

INVITING A MEMBER OF CONGRESS TO TOUR YOUR SBHC

One of the best ways to build support for school-based health care is to show our potential allies how effective SBHCs are in helping students to learn. Inviting a member of Congress to visit is the first step.

Request a School-Based Health Center (SBHC) Tour

Set up a visit by calling the elected official's office; you'll be working with each office's scheduler. Here's how:

1. Identify your elected official. You can find your Member of Congress (MOC) through <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/findyourreps.xpd>
2. Once you have obtained the contact information for the office, get in touch with the district office closest to the SBHC. Each office has different protocols for making a request, so follow their directions carefully.
 - A formal written request may be a required component for the site visit; a sample letter is included for reference in the toolkit.
 - Be sure to mention who will be attending the visit.
3. Ask for the name of the scheduler so that you can follow up after adhering to the office's protocols.
4. Schedule the site visit during the month of February when your elected official is available and your SBHC can provide a tour. Be flexible when scheduling the visit.
 - A Congressional Recess is tentatively scheduled for the week starting on President's Day (February 21). It's likely that your MOC will be back in your Congressional District at that time.
5. Follow up with the scheduler as necessary and be persistent.

Sample Script When Calling the District Office

Introduce yourself and provide the scheduler with information about where your SBHC is located and the number of students served by the SBHC in the district represented by the MOC or elected official.

Hi, my name is [your name] and I'd like to invite Senator/Representative [Name] to visit the school-based health center at [location]. We're participating in National School-Based Health Center Awareness Month taking place this February. Our SBHC is located in [town], and the parents of the students we serve are all constituents of [name of Senator/Representative]. How can I send a formal invitation to the office?

Request to receive the Scheduler's direct contact information (e.g. email address, phone number, fax number) to follow-up the coming week.

Organizing a SBHC Site Visit

Create the program and identify tour participants

- Prepare the agenda/program for the day of the tour.
- Identify whom you would like to participate in the event. Important people to consider include the school principal, school counselor, teacher, SBHC administrator, SBHC medical provider, other SBHC personnel, parents, and students.
- Invite those you would like to participate and schedule a brief meeting or phone call to rehearse and go over any important details you might need to share.

Sample Visit Agenda:

- Once everyone has convened at the SBHC, each tour participant should introduce him or herself to the elected officials and provide a point of reference as to how he/she is associated with the SBHC.
- Make sure that there is a presentation by an adult to thank the elected official for taking the time to visit.
- Mention how government support has made a difference at the SBHC, *especially* if your center has applied for the federal grants authorized under health care reform.
- Lead the elected official on a tour of the SBHC.
- Share general information about SBHCs in your community – how many children they serve, what services they provide, the impact they have on health and well-being.
- Have one or two students share their experience with the SBHC. Their brief remarks might include:
 - How the SBHC has helped him/her
 - Why it is important to have the SBHC in the school
 - Why students like to come to the SBHC
- Consider having a teacher emphasize how the SBHC helps keep students healthy and in class, and highlight any stories of teachers using SBHC services, if applicable.
- Ask the elected official to help support vulnerable students by making school-based health care eligible for existing federal school improvement funds
 - NASBHC Webinar: An Education Policy Primer – January 18, 3 pm (Eastern)
 - See NASBHC's Education Policy Fact Sheet (in this toolkit) for detail
- Allow time for questions and be prepared with two questions to ask the elected official. Be prepared for the elected official to ask questions of both the adults and the students.

Decide on media and organize materials and handouts

- Prepare folders of information for the elected official and other tour participants. In the folder, include information about the SBHC, your marketing materials, if any, SBHC fact sheets, and education leave behinds.

Conduct tour, debrief, and give thanks

- **Take pictures and/or videos of the site visit (with the permission of your guest); post online and send to NASBHC Communications Director, Adrienne Ammerman at aammerman@nasbhc.org.**
- Write a LTE or op-ed to your local newspaper and submit along with photos from the visit (see the media section of this tool kit for more information).
- Debrief with your participants.
- Send thank you notes to the elected official and tour participants.

Sample Visit Request Letter

It's likely that, in order to finalize the invitation, you will need to send a formal request. Here is a sample letter you might be able to tailor to your needs. This letter is designed to encourage invitations to all valued dignitaries and should include your local community leaders, education officials, and/or mayors.

DATE

The Honorable _____

Washington Office

ADDRESS

Washington, DC

Local Office

ADDRESS

RE: Visit to [Name of SBHC]

Dear *DIGNITARY NAME/TITLE*

The [*name of SBHC (and the state association, if applicable)*] invites you to take a 30-minute tour of a school-based health center and meet with the students and families who are being positively impacted by our care every day.

People in [*state/city*] value their school-based health centers. They are the lowest cost, most effective model for delivering health care to students. There are [*number*] SBHCs in [*state/city*], serving [*number*] students. These students could lose access to vital health and mental health services without your attention. Come visit your local SBHC to learn about how we help students thrive – socially, physically, and academically. The future of [*state/city*] depends on having healthy and successful students now.

We look forward to working with your staff to schedule a visit to our school-based health center. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

NAME

TITLE

PHONE NUMBER

EMAIL