



Make the Most Out of Your Visit

Meeting Prep

1. Background Material to read “[Quick Start Guide to Educating Policy Makers](#)” and “[Education and Advocacy: Know the Difference.](#)” Also see [plain language guide.](#)
2. Pick your Topic/Topics

Speaking About an Experience

As a trainee, you have a strong story to tell about your experience. Legislators may not have heard of the LEND or UCEDD programs, and you play an important role in informing them of the transformative work happening at these Centers and the lives they touch. By telling that story, you can also inform the Legislators of the importance of funding these programs and contribute to changing communities for people with disabilities.

You should have a solid level of familiarity and comfort with your talking points to ensure a good visit. Share about your LEND or UCEDD in general, the role of trainees, how trainees help people with disabilities and how they’ll continue to be a change agent for years to come. If possible, bring evidence-based research that supports your experience. *Remember that your role is to educate your Legislator or their staff about why that issue is important to you; you should not ask them for anything (support, votes, a commitment) in return as that is considered lobbying.*

- a. Shape what you talk about with your Legislators: connect your experience to the larger issues. Describe how being trained by the LEND or UCEDD to be a leader in [your discipline] is going to change lives in your community. Use the attached LEND and UCEDD talking points to frame your story and connect it back to legislation or funding that the Member has influence over. (**Remember:** you can educate them about the importance of funding but not ask them for more funding.)
- b. Include a personal story, especially if you have a family member with disabilities. Connecting policies to people not only makes your meeting stand out among the hundreds they have each year, but it reminds everyone that abstract policies have real world effects.
- c. Prepare your materials. Bring a branded folder for each person you’ll meet with that contains data, brochures, pictures of individuals, pictures of your Center, etc. that will support your points and make your story memorable. Be prepared to leave a copy of your materials with your Legislator, along with a business card of yourself and/or your Center so they can follow up with any questions or if they need more information.

Day of

1. *Clearly and concisely state the purpose for the meeting*, talk about what you do in your program and its importance (see talking points), and invite your Member to visit your center
2. *Keep it local:* Bring district or state specific information and facts, especially those that cannot be found online such as personal stories or internal research. Position yourself as a long-term local resource for them.
3. *Don’t shy away from staff:* While it may be nice to have the Member in the room, you always want your issue heard by the staff member who covers this issue in depth for the Member.

After

1. *Follow-up:* remember to exchange business cards, and send thank- you cards and any photos taken, this can leave a lasting impression and foster future relationships.
 - a. Part of your follow up should be to meet with your Member again in your state and organize a visit to your Center or program (coordinate this with your program supervisor).
2. Plan to email AUCD staff about who you visited, how it went, and any handouts you shared. AUCD will follow up with them to help facilitate a lasting relationship and answer any future questions about our Centers, disability policies, and the people they affect.
3. Contact your Center/university and inquire if they’ll post your story and photos. Your visit is a big deal and you deserve some credit. Members of Congress also enjoy being tagged in positive posts or seeing a photo of them with constituents in a local newsletter