

State Advocacy 101 - Meeting your legislator

Find out who your STATE legislators are (PA House & PA Senate).

Schedule your meeting – preferably get 2-4 friends or relatives to go with you.

Call district office to schedule.

Your initial meeting with your legislator is best thought of as a fact-finding and “getting to know you” mission. It’s all about BUILDING RAPPORT.

1. Research your legislator – check their bio, recent social media feed, sign up for their newsletter. Learn what committees they are on and what issues they are working on.
2. Choose and Print the handout that you want to leave with the legislator. Keep it simple, most legislators know VERY LITTLE about vaccine issues other than what they have heard from the media and health dept. Expect them to know nothing if you have not met with them before. There are 3 main things that we want every legislator to know:
 - a. Vaccine manufacturers are not liable for harm caused by their products since Congress passed the NCVIA in 1986
 - b. The vaccine schedule has tripled since the passing of that law
 - c. Even though most cases are rejected because of the cumbersome and costly court procedures, the Federal program has paid out over \$4 Billion to victims of vaccine injury.

We recommend the Basic Vax Facts document along with the Current CDC Schedule as tools for conveying these points – both are available on our website. **Whatever literature you bring, make absolutely sure that it is from a credible source.** Keep your handout in a folder or something to keep it in good condition.

3. Bring something to write on. Bringing a notebook makes you appear genuinely interested – interested enough to take notes. (If you forget this, you can take notes on your phone, or ask the receptionist for something to write on.)
4. Dress well. “When in Rome” – people build rapport more quickly with people who appear to be like them. Try to wear clothes that help you feel confident. Coming straight from work is ok too! If you have to show up in scrubs, a uniform, or work boots, that is fine. Legislators listen to people who work in PA!
5. Plan to arrive a little bit early.
6. Park and rest in your car for a few minutes to gather your thoughts, materials, and check in with your state of mind. I recommend doing some relaxing breathing techniques and vocal warm ups to relax. Your demeanor should be Calm, Cheerful, and Curious. Three Cs.
7. Meet with your friends outside if possible and go in together.
8. Introduce yourselves. Thank the legislator for their time.
9. If possible and appropriate, ask a question about something they are already working on or have done – a bill they introduced, community project they are involved in, something from their bio. Try to create common ground.
10. Introduce your information – invite questions – Did you know that.....
11. Building Rapid Rapport –
 - a. Repeat the last few words of their statement or important point
 - b. Encourage their speaking

- c. Take notes
 - d. NEVER interrupt – try to truly listen without just waiting for the pause so that you can get your points across (taking notes can help with this).
12. Ask WHAT and HOW, NOT WHY – Why questions tend to make people defensive. Ask what and how questions.
- a. What do you think would happen if....
 - b. What made you think that
 - c. How do you think we could...
 - d. How do you think that parents could find a doctor....
13. If there are questions that you can't answer – great! WRITE THEM DOWN. This gives you a perfect opportunity to contact them again. You do NOT need to be an expert. You know more than they do and you know where to find information. Don't hesitate to answer a questions with, "I don't have the answer to that today, but I will get back to you with it." Thank them for their time.
14. Close with a summary statement if you are comfortable with that. Ex: "Thank you for meeting with us. I really enjoyed talking with you. I hope that we can count on you to protect parental rights in this area."
15. Send a thank you card. **Follow up with information to answer any unresolved questions.** Best to do this ASAP before it falls off your to-do list!
16. Keep following them on social media and email. Meet with them a couple of times a year and try to attend one or more of their community events. If appropriate, volunteer to help with their re-election campaign.

An effective advocate must always be Calm, Courteous, and Credible.

You Got This!