

Take your Legislator to “Work” Day

Strategies for Success

Organizing a "Take Your Legislator to Work Day" is a powerful tool to give your state and federal legislators an up close look at the safe and effective contributions pharmacists make to patient care in health-systems. Your outreach will be the first step in building an ongoing relationship with legislators and their staff, and will strengthen the profession's overall advocacy efforts.

Get Started

Planning for “Take Your Legislator to Work Day” can be stress free by engaging a committee of dedicated pharmacists. Recruit other New Practitioners and residents to help plan the event!

8 WEEKS PRIOR TO THE EVENT

- Make sure the leadership at your practice site is open to hosting a legislator. Schedule a meeting with your administrator to discuss the goals of the activity and outline the impact it will have on the hospital.
- Submit invitations to state legislators to request a meeting. A sample invitation letter is available on the Advocacy Toolkit main page.
- Be sure to follow-up with a phone call within five business days of sending the initial invitation. Mention your letter and re-invite the legislator and staff.
- Consider inviting your state affiliate organization to participate. They may be able to provide you with health-system pharmacy leaders to assist you.
- Draft a document indicating your “take away message” and identify the key issues. This document can be used to brief all of the participants before the event. Look to ASHP's Advocacy Agenda and the Advocacy Toolkit main page for additional resources to help you develop your advocacy strategy.
- Draft an itinerary for the visit. A sample itinerary is available for you on the Advocacy Toolkit main page.

2 WEEKS PRIOR TO THE EVENT

- By now, the event date and time should be confirmed. It is important to provide the legislator's district office with the proposed itinerary for the day's events.

- Put together an informational packet with background information and handouts for the legislators to take back with them.
- Plan to meet a few days before the event to brief all attendees on the main “take away message.” Practice discussing key legislative issues with each other before meeting with the legislator. This will allow your group to have a common voice and a greater impact on the legislators and their staff.

TAKE YOUR LEGISLATOR TO WORK DAY!!

- The tour should last approximately 30-45 minutes. Be sure to include samples of all areas where pharmacists participate in patient care. Also take the time to differentiate the work performed by technicians and the work performed by pharmacists.
- When meeting with your legislators face-to-face, introduce yourself and be prepared to speak clearly about your message. Show them that you are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the issue.
- Point their attention to the prepared informational packet and describe the role of a health-system pharmacist and the training requirements. This will be a useful and meaningful tool in your discussion.

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE EVENT

- Send a follow-up thank you letter immediately after the event thanking the legislator and staff for their time. Include any photos from the event. A sample thank you letter is available for you on the Advocacy Toolkit main page.
- Send a thank you note to all of the attendees, including the state affiliate, for participating in the event. Include any photos from the event.

Tips and Tricks

- **Your institution’s government affairs and public relations departments** can be valuable resources. Ask for their help in making arrangements with legislators’ offices and to contact the media.
- **Have patience and be flexible.** Legislators and their staff can be incredibly busy and schedules may change at the last minute. A meeting scheduled with the legislator may switch to a meeting with the staff. And that’s okay! Remember that meeting with staff is often more productive than meeting directly with the Legislator because staff advise on how to vote on key issues. Be sure to thank the legislators and staff for their time.
- **Expect a "short and sweet" meeting, so BE PREPARED!** Although some staff may have time for lengthier visits, expect to have **no more than thirty minutes** with legislators or

their staff. That means that you must act fast to make your mark. Such a limited amount of time does not allow for in-depth discussions of all of your key issues. If you try to pack in several issues in such a short time, your message will likely be garbled or instantly forgotten. That's why we suggest that you **KEEP IT SIMPLE**. The most important goal to accomplish is to be sure that the legislator and/or staff walk away from the meeting with a clear understanding of **what a "health-system pharmacist" does**. Discussions of specific legislative issues will have little impact if your audience does not understand why the issues are important to you and how they may impact your practice!

- **Always keep the tone of the meeting positive.** You may encounter some legislators/staff who disagree with your views. Although they may challenge you, try not to be defensive, and never argue. Always be respectful of "the other side," and be willing to agree to disagree. Reinforce that your number-one concern is patient care.
- **Direct attention to the take away message you developed in planning.**
- **If you don't know the answer to a question, offer to find the answer and follow-up.** It is perfectly understandable to not know the answer to a question you may be asked. "I'll get back to you," is acceptable but try to follow-up with a response as soon as possible.
- **Ask for a business card.** If the staff person has not already offered one, be sure to get a card. This makes follow-up communication much easier.
- **Thank the individual(s)** for their time and offer to serve as a resource on health-related issues.
- **HAVE FUN!** Remember -- YOU are the expert. You are also a constituent and you vote. You have a right to meet with your representatives and express your interests or concerns regarding certain issues. You are also part of an elite minority of Americans who take the time to have their voice heard at the State Capitol.