



Ohio Children's Alliance

Leading change for child and family service providers

Meeting with Legislative Offices: A Guide

Once you have found your [legislator](#), you can contact their office to schedule a meeting, or reach out to us and we can help facilitate! Whether you reach out via phone or email, be sure to have different dates and times readily available to schedule at least a few weeks to month out if possible.

Meeting Location

If you are meeting a State Representative, your meeting will be located at the [Vern Riffe Center](#) and if you are meeting a State Senator, it will be located at the [Ohio Statehouse](#). Each building has security procedures which you can read about [here](#) and [here](#).

Parking

[The Statehouse Parking Garage](#), connected to both the Riffe Center and Statehouse, often fills up quickly. However, there are many other parking lots within walking distance you can use which we have identified [here](#).

Preparing for the Meeting

After a meeting has been secured, here are our top ten meeting preparation tips to ensure success for you and your organization:

1. **Get organized.** You want to establish and solidify lasting relationships relationship with legislators and staff. To make the best impression, it is important to prepare thoroughly, be polite, and be as specific as possible. This includes arriving early, being prepared, and having multiple copies of leave-behind materials and/or written resources.
2. **Accept Meetings With Staff.** Don't be concerned if you end up meeting with staff rather than the legislator. In many cases, this can prove to be just as effective.
3. **Plan Your Time Wisely.** Strike a balance between being concise and thorough. It is important to focus this meeting around a couple of specific points and action items. Most legislative office meetings are 30 minutes or less, so keep that in mind and plan to leave some time for discussion. If there will be multiple people

educate | advocate | innovate | connect

with you at the meeting, establish with them ahead of time who will introduce the group, who will make the case, provide personal stories, and deliver the ask.

4. **Use Your Unique Voice.** Explain why the issue is important to you and to people in your district. Use personal experiences and illustrate your points with real people and examples. Include any specific challenges or barriers you are facing. From your perspective, explain why you think it is important to act and why the child welfare or behavioral health system benefits as a whole from your ideas.
5. **Have the Facts.** Establish arguments explaining the importance of prioritizing investments and policies connected to child welfare and behavioral health. If possible, cite sources of independent support for your position (opinion polls, studies, facts sheets) Consider providing additional resources to leave behind with your legislator's office. These can include an overview of your program, additional information about child welfare and behavioral health, and written versions of your policy or budget asks.
6. **Provide a Final Ask.** After you make your points, request specific action be taken. You have established the 'why' and now is the time to establish the 'how'. This can include asking the member to champion an issue, draft an amendment or bill, or provide a favorable vote. If you need help preparing an ask, please reach out to us!
7. **End the meeting on a High Note.** Let the member or aide know you look forward to continuing to work with them and serving as a resource. Leave your name, address, email address, affiliation, and telephone number with the member or legislative aide. Thank them for taking time to meet with you. If you have time, try to get a picture with them before leaving!
8. **Follow Through with Follow-Up.** We recommend that you provide a hand-written message thanking the member or staffer again and briefly summarizing the major issues discussed. Be sure to follow through on any commitments you made and provide any additional information requested.
9. **Share What Happened.** Share pictures and details from your experience on social media, in your newsletter, or on your website. When possible, tag your legislator in the posts and share pictures. Please also share your experience with us so we can promote it and help with any follow-ups.
10. **Finally, remember** that relationships are important to accomplishing your goals! Continue to engage your legislators through periodical meetings, emails, or site visits. And let us help you to maintain those relationships any way we can!

educate | advocate | innovate | connect