



## **Tips for Effective Face-to-Face Communication With Your Legislators**

Summer recess is a great time to meet with your legislators, who are in their home districts kicking off campaign season by attending community events and getting much-valued face time with their constituents. There is no reason to feel nervous or intimidated about meeting with your legislators! Remember that they welcome visits from the people who will have the opportunity to vote for them in the next election. Also, legislators appreciate hearing directly from their constituents about the issues that are most important to them. A representative from CALM will help prep/coach you beforehand and do a brief follow-up with you afterwards.

Scheduling a meeting is easy! The whole process, including phone coaching/prep from a CALM representative, the visit itself, and the follow-up will take about an hour of your time. To schedule a meeting, call your legislator's in-district office, tell them your name and where you live and let them know that you would like to schedule a meeting with them in their home office to discuss issues related to midwifery care and out-of-hospital birth.

Do not be disappointed if you wind up meeting with a legislative aide (LA). In fact, legislative staff are **VERY IMPORTANT PEOPLE** who are responsible for researching the issues and making recommendations to their bosses about what their legislative priorities should be. Meeting with your legislators' aides and building a positive relationship with them can be highly effective tool for cultivating allies who will support midwifery legislation in the future.

If you can, take one or two other constituents to the meeting with you and let the scheduler know how many are in your group. If you have a group, it works best if you lead the discussion while someone else takes notes. If you are going to a meeting on your own, wait until after the meeting to take notes.

## **General Guidelines for Meeting with Your Legislators**

- While business or formal attire isn't expected, be sure to dress neatly and to refrain from wearing political buttons or slogans.
- Babies and children are welcome. General restaurant rules apply—make sure they are prepared to sit relatively quietly and/or have something to occupy their attention. Legislators love to receive hand-made cards or drawings from children, so if your child is artistically inclined, it's



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- always a welcome gift!
- Be courteous and respectful; do not offer to vote for them in exchange for their vote for a bill or threaten to vote against them if they don't support your issue.
- Keep the discussion focused. If your legislator attempts to divert the conversation, bring them back to the main topic.
- While it is always important to mention your personal connection to the issues at hand, please refrain from telling birth stories or going into intimate detail about your birth experiences.
- Be mindful of the time—legislators and their staff have very busy schedules and they will appreciate your respect of that fact. Expect your meeting to last 15 to 20 minutes.
- Not knowing the answer to a question is a good thing! If you do not know the answer to a question, be honest and say so. Offering to get the answer to a question and to follow up later with your legislator or their aide is an excellent opportunity to keep the lines of communication going.
- Many legislators hold regular “town hall” meetings or other events in their district when they're not in session. Ask if they can give you a schedule for any in-district meetings or events they might have during summer recess.
- Before you leave, be sure to ask your legislator if you can count on their support for midwifery and out-of-hospital birth in California and if there are any other questions they may have.
- Don't forget to thank them for their time!
- Take notes. They do not have to be too detailed, but please do mention any positive or negative statements your legislator may have made about midwifery care and out-of-hospital birth; any statements they may have made about how they voted on previous legislation; any questions they may have asked; and their overall attitude towards the issues you discussed.
- Send a thank you note or email after your meeting. Reiterate any positive statements or commitments of support made by the legislator or their aide and be sure to include your contact information.