

Advocacy Tools for Legislative Visits

Advocacy Do's

- Know your legislator. Have some idea of his/her position on the issue, past votes on similar legislation as well as legislative and personal interest can help you tailor your arguments.
- Identify yourself and say whom you represent immediately on each contact. Legislators and staff meet hundreds of people and cannot remember everyone.
- State why you are there
- Have clear, limited goals
- Speak with a unified voice
- Be brief. Legislators are very busy.
- Know the issue and the status of the legislation. Refer to legislation by number.
- Talk with legislators even if their positions are opposite yours.
- Think of yourself as a consultant to a legislator. You have expertise and insights that help the legislators understand the issue.
- Be specific and practical. Relate arguments to situations in the legislator's home district.
- Be honest. If you don't have answers to questions, then reply that you don't know but you will find out and send information.
- Ask the legislator to do something specific (e.g. support CAADPE position)
- Thank legislators when you finish the meeting. Invite them to visit your programs/agency.
- Keep the door open for further discussion even if you don't agree at this time.
- If possible, leave behind a fact sheet summarizing your position. Highlight important facts and arguments. Include your business card or contact information so you can be reached if there are questions.
- Send a thank you letter. Include in your letter any information that you promised.

Advocacy Don'ts

- Talk about personal/individual organization's agenda
- Back legislators into a corner
- Overwhelm them with too much information or jargon.
- Get into a lengthy argument.
- Be afraid to say you don't know. Offer to find out and send the information back.
- Confront, threaten, pressure or beg.
- Expect legislators to be specialists. Their schedules and the number of bills make them generalists.

FOLLOW AOD LEGISLATION ON THE INTERNET

CAADPE members can easily keep updated on the status of bills impacting the substance abuse field through CAADPE's Internet based bill-monitoring service.

CAADPE continuously monitors bills through its web-based service, CapitolTrack. With CapitolTrack, CAADPE identifies bills of importance to the field and keeps the listing on a special file that CAADPE members can access 24/7 through the Internet. The services list information about the status of the bill, upcoming hearings, CAADPE's position and recommendations for actions on specific items. CAADPE members receive their login/password with their membership and are notified of password changes on a quarterly basis.

VOICE YOUR OPINIONS IS A CLICK AWAY!

Your voice can now be heard with a push of a button! CAADPE members can voice their opinions to members of the California Legislature about pending legislation and on public policy issues being considered in Sacramento through the Internet. Electronic messages and letters can be sent via e-mail to members of the Assembly and the Senate via their respective websites. Voicing your opinion has never been easier! Below are directions for accessing the e-mail box for each house of the legislature.

The California Assembly's website! . To write to the author of Assembly bills, log onto the Assembly web page WWW.ASSEMBLY.CA.GOV and click on legislation. Follow the on-screen instructions to locate the bill number. A screen will appear displaying the bill number and author and a space to type your comments, as you would in a letter - support, opposition, or ideas for amendments! When finished, hit the "send" button and the Assembly's network will deliver your comments to the author of the bill.

For Senate Bills, log on to the Senate web page, WWW.SENATE.CA.GOV, and then click on "Senators " to get to the listing of all members of the state Senate. Click on the name of the Senator to reach his/her home page. On each Senator's Home Page you will find his/her email address, click on the e-mail address and the message form will appear for you to write your message.