

Meeting Your State Legislator at the Capitol

➤ *Prepare Your Story Before the Meeting*

- Legislators are very busy, so it's helpful if your story is brief - under five minutes is best. Here are some questions to consider when putting together that story:
 - ✓ Describe the needs of your family member with a disability.
 - ✓ Describe what life was like before you or your family had any services.
 - ✓ Describe how you found out about services.
 - ✓ What services are you or your family receiving now?
 - ✓ If you have had to wait for services, how long have you waited?
 - ✓ Are the services you are receiving meeting your needs and/or your family's needs?
 - ✓ What would happen if these services were no longer available to you or your family?
- Practice your story before the meeting so you can present it clearly and concisely.



➤ *At the Meeting*

- Begin by briefly introducing yourself and why you are there.
- State clearly what you would like the legislator to do. For example, "Please support Senator (or Representative) Jones' bill," or "Please don't cut funding for services that help people become more independent." If you are advocating for a particular bill, mention the bill number; it will be a House File or Senate File number (e.g., HF 314 or SF 1034).
- Be focused in the meeting. Discuss only one issue at a time.
- Be confident about sharing your story and your experience. You are the expert on your life and/or the life of the person you support, and that knowledge is crucial information for elected officials.
- If a legislator asks questions that you can't answer, tell them you will get back to them with that information. Contact the disability group you are connected with to help find the information.
- Avoid using jargon or overly technical terms if at all possible. If you do use a term that the legislator isn't familiar with, give a brief, layperson definition. ("My son receives waived services, which are programs that help him be more independent and live in the community.")
- Ask the legislator for a specific commitment. (E.g., "Will you vote for HF 314?" or "Will you oppose cuts to waived services?")
- Don't threaten the legislator with consequences if he/she doesn't agree to your position (for example, "If you don't vote for this bill, I won't vote for you.")
- Always thank the legislator at the end of the meeting. Even when they don't agree with you, at least thank them for meeting with you.
- Keep a record of what happened in the visit - who you met with, the issues discussed, and any comments or commitments that the legislator made.