



BEING THE EXPERT: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Do I need to be an expert on the legislation?

You are an expert on serving the healthcare needs of your community, and your job is to relate those experiences to the legislator or staff member. You do not need to be an expert on the legislation or the State Budget. However, you need to have a basic understanding of the issues. Refer to the “talking points” in your packet, and add information and anecdotes about your personal experience with your health center to the conversation.

What if the legislator asks for statistics demonstrating the need for the legislation?

Don't worry! If this situation arises, you may say that you do not have that information but you would be happy to pass it on to CHCANYS for follow-up. You should be able to talk about the prevalence of the particular issue in your community, however. Do not get bogged down arguing the details. You are there to discuss the needs of community, homeless and migrant health centers and the people served. Be confident in your own knowledge and experience. Stay focused on the big picture; CHCANYS will attend to the details.

How long will the meeting last?

Most meetings are about 15 minutes long. The purpose of the meeting is to let the legislator know that his/her constituents are concerned about the issue of community-based health care. By merely making the effort to participate in these meetings, you are demonstrating the importance of this issue. Don't be discouraged by the brevity of the meeting. Your presence is the most important message you can send.

What information about the policy priorities should I bring to the meeting?

Bring the folders CHCANYS has provided to leave with legislators. Your day-to-day experiences will supplement this information. *You only need to discuss the issues outlined in the “talking points” in your registration packet.*

Should I be discouraged if a staff member or intern meets with me?

No. Legislators rarely have the time to meet with all of their constituents. It is common for a legislator to ask a staff member or intern to cover a meeting. In fact, staff may be more knowledgeable on a given issue than the legislator. Many staff members function as gatekeepers of information, and it is important to inspire them to share information you will provide with the legislators. If you meet with someone who is not familiar with the issues facing health centers, take the opportunity to help him or her understand them better. This can be a great opportunity to create an ally.

Does my voice count?

Yes! The legislator's job is to represent you. You should be courteous and to the point, but do not be afraid to take a stand or be firm. Legislators often know less than you do on your subject; they rely on their constituents to alert them to issues affecting their communities. Also, take the time to thank the legislator for his/her support on previous legislation that addressed the needs of community health centers.