

Meeting Goal

Local Legislative District Days is your chance to build or maintain a relationship with your legislator and district staff while they are focused on district priorities in between legislative sessions.

The goal is for legislators and their staff to see your programs as critical in their community, remind your legislator of all the great work you are doing in their district, and ask them to get involved with your coalition or your efforts.

Also let legislators and their staff know you are the local expert, resource and contact on tobacco control topics.

Your Message

You should use the I&E Days Key Messages document to educate the legislator or staff about the tobacco control success in California as well as the problems that still face the state. For example, you could highlight the fact that more than one million lives have been saved in California in the past 20 years from tobacco control programs, but that still 32,000 youth become daily smokers.

After providing this information, the real focus of the meeting should be on local issues because district staff concentrates on the local community. Talk about the activities you are doing in the district, any recent success you have had, and maybe even bring someone who can tell a personal story about the positive impact of your program.

You can also provide your legislator with an opportunity to protect current and future generations from the number one cause of preventable disease and death by asking them to sign the PACT Resolution. A signature on this resolution shows the legislator's support of the five objectives of the TEROC Master Plan.

Before the Meeting

Who Should Attend:

The meeting should consist of three to four people, one of whom must be a constituent. This could include several key community or coalition leaders.

Think about bringing someone who represents how your program has benefited the community. This will help put a face on the issue and make it relevant to your district.

How to Prepare:

Learn about your legislators. Know what counties he/she represents, what issues he/she cares about, what committees he/she sits on, etc. Look online at their biography at www.legislature.ca.gov or call the Center for more information.

You can also check out the legislator's Twitter page for more information. Go to www.twitter.com and search by name.

Either by phone or by meeting a half hour before your scheduled visit, organize yourselves and decide who will do what during the meeting. Meetings usually last about 10-15 minutes so plan who will start the meeting, who will wrap-up and thank the legislator, etc. Practice what you are going to say and possibly even role-play.

Exchange cell phone numbers to keep in contact if someone is running late or can't make it.

Plan to meet outside of the office so that you can all go in together.

What to Bring:

Bring the I&E Days Key Messages document and PACT Resolution to leave behind with the legislator.

Bring local information to educate the legislator about critical issues in the district. Some ideas are youth purchase data, coalition mission statement, fact sheets for issues you are working on, and invitations for upcoming events.

Put all of this together in a folder to create a leave-behind packet.

Don't forget to bring your business cards to hand out.

During the Meeting

Delivering Your Message:

Build a relationship. Connect your issue to something you know about the legislator from their bio, website or Twitter. If you are meeting with a staffer, ask them questions about themselves to learn more about their background to begin a conversation.

Also, let the legislator or staff member know if you are a constituent. You are important to them!

Focus on your message. Don't get too hung up on statistics. Cite one or two compelling statistics that relate to the district but don't get lost in them. Focus on what is the most important thing you want the legislator to take from this meeting.

Be confident; try not to be nervous. First of all, the legislator is in Sacramento to represent you, so their job is to hear from you. And secondly, you are an expert in your community with important information to share with them.

Most importantly, personalize the issue. For example, if you have a child with asthma or if you know someone with a tobacco-related disease, bring the key messages to life with a story and don't forget - keep it local.

Other Logistics:

Be on time, but be patient even if your meeting does not start right on time, legislative offices are very busy and there may be events that are beyond the office's control.

You don't have to know everything. If you are asked a question for which you do not have the answer, it's OK to say that you don't know. Tell the legislator or staff member that you will find the answer and get back to them.

Listen carefully. It is important to listen to the legislator and/or staffer with whom you are meeting – even if you think what he/she is saying isn't relevant to your purpose or you disagree with him or her.

Thank the legislator or staffer for their time. And don't forget to leave your leave-behind packet with them.

Wear business attire. Even if the district office is relaxed, you should be professional.

After the Meeting

Send a thank you note along with any information you promised, or follow up on questions that were asked. For a sample thank you letter, go to the Center's website: www.center4tobaccopolicy.org/districtdays.

Remind them of an event you invited them to.

Fill out the District Days "Legislator Visit Feedback Form," which can be found on the Center's website at www.Center4TobaccoPolicy.org/DistrictDays. Keep a copy for yourself and fax or email a copy to the Center. This will enable ongoing, long term tracking of the legislator and the education of them on tobacco issues.