Hill Day 101 – Planning for your Meetings

What is Legislative Advocacy?

* Advocacy can be challenging because there is no one set way of doing it – where to begin/what is effective and can be changed!
* Nonprofit advocacy can mean different things to different people
* Advocacy is about speaking out and making the case for something important.
* Everyone can be an advocate!

Why Talk to Congress?

* Everyone in US has 2 senators and 1 representative. We get to vote for them, so really, we are their bosses, and we should feel encouraged to share our views and ask for their support.
* Whether virtual or in-person, it is critical to take a few mins to meet with your US senators and representatives.
* Congress wants to meet with you too – they have been elected to serve the same kids you serve each day.
* Annual Hill Day meetings are an opportunity to do just that by giving CACs an opportunity to discuss the impact any proposed legislation may have on their day-to-day activities, and how bills they are working on can help kids.

So, Where Do I Begin?

* First step – reach out to your elected officials and ask for a meeting in June! *Signing up for Hill Day Prep sessions during Leadership doesn’t mean you have a Hill Day meeting.*
* Chapter or individual CAC – email the scheduler for your US Senators and your US Rep.
* **Ask for a “Constituent Meeting Request” in the subject heading – this will ensure schedulers open up the request and give it priority.**
* Reps and Senators will usually agree to meetings because you are a voter…even more, this is one issue that is not divisive!

Example Template:

Dear [Name of Scheduler],

My name is X and I am [Position] with the [Name of CAC]. NCA, our national membership association, is holding a leadership conference the week of June 6th -8th and I would like to schedule a meeting with [Rep. X] to update him/her on our CAC and how we are helping kids from his/her district that have been abused.

With that in mind, would Rep. X have time to virtually meet with me on the afternoon of June 7th? If that time doesn’t work, is there a better time for a meeting? I know how busy this time of year is for Rep. X, so I promise to be brief.

Please let me know if I can provide you any additional information and I hope we can find a few minutes for me to update Rep. X on the latest from the CAC in his/her district. Thanks again and I look forward to hearing from you on this constituent meeting request.

Where to Begin – Next Steps:

* Once you have sent your “constituent meeting request”, follow up with a call to the office in a few weeks if you haven’t heard from them.
* Be willing to work around the schedule – and be flexible is things come up.
* They may ask for additional materials about possible topics – if so, let us know and we can provide you some info to send along.
* It is important to note that you do not yet have a meeting scheduled until you have a confirmation from the office.

What Happens Next?

* Once you have your meetings set, you will want to attend a Hill Day Prep session. (We are holding a live session on June 1st, and virtual/live on June 6th.)
* We will discuss the issues that may likely be brought up in the meeting.
* We will have materials to prepare for the meeting.
* We will also have materials you can give/send to senators/representatives/staff.

What Happens at the Hill Meeting?

* Whether it is a virtual meeting or in-person – Hill meetings are the same!
* Introduce all meeting attendees and tell them about your CAC, the kids you serve – basically an update from home.
* They will likely ask follow up question – but they want to know what you are doing everyday. So they want to hear from you!
* They will then turn to “why” you are meeting with them and ask if there is anything they can do to help.
* At that point, you will want to talk about legislative priorities.

What Happens After the Meeting?

* After meeting – send a follow up thank you!
* It goes a long way and gives you an opportunity to provide any follow up info that was requested.
* Invite them to come tour the CAC when they are back home.
* Offer to be a resource – the will appreciate it!

Federal Lobbying Rules

* A person is required to register as a lobbyist it:
  1. They have “more than one lobbying contact” – meaning at least 2 outreach messages; **AND**
  2. Their “lobbying activities” during a quarterly period constitute at least 20% of the individual’s time. This means that at least 8 hours during a 40 hour work is spent on lobbying. (This usually precludes being considered a lobbyist, since most people do not meet this part of the standard.)
* If someone does meet these requirements – they are only required to register if they spend more than $10K on lobbying activities.

Nonprofits and Lobbying

* Federal lobbying rules have different requirements for nonprofits.
* The rules make a distinction between education and direct lobbying – ***only direct lobbying requires disclosure.***
* For example, if a nonprofit meets with a senator or representative to educate them about CACs, or is called to testify on child abuse, **neither action is considered lobbying.**
* However, a meeting with Congress to advocate for our federal funding in CJS appropriations is considered lobbying, at which point the previous rules apply.

What is NOT Lobbying – Examples:

* Requesting a meeting with your US Sen/US Rep to introduce yourself and provide info on your CAC.
* Meeting with Members/staff to update them on your CAC, # of kids you serve and daily operations.
* Meeting with Members/staff to discuss general child abuse issues and need for public policy changes. (For example – VOCA Fix, child welfare system, mandatory reporting, child sexual abuse prevention, etc.)
* Meetings with Members/staff to discuss public policy that highlights the impact of the MDT/CAC model.
* Meeting with Members/staff to discuss the impact of trauma-informed care and how that plays out in CACs.
* Responding to direct questions from Members/staff about CAC funding needs.