



Tips for a Successful Meeting

Basic Rules

- They want to hear from you.
- You are the expert -- don't be afraid to talk. However, don't be condescending.
- This is all about relationship development. Remember that trust is hard to gain and easy to destroy.

The Meeting

Be Prepared.

- Familiarize yourself with the background information, and know your talking points.
- Prepare a folder of materials to leave in each office you visit. NCSEA has prepared several documents for you to use.
- Know your members of Congress. Read their bios, know their committees.

Be Flexible.

Time:

- While you should always arrive early, the meeting may not start on time.
- If you are going to be late (even 2 minutes), call the office and let them know.

In Person:

- Introduce yourself and be sure to provide a direct phone number and email address.
- The meeting may be with a staff member instead of the representative, and may change on short notice.

- Don't be alarmed if this happens. Staff members are young and smart, and are the ones that prepare information and materials for the Congressperson or Senator.

Be Succinct.

- Your goal is to develop an on-going relationship with the legislator or staffer, as well as to educate him/her on particular issues they may face, here are a few things to keep in mind
- You will have 15 quality minutes: Organize accordingly.
- Limit your message, and stay on point.
- Describe the importance of the issue; use anecdotes or narratives. Do not use jargon – don't assume your audience understands the field of child support.
- Let them ask questions. If you do not know the answer, don't guess. Assure them you will follow up with the answer.
- Be a good listener and hear out what your legislator has to say on the issue.
- Don't debate with them or give them ultimatums.
- Remember all causes are good causes. You must convince your legislator there is something extra special about yours.

After the Meeting

- Thank them for the meeting – *verbally and via email*.
- Emphasize the main points of your conversation in a follow up email and make sure to thank the legislator for taking time to hear your position.
- Once a legislator gives you a commitment, it is all right to check back with them. Do not badger them with phone calls.
- Let the NCSEA know about your visit using the Legislator Meeting Report Form.