How To Engage With Your Legislators
Guidelines For Meeting a Policy Maker
1. Prepare For The Meeting

- **Make**
  - Make an appointment.

- **Learn**
  - Learn about the policy maker’s stand on your issues and on important legislation (is he/she a co-sponsor of the bill, etc.)

- **Plan**
  - Plan what you want to say.

- **Decide**
  - Decide who will lead the discussion.
2. During the Meeting

- Keep introductions short.
- Limit small talk and focus on meeting objective.
- Tell the policy maker your position.
- Discuss one to two important issues.
- Pay attention to nonverbal gestures.
- Stay focused until points are conveyed.
- Ask to take photo with the policy maker at the end of the meeting.
- Explain to policy maker how the picture will be used.
3. Share your Personal Stories

- Explain why it is important for policy maker to be interested in your issues.
- Ask for the policy maker’s position on your issues and reason for it.
- Talk about how you are personally affected by the issue and share your one page story.
- Explain why your personal story is important and how other people are also affected.
- Offer to provide additional information.
4. Make Request(s) Specific

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Explain</th>
<th>Request</th>
<th>Propose</th>
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<td>Explain why it is important for policy maker to be interested in your issue.</td>
<td>Request specific action by policy maker (Such as co-sponsor a bill, oppose a certain amendment, speak in support of or in opposition to an amendment, visit a program in home community, give a speech, etc.).</td>
<td>Propose a meeting or visit to program in home district.</td>
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5. Write a Thank You

- Write a thank you letter for the visit and summarize what was discussed.
- List what you said you would deliver.
6. Provide Feedback to The Arc of KY Staff

- Report to The Arc Kentucky staff about your meeting.
- Describe the policy maker’s response.
- Describe the nonverbal communications by the policy makers staff.
- Report what you promised to provide to the policy maker in response to issues raised.
- Ask The Arc what follow-up is appropriate.
- Continue advocating until change is made!
7. Contact Your Legislators

- [http://lrc.ky.gov/legislators.htm](http://lrc.ky.gov/legislators.htm)
- Legislative Message Line: 1-800-372-7181
- Bill Status Line: 1-866-840-2835
- Meeting Line: 1-800-633-9650
Writing Letters & E-Mail Tips

• Senators and Representative pay attention to their mail (both regular and e-mail). It’s good politics.
• Responding to constituents is crucial to re-election. Members know your vote can be won or lost by their responses.
• Due to security issues, letters sent by U.S. mail are delayed. It is best to contact your U.S. Senator or Representative by email, phone or fax.
• The most effective letter is a personal one, not a form letter. The letter should be concise, informed and polite.
Contents of Your Letter or E-Mail

- Identify yourself as living in your legislator’s district.
- Try to keep your letter to one page or two pages at most. Don’t write on the back of a page and write legibly.
- State your purpose in a short introductory paragraph. If the subject is a bill, cite the bill number and name. Cover only one issue or subject in the letter.
- Be factual and explain how the legislation will affect you, your family and others. Avoid emotion.
- If you believe the legislation should be opposed, say so. Give an example of how it may be harmful and suggest a different approach.
When Writing a Letter or E-Mail

- Make sure your name and address are legible.
- In an e-mail, make sure your name, e-mail address, mailing address and phone number are all included.
- When writing a letter, instead of “Mr.” or “Ms.” Use:
  - Dear Senator or Representative ______
  - Address
  - City, State, Zip Code
  - Begin e-mail with:
    - Dear Senator________ or
    - Dear Representative________
Telephone calls should:

- Convey a meaningful message with helpful information.
- Be made in a timely manner.
- Be brief and to the point.
- Always be polite and leave a message if no one is unavailable.
When you call:

- Identify yourself with your name, city or town of residence.
- If your call is regarding a specific bill, give the bill number and subject matter.
- State your support or opposition to the bill and a brief reason for your position.
- Request your legislator's support or opposition to the bill.
- Let your legislator know your availability to discuss the issue further.
- Leave your phone number.
- Express thanks.
Any Questions?