

BEST PRACTICES FOR A SUCCESSFUL (AND FUN) ADVOCACY DAY VISIT

START WITH INTRODUCTIONS

Introductions about yourself, your practice type, and your patients help paint a picture of why this Day of Action is so important. As medical professionals, your viewpoint often carries more weight with members of congress and their staff. This is especially true if you are a constituent. For members of congress and staffers who don't have deep expertise in HIV or even health care, the connection you're able to make with them may help them to prioritize policies that improve HIV prevention and health care.

TEAM LEADS & MEETING ORGANIZATION

Each meeting will include a member of the Academy staff to help organize the meeting and keep the conversation moving. But the purpose of the Day of Action is to elevate the voices and experiences of you, Academy members and credentialed staff. As such, it's important to remember that this is your meeting and you should try to stay on topic, even if a lawmaker or staff person asks questions about other subjects. You may only have 10 or 20 minutes to present your case, so don't waste your time. Focus on the core issues that you care most about and/or have the greatest impact on your work.

CLEARLY STATE YOUR POSITION

Politely but firmly explain your position and back it up with clear arguments. Personalize the issue. Talk about how HIV-related policies or the broader health care system affect your patients and your ability to deliver quality health care.

ASK SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

It is important that you ask specific questions of the lawmaker or staff member. It is not enough for them to assure you they support the issues generally. Rather, you want them to engage you in a discussion about *specific* issues. Be polite but firm. It is your right to ask your lawmakers for clear positions on the issues, particularly if you are a constituent. If you disagree with a position they take, you can say so in a respectful manner, and ask what information might persuade the member to reconsider. This type of disagreement often happens around funding and the federal budget process; it's okay if you ultimately don't come to an agreement but you should feel empowered to offer your experiences and those of your patients. Finally, if you are asked a question you cannot answer, do not try. Say you will get back to them, and make sure you do. (Academy staff will follow up after every meeting to ensure the members of congress or staff have whatever supporting documentation, research, or policy positions they may need.)

PROVIDE INFORMATION

Each staffer will have received policy materials in advance of the meeting but may not have had time to review them. As such, Academy staff will provide a "leave behind" that includes the Academy's budget requests, bill co-sponsorship opportunities, and a policy brief to inform their work on HIV prevention and care. If there are specific materials you would like to provide directly to the member or staff, you can do so. These materials help ensure that your position is known by the lawmaker and the staff when you leave. Note: since lawmakers must keep track of many issues, staff members are key in persuading their boss to support a particular position. Use these staff as your primary contacts in the future.

SAY THANK YOU and HAVE FUN

Whether members of congress or staff agree with our positions or not, they are always potential allies. It is a competitive environment for meetings, and they've chosen to sit down and hear from you. Be sure to thank them for their time. Consider maintaining relationships with your elected official and their staff, particularly those who are in-district, after the Day of Action and beyond.



1600 K St. NW
Suite 350
Washington, DC 20006

 202.659.0699
 202.659.0976
 aahivm.org

 aahivm
 aahivmcomm