



NATIONAL HEAD START ASSOCIATION

Building Relationships with your Legislators

How to Request and Conduct a Meeting

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Get to know your state elected officials

Congress

- To find your representative and two senators go to: <http://contactingthecongress.org/>
- Put in your address and you will be given a list of your members of Congress and their contact info.

State Capitol

- To find your Governor go to: <http://www.usa.gov/Contact/Governors.shtml>
- Click on your state and you will be directed to the website of your Governor.

Request a Meeting

- Some legislators have an online meeting request form that you can fill out online, or you can call the main office line (of their local or Washington, D.C. based office and ask for the email address of the scheduler.)
- Meeting requests should be addressed to the scheduler.
- In your request, always ask to meet with your legislator but, if your legislator is not available, meeting with an aide who focuses on education can also be productive.

Prepare for your meeting and follow up

- Review your issue.
- Define your message, stick to your talking points.
- Determine and review roles of all who will be in the meeting.
- Practice for the meeting. Make sure that you have first hand stories to tell from Head Start alum, parents, families or someone to share Head Start stories that they know of. (You can find many Head Start success stories at <http://blog.nhsa.org/>)
- Determine what you will ask of the elected official. In the past people have asked their elected officials to: support robust funding for Head Start, come visit a Head Start program, help fix sequestration and ensure that Head Start can continue to serve those in the program, etc.
- After the meeting follow up, email and call who you met with and remind them of what they committed to and/or send them the key information about Head Start.
- Stay in touch with those you met with, send them information from time to time and serve as a resource on Head Start for them (updated Head Start talking points and facts sheets are available at www.nhsa.org)

Remember...

- Positive messages work so be positive!
- Connect to your core values and explain why Head Start is so important to you, your family, your city and/or your state.
- Appeal to the broadest sector by explaining that Head Start is not about politics, it is about values. All children deserve the opportunity to succeed in school and life! Who can't get behind that?
- Head Start supporters include 32 million graduates and many supporters, invite them to join this movement and take a stand for our most at-risk infants and toddlers.

Reasons to be hopeful!

- You can make a difference.
- People working together can make a difference.
- People can change laws/policies.
- Advocacy is an American tradition.
- Advocacy helps find real solutions.
- Policymakers need your expertise.
- Advocacy helps people.
- Your views as a Head Start alum, parent or Head Start supporter are important.
- Advocacy advances our cause and builds public trust.