

## TIPS FOR HOSTING A LEGISLATOR IN YOUR ED

### Before you begin

1. **Why should the visit be conducted?** Determine what the visit should accomplish beforehand and if the timing is appropriate.
2. **What will the visit accomplish for your and/or ACEP's legislative agenda?** The meeting should provide an opportunity to explain how an issue affects the delivery of emergency medicine, or should build rapport with the legislator.
3. **How will the legislator benefit from the visit?** In addition to meeting constituents, the visit should provide the legislator with useful information and establish you and your staff as a future resource.
4. **Will you benefit from the visit?** Be sure that the visit is a good opportunity for you personally to establish and build a constituent relationship with your Member of Congress.
5. **Are there options other than a visit that could help you achieve your objectives?** Planning and conducting a tour is time consuming. At times, a thoughtful, persuasive letter or a visit to the legislator's office may be more appropriate.

### Scheduling the visit

1. Contact the district or capitol office of your legislator. You can obtain the district number from your local directory. The capitol office may be reached through the capitol switchboard, at (202) 225-3121. Ask to be connected to the legislator's office.
2. Ask to speak with the scheduler. Identify yourself as a constituent and emergency physician. Mention where you practice.
3. Extend the invitation to the legislator and any staff members who may be interested. Provide several dates when you would be available to host the visit. **A good time to schedule the visit is during a legislative recess or district work period.**
4. Follow-up the phone call with a written invitation confirming the date and time. It may take several contacts to schedule a visit.
5. Include a confidentiality agreement with your letter which should be signed in advance by all parties planning to participate in the visit. Because of concerns with liability and HIPAA, confidentiality is important to the hospital, physicians and patients.
6. Inform the hospital's administration and public relations department of the visit. Be prepared to discuss the advantages for the hospital as well as for yourself, your patients and the community. You may also want to inform hospital security of the visit.

### Preparing for the visit

1. **Do your homework.** If this is your first meeting with the legislator, it's a good idea to learn more about his/her key issues, voting patterns, committee assignments and election campaign. To obtain background, check with ACEP's Washington office about your Member of Congress.
2. **Concentrate your discussions on three key points or less.** ACEP's Washington office can provide you with issue papers and talking points on key concerns of emergency medicine in legislative and regulatory areas.
3. **Determine before the visit whether the legislator will be informing the local media of the visit or inviting them to cover the event.** You may want to have a photographer on hand where appropriate. Photographs as well as news releases can provide information for local papers and newsletters.
4. **Inform the other members of the emergency department staff of the visit and its purpose.** Be prepared to provide them with background information on the legislator and issues that could be discussed.
5. **Develop a schedule that allows enough time to tour the facility and to enjoy informal discussions.**
6. **Prepare or provide a fact sheet** for the legislator. Include the number of patient visits, number of staff, reasons for visits, etc.
7. **If the legislator's schedule permits, plan an informal luncheon or reception following the visit.** If not, follow the visit with a short private discussion in a quiet office or lounge area.

### The visit

1. Provide the legislator and his staff with lab coats and identifying name tags if possible.
2. Brief the legislator on the role of the emergency department in the community. Walk through the reasons why a patient would present at an emergency department (unavailability of primary care physician, uninsured, out-of-town care, accidents, etc.)
3. Include if appropriate: tour of the facilities, introductions and discussions with staff, discussions with patients or their family members, patient screening/encounters.
4. Keep the visit focused while encouraging questions and open discussion. Keep close track of time.
5. **Try to leave one or two clear messages or impressions with the legislator.**
6. Provide the legislator with materials that explain ACEP's positions on legislation pending in Congress.

### After the visit

1. Follow-up is critical. **Send a thank-you letter detailing the highlights of the visit.**
2. Send any photographs taken during the visit, and copies of any newspaper articles highlighting the visit to the facility.
3. Inform the ACEP Washington office of the results of your visit. Advise them of any follow-up which is necessary by ACEP staff.
4. Keep in regular contact with your legislator. Write letters on issues of concern, attend town hall meetings, and schedule future visits to encourage further communication and to establish you as a resource for the legislator.
5. Express interest in the legislator's political and legislative activities. Ask to receive the legislator's newsletter. Send a note of thanks when the lawmaker pleases you with a vote on an issue.
6. Inform your legislator of your activities and continuing problems. Don't hesitate to state your position on upcoming legislation.