



## CONDUCTING A SUCCESSFUL LEGISLATIVE MEETING

### MEETING GOALS

- Get to know your legislator and let him/her get to know you.
- Inform your legislator about your community, homeless or migrant health center
- Establish an ongoing relationship with your legislator. Even if he/she can't or won't help you now, you may have a common issue in the future. Start developing a good relationship now.
- Let your community know the results. When your legislator is helpful and supportive, tell as many people about it as you would if the meeting had been a disaster.

### PREPARATION BEFORE THE MEETING

- Prepare a statement for yourself detailing what you would like to highlight about your community, homeless or migrant health center. Who does it serve? What services are provided? Include examples or statistics to illustrate the impact.
- Find out information about your legislator. Know his/her pet projects, committee assignment(s), special projects, and party affiliation.

### DURING THE MEETING

#### *Meeting Strategy*

- Determine your goals for the meeting.
- Each meeting will have three main components: (1) introductions; (2) presentation of the issues; (3) getting comments/commitments from the legislator.
- Determine who will speak, for how long and on what issues.
- **Determine who on your team will do the following:**
  - **The introduction.** For example: "Hi, thank you for taking the time to meet with our group. We are here representing the Community Health Care Association of NYS and *"insert your CHC name."* We would like to speak with you about community health centers generally and specifically in your community."
  - **Presentation of the issues.** Try to designate a different person to introduce each of the issues on the "Talking Points" sheet in your packet.
  - **Note-taker.** The note-taker should keep track of the legislator's position on each agenda item, what commitments he/she has made, and what commitments your group members have made for *the Constituent Visit Report Form*. Don't forget to write down the name(s) of any legislative staff with whom you meet.

#### *Presenting Your Issues*

- Even with an appointment, your legislator may be unavailable. Ask to talk with staff instead. Ask for names and titles.
- You will only have about **15 - 20 minutes** with each legislator.
- **Introduce yourself and the others in your group.** Inform the legislator that you are a constituent (or represent a group of constituents).

- Give the legislator/staffer a packet of information at the beginning of the meeting.
- Talk about your health center and health centers in general.
- Be brief and persuasive. Clearly specify the issues you wish to address.
- If appropriate, thank the legislator for his/her past support.
- Ask for the legislator's point of view. Listen to the answer.
- If you are asked a question that you can't answer, offer to get the information.

#### *Push For Action*

- Remember to leave time in your meetings to ask what the legislator can do to help support our agenda. For example, you can suggest to the legislator that he/she should:
  - Write a letter or personally speak to the Governor, Senate Majority Leader, Assembly Speaker, and his/her fellow state officials to urge them to support our agenda and/or support a specific bill.
  - Make a public statement about his/her support.
- Try to get a specific response to your request.
- **Also ask the legislator what we might be able to help them help us.**

#### **AFTERWARDS**

- Send a thank you letter.
- Send any follow up information requested.
- Follow up with the legislator in his or her home district. Meet with him/her in your community later; take along community members; invite his/her to your CHC; try to make an ally of him/her. Let the legislator know that you are knowledgeable about what he/she is doing, and you are reporting these actions to constituents.
- **Please make sure to fill out the *Constituent Visit Report Form*. These forms were given to you at registration and are extremely important to return. Please return the forms any time during the day to CHCANYS Staff at the Registration table, or return them via fax to Beverly Grossman at 518-434-1114.**