KIDNEY PATIENT SUMMIT 2018

Inspiring action for kidney disease

Steps to a Successful Advocacy Visit

Be prepared - Visit your elected official's website and Facebook page to see what issues he/she cares about and any possible personal connections you can form. Know who you are meeting with and their role in the office.

Dress in a professional manner - But wear comfortable shoes and weather-appropriate clothing so you can walk between House and Senate sides of Capitol Hill.

Check the hallway maps - Check the building maps by elevators when walking to your meeting. Some buildings have logical layouts, but others do not…just look at Rayburn!

Be flexible - Arrive five minutes early for your meeting. Sometimes your meeting may start late, but you do not want to be the reason why. Votes and other demands change schedules frequently. You may be asked to meet standing up, sitting in the Member's front office, in the hallway, or in a loud cafeteria. If a Member of Congress needs to go to a committee meeting or vote while you're speaking, offer to walk with him/her to finish the conversation.

Prepare with your group - Read the talking points and discuss what you and your teammates will say during the meeting so that you don't repeat, conflict, or overlap, and so you can capitalize on each team member's strengths. Remember, time is limited.

Introduce yourself - You are the face of kidney disease. Tell them why this issue is so important to their constituents. Use your experience to illustrate the challenges kidney patients face. Members and staff love a good anecdote that they can use later, so be sure to use one while making your presentation.

Be concise and compelling - The staff (or Member) you meet with has a full schedule and may not have more than 15-20 minutes to devote to the discussion, so be informative and concise.

Be appreciative - Thank the office for the meeting, for a specific vote or position on an issue, or for being in the Congressional Kidney Caucus. This is always appreciated and is a nice way to set the tone of the meeting.

Keep it simple - The Members and staff will not necessarily be versed in the issues you are there to discuss. They may not know much about or have real life experience with chronic kidney disease, dialysis, donation, and transplantation. Avoid acronyms, vernacular, and keep the language you use as basic and as non-technical as possible.

Be honest - If asked a question you do not know the answer to, offer to follow-up. This will give you an opportunity to have another discussion with the staff member via phone or email.

Get information - Knowing is half the battle! Find out what you can about member's positions, but don't expect a clear answer or commitment**.** Find out what connections you may have to them, and they to kidney health. Maybe they have a family member with CKD or have been to kidney health events.

Don't forget "the ask" - You identified the problem. Don't forget to offer the solution.

Try to develop a relationship - Congressional staff may not hail from your district or state. Some may be younger than your children or your grandchildren. Do not be discouraged by this. These staffers are the policy advisors to Members of Congress and are instrumental to getting his/her support on issues you care about. They work long, hard hours on your behalf and work on many diverse issues.

Follow up - Make sure you respond to any questions you could not answer, invite them to future events in district, and be sure to thank everyone involved for their time. Find out who you can work with in their offices in your state.

Fill out your meeting report - Make sure to fill out your report forms after each meeting while the details are fresh. Give them to a representative from one of the host organizations. We need this information to better target our efforts and answer any requests in a timely fashion.

Remember: You are a constituent, and they work for you!