



Meeting with your Legislator

Personal visits are highly effective ways of helping legislators understand your position or program. Legislators welcome visits from constituents. **They want you involved**, even though they are busy people.

Flexibility is always important when making appointments with legislators. Be as flexible as possible when scheduling your meeting. Be prepared for schedule changes; do not take these changes personally, this is just how it is. Please remember that time is a valuable commodity to legislators. So with all contacts, **be brief, be specific and be polite!**

- Be on time for your appointment. Be prepared, dress neatly, be polite and be brief.
- At the beginning of the meeting, state who you are, whom you represent, what you want to discuss, and what you want your legislator to do.
- Do not be surprised if your legislator does not know about your issue or program. Legislators have to know about many issues and may specialize in areas unrelated to your work. Avoid overwhelming the legislator with information and detail.
- If you do not know the answer to a specific question, offer to find the answer and then forward the information to the legislator.

Before you leave the Meeting--

- Try to find out where your legislator stands on your issue.
- Leave a one-page fact sheet summarizing your points; include your name, address and telephone number. More detailed information should be included in a packet of attachments.
- ***Perhaps the most critical part of your visit*** --- Ask your legislator for some sort of commitment, some way that they would like to help you.
- If your legislator needs more information, make arrangements to give them information AND ask them when you should follow-up with them.
- Try to leave the meeting knowing what your next steps should be (e.g. calling their district office to set up a site visit, organizing a small informal meeting, providing additional information, etc.)

After the Meeting--

- Follow up the meeting with a thank you note, thanking the legislator for his or her time.
- Be sure to re-state your position in this note.
- If the legislator asks for more information, please get this information to them. Need help with follow-up? Call us at California WIC Association.

Isn't this lobbying, and am I allowed to do it?

Non-profits are allowed to lobby, and many counties employ lobbyists. Simply inviting public officials to visit and chatting with them about key WIC and Breastfeeding issues is not lobbying, it's "public issues education." Even if you were to support a specific piece of legislation, which is technically lobbying, it's usually fine with most nonprofits (check with your boss). You can always go on lunch hour or break and exercise your free speech rights as a private citizen, as well! **For more details on lobbying rights and responsibilities, go to the Alliance for Justice website at www.afj.org or the IRS at www.irs.gov.**