

Tips for Building Effective Relations with Elected Officials



VISION STATEMENT:

We envision that occupational therapy is a powerful, widely recognized, science-driven, and evidence-based profession with a globally connected and diverse workforce meeting society's occupational needs.

MISSION STATEMENT:

OTAC serves, supports, and promotes the profession of occupational therapy and its practitioners.



P.O. Box 276567
Sacramento, CA 95827

Phone: 916/567-7000
Fax: 916/567-7001

E-mail: info@otaonline.org
Web site: www.otaonline.org

3/12/2014

DO:

- Dress appropriately, at least business casual attire (no jeans, t-shirts).
- Have a neat and clean appearance. You are representing your profession.
- Arrive 5 to 10 minutes ahead of your scheduled appointment.
- Greet them with a firm handshake, good eye contact, and introduce yourself formally as well as everyone present around you.
- Be polite and courteous.
- Study the elected official's biography and the issues they support.
- Be prepared. Know your topic.
- Limit your agenda meeting to two to three topics or issues.
- Cite specific bills, titles, and issues for clarity.
- Find out their knowledge and understanding of occupational therapy.
- Relate information directly to the elected official's constituents (you and the individuals you serve) using personalized stories, helping translate the issues into tangible, practical, and real problems.
- Demonstrate why the particular issue is important to you and the members you represent. Suggest solutions to the issues.
- Be attentive to the elected official's positions, comments, and feedback.
- Prepare a packet to leave with your elected official including informational facts on specific topics or issues, and OTAC.
- Offer to provide any additional information or follow up on any questions they may have.
- Ask when a good time would be to follow up with the elected official and the best method of communication (e-mail, phone, text messaging, etc.).
MAKE SURE TO FOLLOW UP!
- Ask to be included as a resource for health care matters for the elected official's office.
- Report visits and the outcome to OTAC.
- Send a thank you letter.

DO NOT:

- Get discouraged if your legislator is late to the meeting or if you meet instead with an elected official's representative or aide. Elected official's schedules are very unpredictable.
- Overstay your welcome. Keep track of the length of your appointment.
- Assume the elected official knows about occupational therapy.
- Assume that the elected official is familiar with the issues you are to present. There are many bills, issues, and regulations introduced and elected officials and their representatives will not be able to remember all of them.
- Discuss numerous bills or address unrelated issues. Stay on course. Be direct, concise, clear, and succinct.
- Maintain a narrow-minded perspective. Be attentive and open to differing views and feedback.
- Be angry, threatening, or confrontational. Always leave the elected official's office with a positive feeling and a future desire for collaboration.
- Consider the meeting as a one-time event. Develop a working relationship with your elected officials.