



# How to Advocate As A State Agency Employee

## FACT SHEET

State agencies may have policies regarding employee contact with Congress. This fact sheet describes ways state government employees can participate in the public policy process and also adhere to your agency's policy.

### I. Individuals

As a citizen, you may fax\*, e-mail or call your Senator or Representative or any other member of Congress who may influence your areas of interest. You may need to use stationery, if you fax or attach a document to an e-mail, that does not reflect your position in state government.

Pointers for Calls and Correspondence:

1. Include your address/phone so the office holder may respond to you.
2. Keep your message short and to the point.
3. In general, your communication should specifically state:
  - (a) What you want the legislator to do (i.e. support, oppose, co-sponsor, contact the assigned committee, etc.).
  - (b) The bill name, number, committee assignment, and current status, if applicable.
  - (c) Why you want the legislator to take the position.
  - (d) Your appreciation.
4. Remember to ask friends and family members to contact their legislators too.

*\*It is strongly recommended that due to security issues, individuals either fax or e-mail to their Congressional delegation in lieu of writing letters (snail mail).*

## **II. Councils/State Agencies**

If agency policy permits, you may call or contact your congressional delegation on behalf of your agency or your state's advisory council. The pointers for calls or correspondence described above also apply to state sanctioned communications. In addition, you may:

1. Contact your state's Washington, D.C. based office, if one exists, to let them know of TBI issues that impact your state. You might consider asking your director or commissioner to make the initial contact.
2. Establish relationships with key staff in your Congressional office to facilitate information exchange between the state's TBI program and elected officials. Often, once a relationship is established, the staff person will contact you regarding issues that come before Congress.
3. Let key state legislators, such as your budget or appropriations committee chair or leadership, know of your interests at the federal level. Often, members of the same political party know one another and may be willing to contact members of Congress on your behalf. Sometime, a state legislature will even submit a resolution to Congress urging them to support or oppose a certain position.
4. Ask other state agencies, councils and quasi-governmental entities to contact your congressional delegation or key congressional people on your behalf. Examples of agencies you may want to approach include your Developmental Disabilities Planning Council, Governor's Council on Disabilities, Assistive Technology Council, State Independent Living Centers Council, etc.
5. Organize a coalition or group of agencies and councils to support TBI issues. The coalition members can agree to support issues for each other.

## **III. Support & Follow Up**

It is a good to have on hand a fact sheet on TBI issues pertinent to your state that can provide an overview of the prevalence and incidence of injuries, a description of needs, current service delivery, and how federal TBI issues have impacted your state. A general fact sheet can also be distributed on a specific-issue, along with the coalition of agencies and organizations who are in support of the issue (TBI Reauthorization, for example).

It is IMPORTANT to keep NASHIA informed of your communication with members of Congress. If you have questions concerning state or federal policies or want to become more involved, please call Susan Vaughn, Director of Public Policy, at 301-656-3500 or 573-636-6946.

**NASHIA is assisting State government in promoting partnerships and building systems to meet the needs of individuals with brain injury and their families.**