overlapping service areas)

INVITATIONS

Make it simple, use postcards or a brief letter on your letterhead. Cover Who, What, When, Where and Why. Two samples follow.

- Join us for a legislative breakfast
- Organization name
- Date, time
- Address
- Phone #, e-mail address for questions and RSVP
- Call to action= why?

Include directions and parking info with the invitation – don't direct them to a website. Some agencies will include a response card or page with a stamped, self-addressed envelope, but it isn't necessary. You may include an organizational brochure, but don't include more info about you than that.

SAMPLE POSTCARD LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST INVITATION



SAMPLE INVITATION LETTER TO LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST

Use your letterhead

(Date)

The Honorable John Doe
New Hampshire Senate
State House
25 Capitol Street
Concord, NH 03301

Or

The Honorable Jane Doe
NH House of Representatives
State House
25 Capitol St
Concord, NH 03301

Dear (Representative Doe or Senator Doe):

On behalf of the (Agency or name of local event planning committee), I am writing to invite you to attend our (Legislative Breakfast/Other Event) on (time and date). This is an excellent opportunity for you to learn about what we do and how we can work together to make sure that all Granite State residents get the home health care and hospice services they need and deserve.

I will follow up with a call to you next week to learn of your availability. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Name

Title

A WEEK BEFORE – DIVIDE UP THE JOBS

Consider the logistics like food and drink, as well as arranging the room, also assembling paperwork and supplies. Assign someone to take pictures and someone to collect names of attendees.

- ***Greet each legislator.*** You need several people for this function. The idea here is pleasant small talk; you want them to feel relaxed and comfortable.
- ***Collect names of everyone who attends.*** *This is critical and should be that person's only job.* Have a sign-in sheet at the door so you can follow up with thank you notes after the event. Each one in attendance needs a thank you note. Trying to guess who was there afterward will not work.
- ***Determine who will speak and give the formal remarks.***
- ***Stay on Message*** - Make sure all your staff and volunteers are clear on what they should say.

THE EVENT –

Set up the room for conversation. Tables and chair in small groups will encourage networking. The opening remarks need to be welcoming, and congenial, and shouldn't feel like a conference.

Have plenty of information folders available. The folder should include the agency's brochure, fact sheet and the CEO's business card. The most important piece of the packet is your contact information. Have more folders than you think they will need; they may take extras.

Take pictures of legislators with patients and staff if you can, especially for digital formats. Try to get everyone. Also, take some crowd shots. These can be sent along with thank you notes and used in your newsletters/communications/website. Remember to get photo releases from staff, volunteers, patients and caregivers.

Introduce yourself to each legislator. *Don't assume they will remember you;* they meet hundreds of people. A nice way to start off is, "It's so good to see you again, Senator." Be polite, but engage one or several in a separate conversation bringing them back to your services. For example, walk up with a staff person and say, "Senator Jones, I want to make sure you meet Ms. Smith."

Listen carefully to what they are telling you, clarify anything you don't understand. Ask how you can be effective and helpful to them. Comments might include "This is going to be a difficult budget year." Your response, "How can we help you ensure that vital services like this remain available for the people who need them?" Share any concerns that you hear with your advocacy partners – lobbyist, coalition members, etc.

Never argue with a legislator.

Do not use jargon or acronyms – HIPAA, OASIS, Face-to-face and other health care jargon mean nothing to most legislators. Not every legislator is an expert on your program area (nor should they be). Don't make them ask. If they ask a question, get them the answer either from someone in the room or promise to get the answer to them as soon as possible. ***Then follow up*** – include the answer in your thank you letter.

AGENDA –

Again, this is mainly informal. Keep remarks brief – 15 minutes maximum. Have the CEO or director thank them for coming and address how important the services are, followed by a staff person or volunteer who can describe their job, or what the services have meant to them. Thank everyone again for coming and for their support.

Emphasize that you want to create a relationship with them and that they should call you anytime they need information. In describing relevant legislative issues, stay positive, and do not limit yourself to your organization's funding – talk about the needs of your patients and staff as well as other community organizations that you and your clients rely on. Remind them to get an information packet before they leave.

You can follow up with an offer to accompany a clinician on a home visit. Think through client confidentiality issues before you make the ask.

Sample Agenda:

7:30 AM: Continental breakfast, sign-in, and informal networking

8:00 AM: Welcome by Executive Director or CEO and introductions - (*HCANH is happy to provide a template for your PowerPoint presentation ahead of time*)

What is Home Care? Who do you serve? State what state funding and regulatory issues are important to our industry.

8:15 AM: Legislators may want time to discuss state or regional priorities.

Facilitated Discussion- questions, comments, responses to the Legislators

9:00 AM: Adjourn

FOLLOW UP –

Send thank you letters to everyone who attended. You might include a photo of the event, fact sheet, newsletter or brochure that ***wasn't*** in the packet. Reiterate your offer to help. Include your contact information on the letter and include a business card – you can write on the back, "Call me anytime." Reference specific information about their visit, e.g. "I've included a picture of you and Ms. Smith, our board chair" or "I looked into your question and found that . . .". ***See the sample thank you letter for legislators who attended.***

Send a letter to legislators and others who did not attend. Include a packet, with all the above contact information. ***See the sample letter to legislators who did not attend.***

EVALUATE -

Make sure you consider what went right and what could be improved. If your attendance was lower than expected, try to figure out why. Build on what worked and changed what did not so that every year your event will be better than the year before. And don't forget to use us here at HCANH, we can help.

Thank You, Members!

Since 1974, the Home Care Association of New Hampshire has built partnerships with New Hampshire's governors and legislators on both sides of the aisle to make sure that all Granite State residents have access to high quality, affordable home health care and hospice.

SAMPLE LETTER TO A LEGISLATOR WHO ATTENDED YOUR BREAKFAST

Use your letterhead

(date)

The Honorable John Jones
New Hampshire Senate
State House
25 Capitol Street
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Senator Jones:

It was a pleasure to see you at our legislative breakfast on January 20th. We appreciate your taking the time from your busy schedule to join us.

As New Hampshire's population ages, the need for health care in all settings will continue to grow. We have experienced dramatic increases in demand for home care services, that coupled with increased unfunded regulatory burdens and stagnated reimbursement rates has made these programs vulnerable.

We are very grateful for your continued support of our work over the years and look forward to working with you again this session. If we can help in any way, please call me at (603) 123-4567.

Thank you again for your time and your commitment to the health of all New Hampshire residents.

Sincerely,

Name

Title

SAMPLE LETTER TO A LEGISLATOR WHO MISSED YOUR BREAKFAST

Use your letterhead

The Honorable Bill Jones
Legislative Office Building
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Senator Jones:

We missed you at our legislative breakfast on November 20th. I have included a copy of the packet of information from the breakfast.

As New Hampshire's population ages, the need for health care in all settings will continue to grow. We have experienced dramatic increases in demand for home care services, that coupled with increased unfunded regulatory burdens and stagnated reimbursement rates has made these programs vulnerable.

We are very grateful for your continued support of our work over the years and look forward to working with you again this session. If we can help in any way, please call me at (603) 123-4567.

Thank you again for your time and your commitment to the health of all New Hampshire residents.

Sincerely,

Name

Title