

School-Based Health Care Week *Healthy and Learning: Back to School 2009*

VIRTUAL TOUR: SCHEDULING THE MEETING

Telephoning Your Elected Legislators

To find your Senators' and Representative's phone numbers, you may use the following websites www.house.gov, www.senate.gov, www.congressmerge.com or call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and ask for your Senators' and/or Representative's office.

When calling a Member's office, remember that your call is going to be taken by a staffer and not the Member of Congress himself or herself. Introduce yourself to the receptionist and ask to speak with the Health LA (Legislative Assistant) or the person who handles health issues for the Representative or Senator.

Remember, the person who shot the video does not have to be the person who conducts the meeting. It is more likely that a constituent will get a meeting!

Make sure you ask for the spelling of the staffers' names so you can send an e-mail if you have to leave a voice message.

Messages:

- *For voicemail message:* State who you are and the name of the SBHC you represent and its location in the Congressional Member's state/district. Say that you want to schedule a telephone meeting for the week of September 14 to take the Member or staffer on a virtual tour of your SBHC – a link you will send via email. Leave all dates and times you are available during the week of September 14 and your best contact phone number.
- Email format: State who you are and your purpose in the body of the email, including all possible dates and times you are available or the call.
 - Senate Staff - `firstname_lastname@senatorsname.senate.gov`
 - i.e., `tom_jones@obama.senate.gov`
 - House Staff – `firstname.lastname@mail.house.gov`
 - i.e., `tom.jones@mail.house.gov`
- It is possible that you may need to call or email the staff again if you do not hear back within a week. Do not be discouraged. That is normal as Hill staff are extremely busy coming back from the Congressional recess.
 - If you continue to experience difficulties in scheduling the meeting (use your discretion but generally two calls and/or emails over a week/10 day period is sufficient), you can call the office and ask to speak with the Legislative Director (LD) or the Chief of Staff (COS). Remember, you are a constituent and the Members of Congress work for you!

Tips for Conducting the Meeting

- Be prompt.
- Make sure you establish who is calling whom at the predetermined time.
- Email your packet of information (legislative background available on NASBHC's Virtual Tour web page and anything you have on your specific center that can be emailed) before your scheduled meeting. Allow enough time for the LA to review the materials before the call.
- Begin the meeting by introducing yourself and telling the staffer what your role is in relation to the SBHCs in the Congressman/Senators district/state. If you are a constituent (i.e., if you live in the Representative's district), be sure to mention that!
- Ask the staffer how familiar s/he is with SBHCs. Use your discretion. If the staffer doesn't seem very knowledgeable, we recommend that you spend a little bit of time giving him/her the "SBHC 411": what SBHCs are, how many are in the state/district, who they serve, how they are funded, etc. If the staffer is already knowledgeable about SBHCs, review the number of SBHCs in the state/district, briefly talk about anything new/interesting happening in the state/district, and move right into watching the video.
- Watch the tour together and discuss. Be sure to provide YOUR story – who you are, why you run the center, etc. – and relay stories of the people you help at your SBHC. Make it personal and memorable.
- Leave time for questions. You won't be in the room, so you can't read the body language of the staffer. Try to be sensitive to the time and his/her attention.
- Finally, make the "ask"!! (See the talking points document available on NASBHC's Virtual Tour web page.) All staffers expect a constituent to have an ask, so don't be shy! It is their job to receive those requests from constituents and pass them along to their bosses. In fact, staffers want an actionable item from each meeting. Their days are too busy for idle chatting!
- Thank them for their time and let them know you will follow up.

The most important actions you can take are to:

1. Tell the story of the clinic: why the clinic is so important to the Member and his/her constituents.
2. Follow up: email a thank-you and reiterate your willingness to provide any necessary information or be available for any questions the Member may have on your issue. (See NASBHC's thank-you letter template, available on the Virtual Tour web page.) After your thank-you email, continue to stay in touch to make sure you are on the Member's radar screen. Also, if you have a regular newsletter or other publication, add the Member to your mailing list to help him/her stay aware of your work.

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