



HILL VISITS “DOS” AND “DON’TS”

Adapted from the NASW’s Lobby Day Toolkit.

DO:

1. Do present local and/or state trends in child and youth homelessness, as well as local challenges that are directly related to issues that Congress is considering, such as federal funding for the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth program, barriers to higher education for homeless youth (FAFSA), and problems caused by HUD’s definition of homelessness. Visit www.schoolhouseconnection.org for current topics in federal policy.
2. Do use data and some specific examples from the legislator’s home state or district, and be prepared to share real stories that illustrate both the challenges and how the legislation would address them.
3. Do admit you don’t know if you are asked a question to which you don’t know the answer. Offer to find out the answer and send information back to the office. (SchoolHouse Connection is happy to help you find answers, too.)
4. Do spend time developing relationships with the legislative staff, including sending an email after the visit with electronic copies of any materials that you provided.
5. Do thank the staff for his or her time, and for any actions the legislator has taken that you support.

DON’T:

1. Don’t be offended if a legislator is unable to meet and requests that you meet with his or her staff; legislative staff have significant influence.
2. Don’t assume legislative staff are familiar with the issues, nationally or locally: their schedules and workloads tend to make them generalists, not specialists.
3. Don’t give a presentation; the meeting should feel like a conversation and allow time for the staff to ask questions.
4. Don’t be long-winded; staff are very busy, and you may lose their attention if you are not succinct.
5. Don’t be intimidated; you are the expert. Good policy is based on accurate, compelling information provided by constituents.