

Expect a meeting that's "short and sweet".

Fifteen minutes is the normal length of a meeting with legislators and/or staff. Don't take it personally or as a sign that the staffer doesn't care about your issue - be prepared to make the points you want to make in that time frame. And make sure to arrive for your meeting on time if not early!

Don't be disappointed if your appointment is with a staff person rather than the legislator.

Staff are critical members of the legislative team, providing the legislator with advice and information on specific issue areas, such as health care or women's issues. Building a strong relationship with staffers can be very productive, especially since they may work for several legislators over time or even run for office themselves one day!

Be prepared for anything and be gracious!

Mistakes in scheduling happen, staffers get called away, offices erupt with unexpected disruptions. If something happens, assume the best intentions and ask what would be convenient for the individual with whom you were meeting. Be mindful that a lot of offices are very small and cannot accommodate a lot of people. Some offices will have multiple groups showing up at the same time. Sometimes you may end up having a meeting in the hallway or crammed into a little office. In these cases, it's best to get straight to the point and keep the meeting short.

Make sure your team is clear about the points you want to cover in the meeting and who will speak to each point.

Make sure constituents (this will probably be YOU!) get to talk, but remember that every person in the meeting does not have to speak to every point being discussed. Be clear, be concise, be compelling, and don't forget to go for the "ask!" For example, "Do you think that you can support a bill to remove physician supervision for CNMs in California?"

Be ready to step up or step back.

Legislative visits are most effective when several different people share their perspectives on an issue. No one person or organization should dominate the conversation. Think about whether you are someone who usually talks a lot or someone who doesn't talk at all - and be prepared to step Up or step Back as needed to make sure everyone gets to participate!

Say thank you.

Don't forget to express appreciation for taking the time to meet with you! After the meeting, send a hand written note of thanks with contact information for any follow up questions.