

The background features a grid of squares in shades of purple and green, with a dark blue horizontal bar at the bottom right. The text is centered on a dark blue rectangular background.

National Healthy Start Association Spring Conference 2005



Effective Advocacy



By Now You Should Have

- Scheduled your meetings with your lawmakers.
- Invited your congressional representatives to the reception.
- Have your packets of material to leave behind.

Trouble Shooting

If no response to your request for a congressional appointment:

- Call (202) 224-3121 (Senate)
(202) 225-3121 (House)

Ask to be connected to your Member of Congress.

- Message: “I am a constituent and wish to meet with Representative (Name) or Senator (Name) tomorrow, while I am here in Washington. Can you help me?”

Preparing for Your Hill Visits

- Attend all Senate appointments as a group from one state.
- Assign a lead spokesperson from your group.
- Organize who will talk about what in advance.
- Focus on organizing success stories, and who will make the “ask.”

Logistics

- Consult your map of Capitol Hill.
- Give yourself plenty of time between appointments.
- Be on time; if you are running late from one meeting call ahead and let the next congressional office know you have been delayed.
- Wear professional attire and comfortable shoes.

How to Manage Your Hill Meetings: First, educate

- Do not be surprised if you meet with a key staff member instead of the Member of Congress.
- Two important subjects to cover: First, what your HS site is accomplishing for mothers/infants/families in your area. Second, what HS means personally from the perspective of your consumers.

“Educating” versus “Lobbying”

- If you are restricted to educating, this means you can provide all the information you wish about the impact of Healthy Start and its effectiveness.
- If you can not “lobby,” choose a member of your consortium or a consumer to make “the ask”.

How to Manage Your Hill Meetings: Second, make the pitch

- Be sure to ask for two things before you leave: Support for more money for HS and support for HS Reauthorization.
- How is the Appropriations process different from Reauthorization?
- What is Reauthorization and why do we need it?

Important Distinctions

Authorization

Makes a program *eligible* for federal funding.

Appropriations

Actually *provides* the federal funding.

Each process is managed by different congressional committees.

Review: Materials for the Hill Visits

- Review of the Messages.
- Review of the House letters; what they are, who they go to, what you need to ask.
- Review of the Senate letters; what they are, who they go to, what you need to ask.

How to Manage Your Hill Meetings: Third, make a good close

- Thank lawmaker or staff for the time they have taken to meet.
- Be sure to leave behind materials about your HS site, and invite them to visit.
- Make sure to get the name and business card of the person with whom you are meeting.
- Be sure to turn in your Hill Visit Report forms.

What to do if Tough Questions Arise? Examples

- “There isn’t enough money – where would *you* cut to make room for more money for HS?”
- “How can you prove that HS is more effective than other programs? Why should your program have precedence over others?”
- Role Playing.

Congressional Reception Protocol

- Relax and enjoy yourselves. Lawmakers like to enter a room where it is apparent folks are enjoying themselves.
- Keep one eye on the door for your congressional representative; when he/she arrives, go to meet them and make them feel welcome.
- Wear comfortable shoes – you will be standing most of the time.
- Pay attention when the Congressional Guest Speakers are at the podium – support them with your applause.
- Pay special attention to Senator Arlen Specter, our special honoree this year.

Don't Forget: Advocacy is a Year-Round Job

- Send a thank you letter for your meeting as soon as you get home.
- Think of creative ways to include your Member of Congress in your local activities: invite him/her to a press conference, to an opening of a conference or special consortium meeting, to be interviewed for your local newsletter about Healthy Start, etc.
- Add your lawmaker to your mailing lists.
- Arrange for a site visit once a year for your lawmaker to see what you are doing and how you do it.

Advocacy Should Reach Beyond Congress

- Enthusiasm for Healthy Start is infectious. Share your passion with others.
- Local elected officials, consortium members and others need to be kept informed about your successes.
- Your financial sustainability can be enhanced by securing local and state funding.
- The same rules for effective advocacy apply.