

AWHONN

PROMOTING THE HEALTH OF
WOMEN AND NEWBORNS

Legislative Handbook

HOW TO GET STARTED



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Your Voice is Important

EVERYONE KNOWS A NURSE

“A little rebellion now and then is a good thing.” — Thomas Jefferson

Take a minute to think about a perfect world for nurses and the patients to whom they provide care. What would it look like? How would it feel? What form would it take? Now take a step further and try to picture how some changes in public policy might help make some of those dreams a reality. It may not be as hard as you think to bring about change. Why? Because people respect nurses and trust them to act in the interest of their patient’s health. In fact, since 1999, the national Gallup Annual Honesty and Ethics poll has consistently rated nurses as the number one most trusted professionals.

THE POWER OF THE NURSE

How many times has someone told you they could never do what you do? If your experience is typical, you probably get this reaction daily, and this respect means that you have credibility. When public policy leaders — from the President of the United States, to a member of Congress, or a state delegate or local school board representative — turn to health care issues, they look to health care professionals who work in the field every day. The policymakers want to hear from the people who represent the second-largest profession in the country (made up of 3.8 million people) and the professionals with the greatest proportion of women — that is, they want to hear from nurses. For example, a nurse was lobbying a state legislator on an issue that affected the emergency department where she works. She soon realized that she was failing to capture the intensity of the problem because the legislator had no frame of reference from which to see her point of view. She made a bold move: she invited the legislator to join her for a shift. She had him with her during a busy evening in the emergency department. She had cleared the visit through the appropriate channels in the hospital and had a pair of scrubs ready for the legislator when he arrived. There he was for the evening, shadowing her and gaining an appreciation for the skill, training, stress management, and presence of mind it took to do her job. She provided real-life experience through which he could better understand her concerns with certain legislation. He also thought the scrubs were cool.

One health care lobbyist, a nurse, recounts a typical meeting with an elected official:

On behalf of a leading nursing association, I went with a small group of lobbyists to discuss health appropriations funding. While we were talking to a staffer, he learned I was a nurse. He was so intrigued that he began to tell me his personal health woes. He essentially ignored the other lobbyists and came just short of showing me his appendix scar. Experiences like this are common and personal because *everyone knows a nurse*. Everyone has a relative, friend, or experience through which a nurse somehow touched them.

THIS ISN'T CIVICS 101: HOW THIS HANDBOOK CAN HELP YOU

Educating yourself about policy and politics is key. To truly integrate policy and practice, it is necessary to understand the policy process and explore how we can best affect it. This booklet is designed to provide basic information to help nurses understand the making of policy and, most importantly, how they can work to shape the policy process. This book goes beyond “how a bill becomes a law” to provide creative strategies that can be adapted to the realities of nurses’ lives and applied at every level of policy development.

As you continue your journey toward better health care for women and newborns, we invite you to look at policies at the local, state, and federal levels with new eyes. As advocates for women, newborns, and nurses, the first question to be asked about *any* policy is, “How will this policy affect the health of those I care for?”



Getting Started

NUTS AND BOLTS

“I have come to the conclusion that policies are too serious a matter to be left to the politicians.” — General Charles De Gaulle

The first step to participating in the legislative process is *knowledge* about what is happening in public policy that will affect you. It doesn't take much to put your ear to the ground and begin to follow issues that could make a difference in your life. Will Medicaid funding changes hurt your hospital, shrink budgets, or lead to unsafe staffing patterns? If so, you can oppose the legislation that calls for cuts. Do you believe in legislation to address workplace violence or safety? You can contact your representative's office and register your support for the appropriate legislation. You can increase your understanding and access to information on issues. There are some simple ways to get in touch with the people who are making decisions so that your voice is heard.

IDENTIFYING ISSUES

There are many resources available to learn about legislative issues. AWHONN's Board of Directors establishes a Legislative Agenda on the recommendation of the Public Policy Committee that outlines AWHONN's agenda at the federal level. The AWHONN Legislative Update is an excellent resource that gives a sense of the major issues being considered in Congress or being enacted by federal agencies. On its website, AWHONN has developed a user-friendly Legislative Action Center that offers members a variety of legislative information and tools. Navigate there from “Get Involved” on the homepage and then select “Advocate” and then “Take Action.”

OTHER PROFESSIONAL AND CONSUMER GROUPS

Contact other professional, industry, and consumer groups that monitor issues and legislative affairs. By attending your Section or Chapter meeting, reading the AWHONN Legislative Update, or attending a local or state meeting of another professional association, you can get a firsthand look at what hot-button issues are being discussed among your colleagues.

NEWSPAPERS

Legislative issues at the local and state level may be similar to those at the federal level, or the issues may be unique to a given area. On a local level, the town or city newspaper is invaluable for discerning what is

important in your neighborhood. National newspapers typically report on national legislation, and their features and editorials reflect that broader view. All major newspapers have a web site where you can read their latest coverage about national issues. Just as local issues drive national debate, national issues can spur action at the local or state level.

IDENTIFYING YOUR LEGISLATOR

One easy method to identify your legislator is to look it up on the Internet. AWHONN offers a user-friendly search to determine who your representatives and senators are. If you visit AWHONN's Legislative Action Center online, you will find an elected officials lookup (AWHONN.org>Get Involved>Advocate>Take Action>Elected Officials Lookup). You can identify your federal, state, and municipal elected officials by entering your ZIP Code. The US House (www.house.gov) and US Senate (www.senate.gov) also offer address lookups to identify your representatives and senators.

If you are planning to contact your legislators, you should gather some information about them to help you decide what approach to take in your communication. You should find out if they have any interest in or prior knowledge about your issue of concern or if they have worked on any other legislation related to your issue. For example, if you are in favor of a bill that supports breastfeeding, you might want to mention the legislator's previous support of a pro-family medical leave bill and emphasize that you appreciate his or her demonstrated concern for families. If you are writing about a specific bill, find out who is sponsoring and cosponsoring it.

A critical component of legislative affairs at the state and federal level is committee work. Determine what committees your legislator serves on and try to get a feel for how powerful he or she is on those committees. Is he or she a chairman or a ranking-member, or is he or she a first-year junior committee member? A legislator's committee status may make a difference in the kinds of risks he or she is willing to take and the amount of power he or she wields among colleagues. This is not to say that you should always go to the top with your concerns. Many times, senior members of a committee are overburdened, and there are times when a more junior member will be more willing to listen to your concerns. It is always a good idea to cultivate relationships with up-and-coming public figures early in their careers.

In addition to committee assignments, familiarize yourself with the policymaker's legislative history. Obtain a copy of past voting charts and a list of bills introduced and cosponsored by the legislator. Often, you can get this information directly from your legislator's office. For members of the US Congress, much of this information can be found on www.congress.gov.

It is useful to know which issues a legislator supports. There may be opportunities to assist with an issue close to the legislator's heart, and he or she may be more likely to support one of your projects. While helping someone doesn't mean he or she will vote the way you want, it will give the legislator a frame of reference and a positive image of you if you request support on an issue in the future.

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Establishing Relationships

It is important to realize the influence staff play in policy development. Legislative assistants are usually the ones working in the trenches — they are negotiating with other legislators’ staffs and working with the legislative counsel’s office to draft bills. Legislators often turn to trusted staff for advice and information on how to approach an issue. In general, assume that talking to or meeting with staff is just as effective as meeting with the legislator.

When entering the legislative arena as a first-time player, it may be a good idea to begin with an issue of concern at the local rather than the national level because local representatives are generally more accessible and may have more personal recognition of your associates or your workplace. Meeting with representatives and senators in their districts or in the state capitol to discuss a regional issue, enlisting the support of fellow nurses and health care professionals, writing letters, and following up can seem less daunting on a local level than dealing with Washington, although your method of advancing a legislative agenda will be similar.

In building relationships, remember the best time to network and build relationships is *before* you need something. If you volunteer on a candidate’s campaign, for example, you will most likely be treated with courtesy and respect if you want your voice to be heard on an issue.

You can increase your visibility in several ways. You can attend meetings or committee hearings and introduce yourself to staff, give them a business card, and tell them to call you if they ever have any health care questions. Another communication that will always be appreciated is providing information without being asked. For example, suppose you see a report that details a problem with infant mortality rates in your state. You could find out who chairs the state legislature’s health committee, ascertain which legislative staffer covers health issues, and send the staffer a copy of the report; include a cover letter (and a business card) explaining this issue is a serious problem you would like to help solve. You can then follow up with a brief, introductory phone call, so the staffer has a voice that corresponds with the material received. Always keep a copy of the letter for yourself so that you can refer to it if the staff person calls you with questions.

Keep in mind that definitions of “lobbying activities” vary at the federal level and between states. If you are actively working on an issue, you may want to check the lobbying guidelines for your state.

Nurses who have something to say about an issue, a bill, or a problem that requires legislative action have several ways to voice their concerns. The methods are tried and true: writing a letter, telephoning or meeting your legislator, testifying before committees, and sending personalized emails are some of the ways to express a viewpoint. Even nurses with little time can write letters or make phone calls to elected officials. A few simple sentences are all that is needed, and it can make a huge difference. The legislative process is open to everyone.

LEAVE A TRAIL: DETAIL AND PERSISTENCE PAY OFF

“To communicate, put your thoughts in order; give them a purpose; use them to persuade, to instruct, to discover, to seduce.” — William Safire

You probably remember the tale of Hansel and Gretel; they ventured deep into the forest and dropped bread crumbs along the way to mark their trail. This strategy is good for advocacy, too — although you will want to use something more lasting than bread crumbs to keep from getting lost! Remember that pursuing an issue can take a year or longer, so mark your path with a trail of email messages, letters, and phone calls to which you can always refer. While you don't want to make a nuisance of yourself, following up with staff and legislators shows that you are committed to the issue, and persistent communication reminds them that they will have to answer you eventually.

CRYSTALLIZING YOUR MESSAGE

“A monk asks a superior if it is permissible to smoke while praying. The superior says, ‘Certainly not!’ The next day the monk asks the superior if it is permissible to pray while smoking. ‘That,’ said the superior, ‘is not merely permissible, it is admirable.” — George Will

The monk's questions emphasize the importance of framing your issue properly for maximum credibility and impact. To communicate effectively in the legislative arena, you should first think about presenting your viewpoint in a way that will make it appealing to the people you are trying to convince. Whenever possible, try to make your message a positive one and illustrate to people in the policy arena how your requested action can benefit their constituents, improve a budget, remedy a health care situation, or enhance their public image. Before you initiate communication, determine *three points* that you want to make. Then, find an opportunity to say what you want to say. Try to deliver your message without getting sidetracked; that is, “stay on message.”

COMMUNICATING BY LETTER

One simple way to communicate your message is by writing a letter to a legislator. Letters are considered formal discourse; they establish the credibility of the sender as a constituent and should be polite, persuasive, and succinct. A letter to a legislator should accomplish the following goals:

- State the sender's position,
- Document support for the position through research or personal experience/belief, and
- Ask the elected official to take action and respond.

Letters to members of Congress are likely to be read only by staff (unless the sender has a personal relationship with the elected official). You can multiply the effectiveness of your letter by demonstrating broad support for your position: assist and encourage friends, family, and colleagues to write and mail similar letters.

Emails are commonplace and should be treated the same as letters. While emails are a quick and convenient form of communication, they should follow the basic rules of formal writing etiquette. Don't forget to say that you are a nurse, and include your name, address, and phone number so you can receive a response.

THE PERSONAL VISIT

Personal visits are also an effective means of getting your point across. As with letter writing, it is important to identify yourself as a nurse. Most of the guidelines for letter writing also apply to personal visits: explain your position, ask for support or opposition depending on the issue, and ask when you might have an answer on the legislator's position on the issue.

At the end of a visit, establish an agreement on when you should follow up and with whom, and then be sure to do so. If you have agreed to provide information (e.g., a copy of a report, letter, statistic, or newspaper article) after a visit, be prompt and accurate in sending the information.

If possible, provide a one- or two-page fact sheet, also called a “leave behind,” that summarizes the issue and your position. Statistics and other facts are especially helpful on leave behinds because they can be used by the legislator as talking points in speeches or opinion pieces.

Always follow up after the meeting by sending a letter thanking the legislator or staff member for his or her time and willingness to listen to your position.

TELEPHONE CALLS

If you don't have time to set up a meeting, the next best thing to do is to call your elected official. When calling the office of a member of Congress, the staffer who answers the phone is likely to be a junior staffer without substantive knowledge of the issue you are calling about. Ask to speak to the legislative assistant handling the issue of concern to you. If the appropriate person isn't available, then you can expect the staffer to faithfully write down your message for consideration by the appropriate issue staffer and ultimately by the elected official. Be direct and to the point.

TESTIMONY

If you plan to lobby intensely on a bill, you may have the opportunity to present testimony at a legislative committee hearing, and you should organize this testimony for maximum effect. If several like-minded people are to testify, the effort must be coordinated to *avoid redundancy*. Each person can present one argument in support of the group's position, or one person can present all the arguments. To achieve your goals, the testimony must be presented forcefully and articulately, and, most importantly, the information given must be accurate. It is important to pay attention to the time limits placed on oral testimony. While legislators and committees vary, find out ahead of time if you can submit written testimony for the record and then provide an abbreviated oral testimony.

If you are unable to testify in person, written testimony is often accepted by committees and then included as part of the hearing record. Be sure to observe deadlines in conjunction with submitting testimony. To obtain instructions on the format, where to testify, or how to submit written testimony, contact the appropriate committee clerk.

INVITATIONAL TOURS OF THE WORKPLACE AND OTHER EVENTS

Inviting policymakers to nurses' events at the workplace or through nursing organizations is another excellent way to build relationships. Some possible opportunities may include Nurses' Day luncheons, legislative breakfasts, Chapter meetings, and tours of the workplace. Honoring officials who have supported nursing and health care issues is another way to foster linkages.

CONQUERING YOUR FEARS: INSIDE THE BELTWAY OR THE STATEHOUSE

“You miss one hundred percent of the shots you never take.” — Wayne Gretzky

It's easy to find reasons to not get involved, such as I don't have time to make a phone call; no one will listen to me; they don't care what I have to say; I don't have any experience; what if I'm asked a question I can't answer? The list is endless. Deep down, many people may simply be afraid of embarrassing themselves. The following list of do's and don'ts should give you useful tips to help ensure your experiences are positive and successful.

DO'S

Do remember you are an expert, and nurses are the most trusted professionals. Most legislators are not health care professionals, so you have specialized knowledge they don't have. Trust that they will listen to you and respect you because you are an expert.

Do consult the AWHONN Legislative Handbook for specific tips on letter writing, personal visits, emails, and phone calls. There are examples in the appendices at the end of this manual for your reference.

Do try to personalize the issue by giving examples of how you, your coworkers, or your patients are affected. You would be amazed at how much more weight is given to a constituent's concerns than those of a lobbyist, but the message must be *meaningful*. Legislators and their staff know that organizations try to mobilize their members to send emails or letters on certain issues. If the letter reads like a form letter, it will not have the same impact as a personal letter that includes examples and personal experiences.

Do get a commitment. At the close of a personal visit or meeting, you should attempt to secure a commitment from the official that he or she will support your position. For example, you might say in closing, "So can we count on your support on Wednesday?" Even verbal commitments are tough to break.

Do realize that talking to the staff is like talking to the elected official. Treat staff the same way you would treat the elected official. Officials often rely on staff to advise them on how to vote or craft legislation, and they also develop interpersonal relationships with trusted staffers. If you alienate the staff, you are asking for trouble.

Do be early for meetings. An elected official's schedule can be filled down to the minute. They don't have time to wait for you, and if they do wait for you, your lateness may get the meeting off to a bad start.

Do avoid health care jargon. Although you are an expert, try to frame your comments as small bullet points of information that can be easily understood by a layperson. While your clinical knowledge may be impressive, if you lose your audience, your message will be lost.

Do leave something behind. At the minimum, leave your business card so the staff or elected official can contact you with questions. Optimally, you should provide a useful leave behind that summarizes your position on an issue in digestible tidbits. Statistics are always a plus, as staff will often use information in leave behinds in speeches or as talking points on the issue.

Do be realistic. Thousands of bills are introduced during each congressional session, but fewer than ten percent are enacted. Don't be discouraged if your bill doesn't pass: you have established relationships, educated both staff and elected officials, and built support for your position. If you have accomplished these things, you have laid the groundwork and increased your chances that a bill will pass the *next time* or the time after that or the time after that!

Do arrive prepared to defend your position. You always have to know what your opposition is up to. If you anticipate questions, then you can prepare to defend your position.

Do dress appropriately in business attire. Remember, the purpose of your visit is to talk about professional issues. To be most effective, you should appear organized and professional.

Do recognize the value of compromise. You may not get everything you want, but, for instance, isn't it better to get *some* money for nursing research than none at all? Think about areas in which you are prepared to compromise and identify those that are *not* negotiable. In some cases, you may even want to anticipate compromise by asking for more than you actually want. But be careful — don't concede anything until the timing is right.

Do keep your phone call or visit brief and to the point. While staff or the elected official will usually be polite, it is incumbent on you to recognize they are very busy. Keep your meeting pleasant and brief and start looking for clues that it's time to wrap things up after fifteen minutes. Meetings should rarely last more than twenty minutes but take your cue from the person with whom you are meeting.

Do make friends before you need them. Whenever possible, develop relationships before you have to ask for something. Try to become familiar with legislators who work on issues of interest to you, even if nothing

is developing on that topic or in his or her committee at the time. One obvious place to start is by getting to know the members of health care committees in your federal, state, or local government.

Do disagree respectfully. If a legislator has a position on an issue and you are unable to change his or her mind, remain respectful of the time he or she gave you to state your position. If possible, compliment the legislator on his or her work on another issue. He or she will appreciate your understanding and be impressed by your knowledge of his or her record.

Do say thank you. Whether you are following up after a personal visit or thanking a member for fighting in committee for one small provision that was important to you, it is always nice to recognize another's efforts. Legislators and their staff work hard, and most have great intentions, so your sincere thanks is appreciated.

Do provide helpful information whenever possible. Providing information is always appreciated. If you send a copy of a current report or an article you think the staff or elected official would find interesting, you present yourself as a considerate, alert person who wants to help. When you provide useful information and are not asking for any specific action in return, you remind the recipient who you are and provide them with a non-threatening communication that will be appreciated.

Do ask AWHONN staff for help! The government affairs staff is committed to helping you with important issues. Contact our headquarters if you need help. Emails can be sent to advocacy@awhonn.org

DON'TS

Don't endorse candidates or participate in political activities in AWHONN's name. While AWHONN can speak on behalf of its members with one voice, AWHONN is also a 501(c)(3) organization, which means it is prohibited from endorsing candidates for elected office.

Don't forget to ask for something. Don't end a personal meeting on an issue without "closing the deal." Instead of just saying thank you and goodbye, pleasantly reiterate your message. For example, "We hope you will recognize this amendment is important for breastfeeding women and their families, and we hope you will agree to cosponsor it."

Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know." Legislators aren't expected to be experts on everything, and neither are you. Admitting you don't know the answer to something can be a good thing, because it allows you to say, "I don't know, but I can research that and get back to you." Then when you have an answer, you have another opportunity to make contact with the staff or elected official.

Don't make threats. Any threats, veiled or overt, are usually recognized for what they are. Nothing is more offensive and inappropriate than threatening someone to get them to do what you want — and it will backfire every time.

Don't become cynical. Keep the faith! Remember that most people who serve in public office do so because they want to make a difference. Try to give them the benefit of the doubt.

Don't disparage other elected officials. This will make your contacts wonder if you're saying the same thing about them to a staff member from a different office. It will always make you look bad.

Don't promise something you can't deliver. Mark A. Clement wrote, "Leaders who win the respect of others are the ones who deliver more than they promise, not the ones who promise more than they can deliver." You must be as good as your word, or you will lose your credibility.



Involvement

WORKING IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD: PLANTING THE GRASSROOTS

“People often say with pride, ‘I’m not interested in politics.’ They might as well say ‘I’m not interested in my standard of living, my health, my job, my rights, my freedom, or my future.’ If we mean to keep any control over our world and lives, we must be interested in politics.” —Abigail McCarthy

Working on legislative issues is addictive! Once you see the impact you can have, you will be motivated and excited to take on another issue. Your enthusiasm and interest are also contagious. If you speak with your peers, colleagues, friends, and family about issues of concern, you develop a network of interested parties. This is really how grassroots efforts begin. By sharing information about issues, you encourage others to join you in promoting a position on a piece of legislation.

SECTION/CHAPTER INVOLVEMENT

AWHONN provides information for members on issues of interest to the association. We strive to give up-to-date information on legislative issues and the workings of Congress through our online Legislative Action Center and Legislative Update. However, if AWHONN is to be a voice for women and newborns, members at the state and local level must make a personal commitment to building a grassroots base to bring specific issues of concern to elected officials at all levels.

AWHONN’s Sections and Chapters provide opportunities to make a difference in nursing issues right now in your state or town. If you are not in the habit of doing so, take the time to read materials from your Section or Chapter. For more information, some Sections have individual links from AWHONN’s website that posts information from the Chair and Section Coordinators.

In addition to being a resource for information on key issues that affect women and newborns, AWHONN provides opportunities for individual involvement. Most Sections have a Legislative Coordinator. Introduce yourself to her or him by phone or in person, get involved by volunteering for a specific task for a committee, meet the national Public Policy Committee members at AWHONN’s annual Convention, and encourage other interested members to get involved by offering to guide and mentor them. If the Section does not currently have a Legislative Coordinator, the Section Chair often fills this role. If your Section does not have one and you are interested, chat with your Section Chair or send an email to advocacy@awhonn.org.

AWHONN always speaks with one voice. The Board of Directors adopts position statements and a Federal Legislative and Policy Agenda. All advocacy using AWHONN resources and the AWHONN name should be supported by either the policy agenda or a position statement. Always email advocacy@awhonn.org to clear advocacy on a state bill.

Ideas for Section and Chapter Activities

Mobilize your base of members by providing plenty of notice for Section/Chapter meetings. Advance notice of meetings can pique member interest if you include an agenda and encourage members to attend the meeting. Take the time to follow up with members to remind them about the meeting, perhaps by telephone calls the day before. Make your meeting more exciting by playing a game or giving a surprise policy quiz with a prize awarded to the person with the most correct answers. Fun activities help strengthen interpersonal relationships at the Section and Chapter level and make meetings something to look forward to.

You are free to energize your colleagues in creative ways. Sections can publish their own newsletter that summarizes issues you are working on — even a one-page newsletter is a great start! Keep in mind AWHONN's Legislative Update contents can be used by AWHONN members without additional permission.

Tips for Section and Chapter Activities

- Provide plenty of notice for meetings and make reminder phone calls.
- Excite member interest by including an agenda.
- Consider some kind of incentive or game to liven up the meeting.
- Start your own Section or Chapter website.
- Create a legislative album and fill it with pictures of AWHONN members in action.
- Write a one-page Section or Chapter newsletter; you can borrow articles from AWHONN's Legislative Update to get started.
- Make an information binder available at meetings to keep a record of your accomplishments.
- Invite a local official to come to your meeting to hear your concerns about health issues affecting women and newborns.
- Circulate a petition on an important issue at the meeting.

Local or Chapter Meetings

Attending Chapter educational meetings provides an opportunity to share information, answer questions, or discuss concerns about both federal and state legislative issues. Petitions can be circulated to obtain signatures of support. You may decide to use small, pre-addressed personal notes or cards that attendees can sign and forward to elected officials to indicate your position on an issue. Attending educational meetings or public meetings in your town or state is also an opportunity to network and learn more about issues that affect health care. They also help legislators put a face to your name. When elected officials receive your email, phone call, or newsletter, they will have a mental picture of who you are and an understanding of what you know about an issue.

Mentoring is a key aspect of building a dynamic grassroots structure in your state or community. None of us is an expert in lobbying issues when we start, and much of our learning comes through experience and the shared experience with others. A commitment to mentoring allows you to deepen the experience of a colleague or friend by teaching them what you have learned “in the trenches.” Strengthened by your support and encouragement, your mentee may soon be a partner in spreading the word and moving your agenda forward.

Professional associations such as AWHONN provide a logical community of common interest from which to build a network. They can be an excellent resource to enhance professional career growth and encourage active involvement in legislative affairs. Members of an association commonly share mutual interests and therefore may be interested in making a difference on issues of importance to them. The extent to which an association can participate in setting the agenda for lobbying at the federal, state, and local level depends on the tax status of the organization.

SOCIAL MEDIA

A preexisting email or social media group can help you mobilize a large number of people in a short time. If you suddenly discover that a bill you thought was locked in committee is being brought to the floor tomorrow, email and social media groups are a great way to encourage colleagues to take quick action. They can be established through Sections or Chapters or through other networking opportunities. Remember, these resources need to be in place *before* quick action is required. You won't have enough time to organize a network and put it into action if you wait until you need it.

Social media presents a great opportunity for ongoing engagement. Social media has the benefit of interactivity over older communications tools. It allows you to tap into ongoing conversations and existing networks. It also presents the opportunity to foster relationships with influential people: popular social media users (influencers), public officials, and reporters.

Whatever platform you use, you can engage with friends, followers, and others by sharing news, research, and your own expertise on nursing care for women and newborns. Be prepared to have an ongoing conversation as others comment or ask questions about what you've posted.

Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn make it possible to participate in conversations of otherwise unconnected users by searching for keywords preceded by the “#” symbol called a hashtag in the social media context. To find a conversation to join, search for hashtags such as #maternalhealth, #womenshealth, or #neonatal. Use hashtags in your own social media posts. Everyone following or searching for that hashtag will see your contribution to the conversation.

You can tap into the network of followers of popular social media users, sometimes called influencers, by interacting with them. You may pick up some contacts by doing so.

Just like anyone else, many public officials use social media. This presents another opportunity to engage with them and, perhaps, influence them in their role in making public policy. Track down and connect with the social media profiles of key public officials, such as members of Congress, legislators, the governor, and public health officials. Interact with public officials online to become a familiar and trusted representative of nurses working in women's and newborn's health care. As always on social media, use your interactions with public officials to share news, research, and your expertise.

Many reporters use social media. Interacting with reporters online allows you to pitch to them ideas for stories or quotes that they can use in their articles.

OTHER AWHONN OPPORTUNITIES

AWHONN committees provide an important link between our governing body and our members and experts in the profession. The Public Policy Committee determines priorities. We also have committees for Research Advisory, Membership, Development, Nominating, Finance, Education Advisory, Section Advisory, and Convention Program.

AWHONN's annual public policy conference and lobby day, AWHONN on Capitol Hill, trains nurses to be advocates. It's the perfect training for a Section or Chapter Legislative Coordinator. Participating nurses spend one day being briefed by experts on issues and legislation. The following day, they meet with staff representing their members of Congress to request action on the legislation they were briefed on the day before.

BUILDING COALITIONS

Remember, the whole can be greater than the sum of its parts. AWHONN is one of over 60 associations in the Nursing Community Coalition, which works to enact public policies of common interest to nurses across specialties such as the Nursing Workforce Development Programs. Coalitions arise when a group of people or organizations decide it is in everyone's best interest to work together to accomplish a common goal. Likewise, you can organize a coalition by working with representatives of associations that share your goal.



If a Tree Falls in a Forest and No One is Around to Hear It, Does it Make a Sound?

GETTING YOUR MESSAGE OUT

“Public Issues thrive on ink or die from the lack of it.” — Michael Kronewetter

This chapter will discuss not only how to get a reporter interested in interviewing you, but how a story can be presented in a manner that compels a reporter to run it.

REACHING THE RIGHT AUDIENCES

Widespread publicity can get your story across to the right audience. The media can create high visibility for your health care issues that can have a wildfire effect on legislation. The media dictate the agenda on the Capitol; nothing is more influential in Washington than a front-page story in the Washington Post, New York Times, or Wall Street Journal backing your lobbying effort. Unfortunately, your chances of coming up with a front-page story in the national media may be slim. But if your issue involves a lot of money, affects a lot of people, or involves a threat to the quality of life, it will probably fit somewhere in a newspaper or local television or radio station. If a legislator reads about an issue in a national newspaper, finds it editorialized in a hometown paper, hears it on the radio, or sees it on the evening news, he or she will find the issue hard to ignore. Legislators may not support the issue, or they might have no opinion whatsoever, but they certainly will become aware of it.

With public exposure, the interest in the issue will start to grow. If a constituency builds in a certain legislator’s district, then you have a greater chance of influencing that legislator. It is, therefore, imperative that you focus your media efforts on the local media — the hometown papers of the legislator. Politicians make it a priority to work on projects that command public attention, and public attention comes with news reports. The decision of how and when to break a story is crucial.

IS YOUR STORY NEWSWORTHY?

Newspapers, television, radio, and magazines print or air what its editors or producers perceive to be news. Therefore, try to make your material as newsworthy as possible. According to PBS, journalists rely on the five news values below.¹

- **Timeliness:** the information is current or possesses an angle or slant that makes it seem new.
- **Proximity:** the story has an immediate impact on the audience’s geographic area.
- **Conflict and controversy:** These things attract attention by highlighting problems or differences within a community.

- **Human interest:** the story has a personal appeal that readers can identify with. Often, there is a celebration, complaint, or crisis.
- **Relevance:** the issue affects the daily lives of the audience and can be related effectively from the audience's perspective.

If you send irrelevant material to reporters who do not cover your issue, it will only end up in the trash, wasting your time and money. Call your local newspaper and television and radio stations to find out who regularly covers health issues.

SPEAKING TO THE PRESS: CHOOSING YOUR WORDS

Preparation

The key to communicating effectively to the media and the public is preparation. Before an interview, whether for print or broadcast, ask the reporter what she or he feels is the main subject of the interview and what questions she or he might ask. Decide what your message will be. Write out what you want the public and the opinion leaders to know. Design your message to be delivered in short and simple responses. Your goal at this stage should be to phrase your answers in quotable sentences that communicate your message. Practice saying these points out loud, so they flow naturally, succinctly, and crisply. The message development tips below will help you get started.

Message Development tips

For each major message, supplement and support your statement with specifics to fit your situation.

- First, write a general statement.
- Add supporting data, statistics, or other factual information.
- Add a personal or local example, also called anecdotal information.

In developing your message for an interview, also prepare a message for questions you don't wish to discuss. For all interviews, you must expect questions on issues you want to avoid. You should prepare positive responses that lead back to your agenda or message. It is also wise for you to research the media outlet before the interview, especially if it is a radio or television interview. Find out the format of the show. Is it taped or live? Will other guests be discussing this subject, or is it a one-on-one interview? This information will help you understand what to expect during the interview.

Delivery

For radio interviews, pay attention to your voice, tone, and inflection. Radio listeners can't see you, so use inflection in your voice to add variety and meaning to your comments. Be aware of your overall pace. Your message will lose its impact if you talk too fast or too slow.

During television interviews, be mindful of your body language and appearance. Maintain eye contact with the person conducting the interview. Also, remember to smile if appropriate; a smile communicates confidence and sincerity. To emphasize a point, use pauses or change to a louder or softer tone. Wear solid colors. Avoid large earrings, necklaces, large bows, puffy sleeves, and distracting ties. Broadcast interviews are usually taped, edited, and aired later. Therefore, if you make a major mistake during an interview — one that alters the meaning of your message — pause, restate the word or phrase correctly and continue. Another option is to tell the reporter you need to correct something you said earlier. There is no need to apologize, just continue on at a relaxed, steady pace.

If your issue or media effort warrants a press conference, there are some key points to remember about message delivery. Should your plans include delivering a prepared statement at the press conference, don't "read" it from the page. Instead, check your notes, pause silently, and absorb the next thought, look up, and begin speaking. Practice this beforehand. This technique may feel awkward at first, but practicing will help you look like you are conversing with the audience.

One of the greatest threats to success in your local media effort is saying more than is necessary to the media. *Never* say anything "off the record." If you don't want something aired or in print, then you should not discuss it *at all*. Be honest if you do not know the answer to a question. Your credibility is crucial, and you do not want to jeopardize it. Be brief in your answers, keeping them short and simple. You'll look and sound better if you get right to the point. Speak convincingly. Don't be afraid to pause. Every time you open your mouth,

look and sound as if you really care. Relax, and remember that you prepared! Some other tips for special situations may be helpful.

Additional Delivery Tips

Don't back away from an aggressive reporter. If a radio or television reporter sticks a microphone in your face, don't back away. You'll look defensive and intimidated. Instead, stand your ground. Eventually, the reporter will have to back off to make sure the microphone is an appropriate distance from your face for sound clarity.

Never answer a question with "no comment." Always explain to the reporter why you can't answer the question. For example, say, "That is not my area of expertise or responsibility," or "I will get back to you when we have prepared a statement or have more information on that." Whenever possible, follow your explanation with information you *can* talk about, such as policies and procedures already in place.

Identify Yourself as a Nurse

In every phrase of dealing with the media, make sure you identify yourself as a nurse. Identifying yourself as a nurse gives credibility to your argument and shows your expertise. It also helps to educate the public and legislators about the role of the nurse in the health care system. When the public and the media think of health care, they think of medicine. Let's change that! Health professionals identified in the media will usually be presumed to be a physician unless noted otherwise. Many people are unaware of the range of nursing specialties vital to the public's welfare and look mostly to physicians for health care education. Use your nursing background to educate the public. There are many ways to achieve this end.

Before the Interview

Before or after the interview, tell the reporter you would like your affiliation to be nursing related. For example, rather than the name of the college or university alone, include "School of Nursing;" state you are a "member of the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses;" or include any other applicable nursing affiliation. Tell the reporter you also wish to be referred to in news stories as "family nurse practitioner," "labor and delivery nurse," "neonatal intensive care nurse," "advanced practice nurse," "certified nurse-midwife," "mother-baby nurse," or another nursing specialty.

During the Interview

Use the word "nurse" or "nursing" in every response you can. For example, begin a response with, "As a nurse, I see..." or "After years as a nurse, I've found that..." or "The Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses has examined this issue and found that..."

While you can speak to the press on any board-approved policy, position, or document, be careful not to imply that AWHONN has taken or endorsed a position unless it has done so. It is ideal to notify AWHONN in advance that you will be speaking to the press. Inquiries to advocacy@awhonn.org will be responded to quickly.

Always keep in mind as you pursue media attention that nursing education, research, and funding can all benefit from the influence media visibility can bring. Your media efforts must, therefore, have a twofold approach — reaching legislatures and educating the public.

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS AND OP-EDS

Publicize your own opinion on an issue by writing a letter to the editor in the hometown papers of the appropriate legislator. Letters to the editor are responses to stories or editorials the newspaper or magazine has recently printed. Your views may confirm or oppose the previous point of view in the article to which you are responding. Getting your letter into a newspaper or magazine is no easy task. Each week, editorial departments receive thousands of unsolicited written communications, most of which do not get past the scanning process. To survive the first cut in the daily editorial triage at any large newspaper or magazine, your issue must be newsworthy, of real interest to a large portion of the readership, timely, and well-written.

Your letter should be no more than one page consisting of four or five paragraphs. Do not assume the readers have any prior knowledge of the article to which you are responding. Refer in the first sentence to the published article and then move on to your point. Be sure not to use acronyms, medical jargon, or abbreviations. Your letter will have a greater impact and increase its chances of being featured in the "Letters to the Editor" section if you include with your signature your organization affiliation, credentials, title, or other

information that shows your expertise on the subject (skills, education, published books, or articles). Send your editorial to the editorial page editor or for small newspapers, to the publisher.

Newspapers also present an opportunity to make a request of an elected official in front of the public. The staff who work for members of Congress are known to read the opinion sections of the newspapers published in their districts. Letters to the editor present the easiest opportunity to get your ask in front of the public. Papers will publish most of the letters that are submitted to them as long as they are within the paper's word limit.

Op-eds (short for "opposite the editorial page" where they have traditionally been printed) are longer than letters to the editor and receive a higher profile. Newspapers are selective about publishing an op-ed. If one newspaper turns down your submission, then try submitting it to another newspaper. For both letters to the editor and op-eds, check the newspaper's word limit before submitting it.



You Can Make a Decision. What Kind of Advocate Do You Want to Be?

“Whether you think that you can, or that you can’t, you are usually right.” — Henry Ford

If you are reading this handbook, you must care about policies that affect the nursing profession and health care delivery to your patients. You have seen that you can limit your activity to a few letters or phone calls a year or become a Section or Chapter leader who mobilizes colleagues: the choice is up to you. You have the power to decide to stand up for patient care and nurses, and only you can determine your level of involvement. Whatever you decide, know that every letter or phone call to a public official means that the voice of nurses is being heard and that you are making a difference.

In a classic grassroots manual, *Personal Political Power — How Ordinary People Get What They Want from Government*, Joel Blackwell identifies three levels of involvement in the political process: rookie, pro, and hall of famer.²

Levels of Political Involvement:

Rookie

- Make first contact with an elected official.
- Deliver the organization’s message.
- Understand the need for accuracy.
- Respond to action alerts.
- Believe lobbying is honorable and effective.
- Become personally effective.

Pro

- Build a personal relationship.
- Call and write frequently.
- Become industry information source.
- Report to headquarters and discuss results.
- Participate in campaigns; give money.
- Recruit others to lobby.

Hall of Famer

- Become a trusted advisor to an elected official.

2

Blackwell, J. (2001). *Personal Political Power – How Ordinary People Get What They Want from Government*

- Be a resource for information, opinion.
- Testify at hearings and talk with media.
- Gather intelligence and spot trends; find allies for a coalition.

Ask yourself where you fit in now, and where you want to fit in. Then you will be off and running!

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APPENDIX A

OP-EDS

Larcile White: Too many American moms are dying, and Sen. James Lankford can make a difference

By Larcile White Dec 9, 2018

https://www.tulsaworld.com/opinion/larcile-white-too-many-american-moms-are-dying-and-sen/article_d70ef2d3-311f-5b88-a966-64e0471d55d3.html



Why are moms dying? Pregnancy is one of the most common health conditions and yet, it is one of the most dangerous. Recent reporting in national media has brought the epidemic of pregnancy-related deaths front and center of the national dialogue.

The rate of severe illness and death among pregnant women is incredibly high in the U.S. compared to other developed countries. According to a study published in 2014 in *The Lancet*, the United States is one of only eight countries that has a rising maternal mortality and morbidity rate, ranking 49th out of 184 countries for maternal deaths.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines a pregnancy-related death as the death of a woman during pregnancy or within one year of the end of pregnancy from a pregnancy complication, a chain of events initiated by pregnancy or the aggravation of an unrelated condition by the physiologic effects of pregnancy. Women of color, specifically African-American women, are 3 to 4 times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than white women. In 2011, the CDC reported that the maternal mortality rate for non-Hispanic white women was 12.5 deaths per 100,000 births compared with 42.8 deaths per 100,000 births for non-Hispanic black women.

Mothers are dying from pregnancy and pregnancy-related complications right here in Oklahoma. The March of Dimes Peristats analyzed vital statistics and found that for every 100,000 live births, Oklahoma has an average of 23.9 maternal deaths. In comparison, for the same time period, 2003-2007, Illinois averaged a maternal mortality rate of 5.8 per 100,000 live births, and the United States, as a whole, averaged 13.3 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. The Oklahoma State Department of Health estimates the maternal mortality rate is closer to 27 deaths per 100,000. Even when you break down the deaths into sub-categories based on demographics, Oklahoma is outpacing national averages in the worst way. Any severe illness or death from pregnancy is unacceptable.

Pregnancy and childbirth are complicated and complex; no two people have the exact same pregnancy experience. Pregnancy-related and pregnancy-associated deaths are caused by a variety of factors, from complications like pre-eclampsia, hemorrhage or infection, to mental health conditions. When a mother dies, health care professionals need to be able to understand fully what happened, to prevent it happening to another mom.

While professional organizations in the nursing community work to develop best standards, eradicating maternal mortality is not a responsibility that falls solely on one profession. There must be a collaborative effort between health care professionals, public health officials and lawmakers. Maternal mortality review committees, interdisciplinary panels of experts who review pregnancy-related deaths and recommend solutions to prevent them, have been shown to lead to reduction in the maternal mortality rate.

U.S. Sen. James Lankford is in a position to aid passage of S 1112, the Maternal Health Accountability Act. This bill would authorize funds for states to establish formal maternal mortality review committees, to identify and review all pregnancy-related and pregnancy-associated deaths, to submit annual reports to the CDC on findings and to recommend solutions.

This bill and a companion bill both enjoy broad bipartisan support. The Senate committees assigned to this bill recommended approval to the full Senate in June, but the clock is running out before the end of the 115th Congress. I ask Lankford to support the Maternal Health Accountability Act and see that it is advanced to a Senate floor vote during the lame duck session.

Larcile White is a neonatal nurse and the legislative coordinator for the Oklahoma Section of the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses. She lives in Tulsa.

APPENDIX B

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Hospital's response ignored staffing ratios

By Carol McIlhenny Jun 10, 2017

https://www.tribdem.com/news/editorials/readers_forum/letter-to-the-editor-hospital-s-response-ignored-staffing-ratios/article_bec0263c-4d38-11e7-ad9b-6f7ef1f391c6.html

Regarding the thoughtful response from Amy Bradley, Conemaugh's director of marketing ("Conemaugh adding staff to meet needs") to my original letter of May 7 in the Readers' Forum, her responses were all true. They addressed issues of safety of the woman/child service line.

But the responses did not directly address appropriate registered nurse staffing ratios at the bedside for the inpatient maternity unit.

In my original letter, I referred to the Association for Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses safety standards but did not cite an example. One example recommended by the organization is that women in active labor should receive one-to-one nursing care regardless of risk.

The current staffing pattern is double that. Nurses are routinely assigned two patients regardless of risk. In fairness, nursing leadership does attempt to assign patients equitably.

Consequences of inadequate staffing include: missed care and failure to rescue, among others (Simpson, Lyndon & Ruhl, 2016). Missed care refers to tasks being delayed or left undone. These can lead to emergent situations that may be overlooked (failure to rescue).

Our hospital's leadership is not observing these staffing guidelines for patient safety – at the expense of mothers and newborns – to meet productivity standards set by Duke LifePoint, regardless of potential adverse consequences.

See "Consequences of inadequate staffing include missed care, potential failure to rescue, and job stress and dissatisfaction" in the Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic & Neonatal Nursing, 45(4), 481–490.

Carol McIlhenny
Johnstown

APPENDIX C

LETTER TO A PUBLIC OFFICIAL

Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses



November 8, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator McConnell,

As constituents of yours, Bekah, a survivor of preeclampsia and HELLP (hemolysis, elevated liver enzymes, and low platelet count) syndrome related to childbirth, and Dr. Parker, a certified registered nurse anesthetist who specializes in obstetric anesthesia and a member of the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses, we ask that you bring S 1112, the Maternal Health Accountability Act to the Senate floor for a vote. This bill is non-controversial and is supported by a majority of senators.

AWHONN supports the companion bills HR 1318, the Preventing Maternal Deaths Act, and S 1112, the Maternal Health Accountability Act, because maternal mortality review committees have been shown to lead to a reduction in the maternal mortality rate. These bills would provide funds for states to establish formal Maternal Mortality Review Committees, identify and review all pregnancy-related and pregnancy-associated deaths, and submit annual reports to the CDC on the committee's findings and recommendations for solutions.

Severe maternal illness and death rates remain remarkably high in the United States compared to other developed countries. The United States ranks 49th out of 184 countries for maternal deaths and is one of eight countries where rates are on the rise.¹ The rates are even higher for women of color. African American women are three to four times as likely to die from pregnancy-related causes as white women.² Kentucky has an average of 8.1 maternal deaths for every 100,000 live births.

The Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses represents 350,000 nurses who are clinically active in hospitals, perinatal facilities, and health centers. If you have any questions or desire to further discuss these issues, please contact AWHONN Government Affairs Director Seth Chase at schase@awhonn.org or 202-261-2427.

Sincerely,

Bekah Bischoff

Cheryl Parker, DNP, CRNA, RNC-OB

¹ <http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736%2814%2960696-6/fulltext>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternalinfanthealth/pregnancy-relatedmortality.htm>

APPENDIX D

MEETING WITH A PUBLIC OFFICIAL

Meeting with an Elected Official

In-person meetings with elected officials are widely regarded as the most effective way for constituents to influence elected officials. You don't have to travel to Washington DC to meet your US representative and senators. Members of Congress return to their states and districts several times each year. In general, they leave Washington, DC for religious and federal holidays, as well as the month of August. Staffers are available to meet when Congress is in session in DC. By speaking out on behalf of women and newborns, you can serve as a valuable source of information for your elected leaders and their staff.

Requesting the Visit

The most effective way of securing an appointment is to be specific about the purpose of the meeting — which issue you want to discuss, a bill number if you are meeting about legislation, and that you are a constituent and a nurse.

- Identify your federal elected officials by visiting the AWHONN Legislative Action Center. You will find an elected officials lookup (AWHONN.org>Get Involved>Advocate>Take Action>Elected Officials Lookup). Each elected official has a profile that includes their office phone number. Visit the individual web pages of your members of Congress for a list of all of their offices.
- Identify the office location that is best suited to your needs and call it. Identify yourself as a constituent and a nurse and ask to speak to the scheduler to set-up a meeting.
- Once connected to the scheduler, again identify yourself as a constituent and a nurse and say that you would like to request a meeting with the member of Congress to discuss “XYZ.” Keep your request to one specific issue.
- Consider going to the meeting with a small team of nurses or other health care experts to better drive home your key messages.

Prepare for the Meeting

- Once you have scheduled an appointment, contact AWHONN government affairs staff at advocacy@awhonn.org for talking points and the most up-to-date status on legislation.
- Do your research. Learn about your elected officials' voting record and statements on AWHONN issues. Become familiar with the views and arguments on both sides of the issue. Arm yourself with research, polling data, news clips, and op-eds to support your position.
- Browse your legislator's website. It will feature a biography, key policy initiatives, committee assignments, and recent speeches.

At the Meeting

- Members of Congress have very full schedules. Keep in mind:
 - If you are even a few minutes late, you may miss an opportunity to meet. Plan to arrive five to ten minutes early.
 - You will likely have no more than 15 minutes. Be polite and succinct.
 - Schedules change. Be flexible.
 - You may meet with an aide. This is fairly common; do not be disappointed. These aides are often experts in their respective fields and advise the elected official how to vote.
- Bring your business card to the meeting. Exchange cards with each of the meeting participants.
- Provide a letter that summarizes the issue, your position and clearly states what you are asking of the elected official. You could also leave a fact sheet to present relevant data.
- Have talking points. Make your position clear and keep the meeting focused.
- Make a clear ask. Are you asking for the elected official to vote for or against a bill? If your meeting consists of a group, decide beforehand who will present the talking points and who will make the ask. Remember to use stories from your experience with patients to highlight your key messages.
- If you are asked a question and you do not know the answer, it is best to say, “I don't know, but I will find out and get back to you.”
- At the end the meeting, establish an agreement on when you should follow up and with whom, and then be sure to do so.

- If you have agreed to provide information (e.g., a copy of a report, letter, statistic, or newspaper article) after a visit, be prompt and accurate in sending the information.
- Ask if the legislator is hosting any nearby roundtables on health care issues or town hall forums. Consider attending.
- Don't be shy. Ask to take a photo with the legislator.

After the Meeting

- Follow up after the meeting with a quick email thanking the elected official, any attending staffers, and other participants for their time. Offer yourself as a resource in the future.
- Maintain the relationship by attending town hall meetings or other forums where you will have an opportunity to interact.
- Consider a follow-up meeting(s).

APPENDIX E

GETTING STARTED ON ADVOCACY WORKSHEET

My two US senators are:

1. _____

- Democratic
- Republican
- Independent

Committee and subcommittee assignments and position on each (member, ranking member, or chair)

2. _____

- Democratic
- Republican
- Independent

Committee and subcommittee assignments and position on each (member, ranking member, or chair)

My congressional district is: _____

My US Representative is: _____

- Democratic
- Republican
- Independent

Committee and subcommittee assignments and position on each (member, ranking member, or chair)

The governor of my state is: _____

The largest newspaper serving my area is: _____

APPENDIX F

SECTION LEGISLATIVE COORDINATOR DESCRIPTION

Title:	Legislative Coordinator
Term:	Appointed by Section Chair. No limit to length of term or reappointment.
Core Functions:	The Legislative Coordinator represents the Association and the Section to policy-makers and acts as a liaison between the Association government affairs staff, the Section and public officials.

Responsibilities:

- Develop and manage relationships between the Section and the state's 2 US senators. Report outcome to AWHONN government affairs (advocacy@awhonn.org).
- Participate in periodic national conference calls for legislative coordinators.

Also consider taking on the following activities on behalf of your Section:

- Track legislation in your state legislature that impacts the AWHONN federal policy agenda and advocate as appropriate.
- Recruit AWHONN members to develop and manage relationships with the state's US representatives.
- Plan a lobby day focused on the state legislature. This could be at the state house or a virtual lobby day.
- Speak at Section and chapter conferences, nursing schools, and other organizations about AWHONN's Legislative and Policy Agenda and legislation that supports AWHONN's agenda.
- Write periodic reports for Section.
- Represent Section in coalitions working on nursing healthcare and maternal, newborn and women's health.
- Manage relationship with state legislators (key committee chairs and leadership) and the state administration.

Prerequisites:

- Legislative coordinators should have attended AWHONN on Capitol Hill or plan to do so within the first year of their term(s).

Jan. 31, 2019

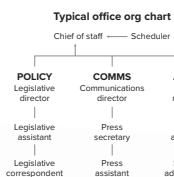
Who's Who in a Congressional Member's Office

BY TODD LINDEMAN AND TAYLOR MILLER THOMAS, POLITICO PRO DATAPOINT

According to the Congressional Management Foundation's 2017 report that surveyed senior congressional staffers, in-person visits to a member's Washington, D.C. office are the most effective advocacy strategy that can positively influence lawmakers who are undecided on an issue.

To catch face time with an on the go Senator or Representative, face-to-face meetings require a written request. Appointment requests are handled by the scheduler, who works to get bookings on the crowded calendar. The scheduler is one of about a dozen people working in the D.C. office who play vital roles in shaping policy, communicating the office's positions and keeping the member on track. The staff is "often more knowledgeable of individual issues than the legislators themselves," says Robert Longley of ThoughtCo.

During fly-ins, these staffers serve as the face of the office, and the eyes and ears of the member. Visiting constituents or groups will typically have access to only the staff, such as a legislative member, and not the lawmaker themselves — the staff, however, will relay constituents' views and materials to the lawmaker for their consideration. **Key positions on a lawmaker's staff.**

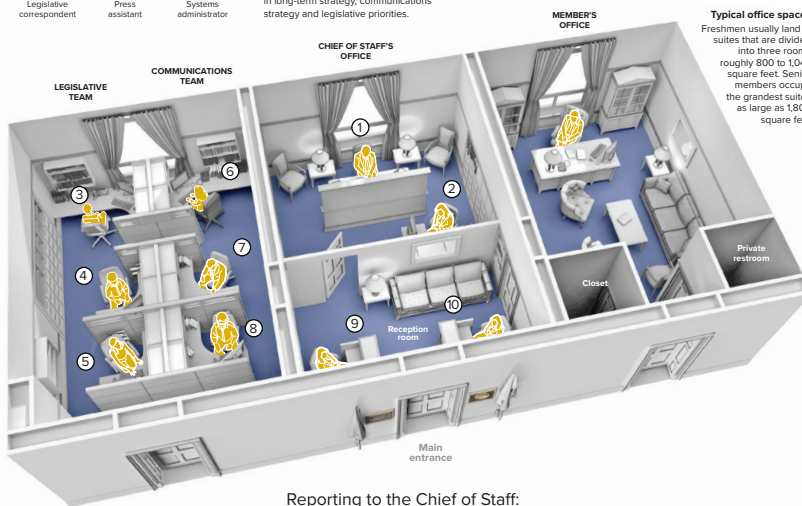


1 Chief of staff

The "Number One" in any office. The chief is responsible for how the office functions — they establish office policies and procedures. The chief oversees staffing decisions, manages employees and handles day-to-day responsibilities, including budget and press. The chief, who advises the member on political matters, plays an important role in long-term strategy, communications strategy and legislative priorities.

2 Scheduler

Also called scheduling director, the executive assistant is the axis of every congressional office. He or she is responsible for scheduling the member's engagements and works directly with the chief. The director allows time for the communications and legislative teams to meet with the member, organizes and books travel plans, knows the fundraising scheduler and assists with the office's finances. They review invitations to speak at or attend certain events and help plan the member's travel back home.



Typical office spaces
Freshmen usually land in suites that are divided into three rooms, roughly 800 to 1,047 square feet. Senior members occupy the grandest suites, as large as 1,800 square feet.

Reporting to the Chief of Staff:



POLICY TEAM

Researches, drafts, communicates about legislation and informs the member on a range of issues before Congress and in committee.

3 Legislative director

Manages the member's legislative portfolio and priorities and manages the legislative assistants and correspondents. They work directly with the member to establish priorities and strategy. The legislative director is in charge of vote recommendations, creating new legislation and running the legislation through committee hearings.

THE POLICY TEAM MAY ALSO INCLUDE:

4 Legislative assistant

The assistant, a senior position on the team, conducts research on legislation and handles mail. An office may have multiple legislative assistants that handle different issue areas or priorities of the member's policy and legislative portfolio.

5 Legislative correspondent

Researches legislation and issue areas. Often, they report to legislative assistants. They also draft correspondence to constituents who write in to the member with questions about policy.



COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

Manages media requests, executes a strategy that communicates what the team is doing and raises awareness about issues that are important to the member's constituents.

6 Communications director

Implements the member's communications strategy and manages the press team. The director handles television interviews, press releases, social media and print media. Either the comms director or the press secretary may serve as the formal spokesperson and may speak on the record about a member's policies and plans.

Some chiefs are heavily involved in communication, while others give the comms director free rein.

THE COMMS TEAM MAY ALSO INCLUDE:

7 Press secretary

Fields media requests and assists in executing media strategy. They report to the communications director and may also work with the press assistant. The press secretary may be responsible for drafting the member's speeches and other remarks.

Depending on size of a member's district or state, or their role in congressional leadership, a member may have multiple press secretaries or a deputy press secretary who reports to the press secretary.

8 Press assistant

Works with the press secretary on media requests and outreach, and can also send releases and pitch media for coverage. The press assistant may also be tasked with compiling press clippings which mention the member or concern issues that are important to the member's district, state or legislative portfolio.



OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

Works to keep the office organized and accountable to the member and constituents. Roles may vary slightly from office to office.

9 Office manager

Oversees office needs, which could include managing supplies, HR, ensuring compliance with House rules and other labor rules, managing paperwork and other compliance matters on mailings, employment and related matters. They may supervise staff assistants and others who work on office administration.

OTHER POSITIONS:

10 Staff assistants

Answer phones, handle word processing, filing and faxing. They welcome visitors in the reception area and handle other general requests, such as flag and tour requests, from constituents. They are often the first person to greet visitors to the member's office.

11 Systems administrator (not shown above)

Oversees physical technology (computers, printers, smartphones), software, cybersecurity and the office's other technological needs. The admin may manage subscriptions and passwords, and ensures that the office aligns with House guidelines for technology and other rules.

Note: Organization charts vary by Congress member.

Sources: Congressional Management Foundation's 2017 report "Citizen-Centric Advocacy: The Untapped Power of Constituent Engagement," ThoughtCo; ACLU; American Speech-Language-Hearing Association and NPR



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