



Working With Legislators

Every day, lawmakers, whether they are in Congress, in a state legislature, or in your own city council, make decisions that impact us all.

One of the most important things we can do to help our clients get the care they need is to **tell our client stories to the government officials who make decisions about home health care.**

Occasionally, Hearts for Home Care will reach out to you to see if you would be willing to contact to your elected officials, attend a meeting, write a letter, or tell a client story. Communicating with government officials can be intimidating, but we are here to help.

We've included some basic guidelines, so we can all better represent our company and serve our clients.

Tips for communicating with legislators

One of the greatest things about living in America is that we can have a direct influence on the people who make our laws. It is important to contact the legislator from your district as lawmakers like to hear from the people they represent.

There are lots of ways to get in touch with your legislators:



Write a letter, email, or a fax message



Make a phone call



Speak out on social media



Set up an in-person meeting

Whichever method you choose, there are a few important things to keep in mind:

- Be polite
- Keep it short and simple
- Talk from experience
- Share a story to put a face on the issue
- Be professional
- Be honest and always follow up





Letters, emails, and faxes

If you choose to write a letter, email, or fax, try and stick to the following guidelines:

Honorable [LEGISLATOR'S NAME]
[ADDRESS]
[DATE]

Dear [SENATOR OR REPRESENTATIVE] [LAST NAME]:

Part 1: Include the reason you are writing in the first sentence. Example: *"I am writing to urge your support for increased funding for Medicaid home and community-based services as provided by HB 1436."*

Part 2: Tell your personal story about how the issue impacts your ability to provide, or your clients' ability to receive, home health care. If you have statistics to back up what you are saying, include them after you tell your story.

Important Tip: Only talk about one issue in your message—trying to do too much can be confusing.

Part 3: Offer to meet with the legislator or one of their staff to answer questions or provide more information.

Part 4: Say again why you are writing, and urge them to support your position.

Closing: *Thank you for your time and consideration.*

Sincerely,
[YOUR NAME]
[TITLE]



Social media

Social media is an easy way to connect with your elected officials. Below are some tips to make your social media messages more effective:

- Make your messages personal—let your elected official know why you care about home health care.
- Ask your friends, family members, and followers to comment too. Multiple comments on an issue can grab the attention of elected officials and their staff.



Phone calls

An easy way to connect with your elected official is by making a phone call to their office. When you make a call, remember the following:

- Ask to speak with the legislator. If they aren't available, ask for the staff member who handles health issues. In Pennsylvania, constituents must first speak with the chief of operations before they are able to connect with their legislator.
- Make sure to let them know you live in their district.
- If you don't talk to the legislator, tell the staff member you wish to leave a message for them (for example: "Please tell Senator Smith...").
- Tell them your reasons for supporting or opposing the bill or issue you are calling about.
- Ask for the legislator's position on the bill or issue. Keep in mind that he or she may not have an official position at the time, which is okay.
- Thank the legislator or staff member for their time and attention to the issue.





Meeting with legislators

Preparing for your meeting

It's important that you have all your information and materials ready for your meeting—and you know what you are going to say. Below are some tips on how to get ready.

- Before you can meet with your legislator to discuss home health care, you must first send them a meeting request for when they are in their district or state (if you are meeting with them in a state capital or in Washington, D.C., update the request accordingly). While you can always call a legislator's office to schedule a meeting, making a formal request by email or letter is preferred. A sample letter can be found [here](#) that you can fill in and use to schedule your meeting(s).
- It's important that Hearts for Home Care keep track of who meets with which legislator, and when. Please let your state GAO director or advocacy@heartsforhomecare.com know about your meeting well before the scheduled date.
- It is important to know the issue you are meeting about. Your state GAO can provide you with talking points and information to help you prepare.
- It's also a good idea to prepare a packet of information to give to your legislator, and to take some time to read over it to prepare for the meeting. We suggest using a folder to hold the materials, including:
 - Your office marketing brochure and business card
 - Any fact sheets about the issue
 - Any other important materials (for example: a home health care case study)
- One of the best ways to talk about the importance of home health care is through personal and client stories. It's a good idea to prepare a story beforehand so you have it ready to go when you meet with your legislator. Below are some questions you can ask yourself to help bring your story together.
 - Why is this issue important?
 - Have you or one of your clients personally experienced the issue you are speaking to the legislator about?
 - How can you connect your thoughts/experiences on the issue to what you know about the legislator you are meeting with and/or their district or state?
- Write out the key thoughts you want to communicate to your legislator. Try and focus on your personal experiences, and **your** commitment to providing the best care for clients from the comfort of their homes.

Meeting tips

Here are some things to keep in mind in advance of your meeting:

- Legislators are most interested in hearing from their constituents: after all, you decide if they get to keep their job on Election Day.
- Call them by their title and last name (for example: "Senator Jones" or "Representative Smith"), unless they tell you to do otherwise.
- The best way to get our message across is to keep it simple—and be personal. Talk about **your** commitment to providing the best possible care at home. Feel free to share personal stories about clients and how our work impacts their needs. If you are given information about a particular issue before the meeting, use this to help guide the conversation.
- If a client is with you, make sure that they know what you are going to say and how you are going to say it.



Meeting tips (continued)

- Expect the meeting to last 10 to 15 minutes. Legislators have very busy schedules, so try to be respectful of their time. Be sure to arrive on time, but know it's not unusual for a legislator to have to cancel at the last minute. If this happens, ask to meet with a member of their staff instead.
- Remember, it's always better to answer a question with "I don't know, but I will get you that information" than it is to try and "wing it."
- If more than one employee is going to the meeting, decide beforehand who will speak for the group (at least at first).
- Always introduce yourself, even if you have met the legislator many times.
- Remember to thank them for their time and attention to the issue.
- Before you leave, also make sure you give the legislator your business card and any materials you want them to review.
- It's always a good idea to send a follow-up letter after meeting with a legislator. A sample letter you can fill in and use after your meeting(s) can be found here. If you end up meeting with a staff member, be sure to take the "Honorable" out before their name—you can just address the letter to their full name, and then refer to them as Senator, Representative, etc., and then their last name for the rest of the letter.

Tell us how it went

After your meeting, it would be great if you would let us know how it went. The best and easiest way to do this is by emailing your state GAO director and advocacy@heartsforhomecare.com. Be sure to tell us who attended the meeting, how long it lasted, how it went, and if we need to follow up with the legislator.

Ready to get started?

You work tirelessly to provide your clients with exceptional care at home, and are truly led by your hearts. We're here to help you tell your story. Please contact us with any and all questions you have about communicating with legislators by emailing us at advocacy@heartsforhomecare.com.

Example communications

Please tailor the letters below to best fit your needs, and to accurately describe the types of services your office provides.

Sample district meeting request letter

Honorable [LEGISLATOR'S NAME]
[ADDRESS]
[DATE]

Dear [SENATOR OR REPRESENTATIVE] [LAST NAME]:

I would like the opportunity to meet with in you in your district office to discuss [BRIEFLY DESCRIBE ISSUE]. I would also like to talk to you about the value of home health care in general.

I understand that you have a busy schedule; I would only need about 15 minutes of your time.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
[YOUR NAME]
[TITLE]



Sample follow-up letter

Honorable [LEGISLATOR'S NAME]
[ADDRESS]
[DATE]

Dear [SENATOR OR REPRESENTATIVE] [LAST NAME]:

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you during [EVENT] in [PLACE].

We were pleased to be able to speak with you about the importance of home health care and [BRIEFLY MENTION THE SPECIFIC ISSUE YOU DISCUSSED].

Home health care is a great option for many people, and is effective in reducing health care costs. Home health care services are less costly than equivalent services provided in institutional settings, yet can often provide better outcomes for seriously ill individuals. When the option is available, most people prefer home care. We would like to see more people have access to home health care services.

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us. We look forward to your support in helping deliver quality home health care services to your constituents.

Sincerely,
[YOUR NAME]
[TITLE]

