

# What to Expect in a Meeting with Your Representative

## ENTER THE OFFICE, CHECK IN WITH STAFF, & GREETINGS

DPAC will have already made your appointment and confirmed it before you arrive. When you (or all of your group members) get to the representative's office, go in and tell the staffer closest to you who you are, who you're with (DPAC), and who your appointment is with. You may have to wait a few minutes before the person makes it up to greet you. If you're meeting with staff, you can call them by their first name, but be sure to address representatives by their title - Representative [last name] or Senator [last name]. Once you have a good relationship with your representative, it may be appropriate to drop the title, but err on the side of formality.

## DISCUSSING YOUR ISSUE

After some initial small talk, it'll be time for you to present your issue and tell why it should be important to your representative. Your discussion could go something like this:

1. **Say a (brief) statement of what your issue is, why it's important, and why it's important to you specifically.** Example: "Today I'd like to talk about non-medical switching, which makes people change medications they're stable on for no reason other than cost savings. I was affected by non-medical switching when my insurance plan switched my insulin last year."
2. **Present the materials you brought with you.** If you present your written materials early, not only does the representative have a chance to review documents that back up what you are saying, they can also come up with questions to ask you that are not addressed in the literature. Plus, if you get stuck, you can glance at the materials to help get you back on track! When you hand over the materials, tell the representative what each document is.
3. **Present the data.** Give the facts of the issue (and just the facts, ma'am) so that the representative can get an idea of the size and scope of the issue. Make sure your facts have accurate sources that you can share with the representative if he or she asks.
4. **Tell your story.** Why are you there? Why does this issue matter to you? Those questions should be answered by the time you're done sharing your story. Remember that the representative does not have a lot of time, so keep your story brief. Remember also that the representative might not know the jargon you use. Instead of saying "CGM," try to say "continuous glucose monitor" - and make sure to explain what that is!

5. **Share your solution and make The Ask.** Now that you've outlined the problem, give your solution! The 'ask' is the action you want the representative to take. This could be cosponsoring a bill, introducing legislation, writing a letter to a regulatory agency, or many other things. This is the most crucial part of the meeting - make your ask clear and strong! Don't be discouraged if the representative cannot make a firm commitment during your meeting; that doesn't mean you haven't impacted their thinking.
6. **Close the meeting and describe how you'll follow up.** Thank the representative for their time and offer to give them more information if they want it. Explain that you'll follow up with them in the following week to see if they've made any progress on the issue. If you're meeting with a representative (not staff), ask for a picture and share it with DPAC!
7. **Get a business card if meeting with staff.** Usually business cards will be in a holder by the door, so you can grab one on your way out. Having a business card will make follow up easier, and will be just one more indicator to the staff that you took this meeting seriously.

## WRITE DOWN YOUR IMPRESSION OF THE MEETING

You did it! Hopefully your visit went very well and you're feeling the glow of success. Before that glow wears off, jot down a few notes on how the meeting went. Be sure to note if you're supposed to send any specific follow-up information, whether the representative made any specific promises, and any anecdotes or topics the representative seemed particularly interested in that you can use to personalize your thank you note later.

## TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- **The discussion outlined above doesn't change if you meet with a member of staff.** Staffers have the representative's ear on issues, so if you can convince a staffer to see your perspective, they'll tell the representative why they should do what you asked!
- **Don't get thrown off your game if the representative asks questions.** Questions are good- they mean the representative is listening to you and thinking about what you're saying! Even if the representative's questioning means you don't get through everything you wanted to say, it's ok. As long as you've made The Ask, you've successfully completed the goal of the meeting.

### We're meeting WHERE?!

Government buildings often do not have a lot of space for staff. It is common, especially in Washington DC, to have meetings in the hallways of buildings. This is not an insult! The staff doesn't think you're 'not worthy' of being in the office; they may just be out of room. Your meeting strategy does not have to change just because you're not where you expected to be- you can still hit all your talking points and show your materials the same way you would if you were in a traditional office.