



Make the Most Out of Your Visit

Meeting Preparation

1. Background material to read: “Education and Lobbying: Know the Difference.”

2. Pick your topics.

As a trainee or employee, you have a strong story to tell about your experience(s) and the work of your Center or program. Members of Congress may not have heard of the UCEDD, LEND or IDDRC, and you play an important role in educating and informing them of the work happening at these programs and the lives they impact. By telling that story, you can also educate Members of Congress of the importance of funding these programs and contribute to protecting and enhancing civil rights and improving services and supports for people with disabilities.

You should have a familiarity and comfort with your talking points to ensure a good visit. Share about your UCEDD, LEND or IDDRC in general, the role of trainees, and how you support improving services and supports for people with disabilities. If possible, bring evidence-based research that supports your experience. *(Remember: Your role is to educate your Member of Congress or their staff about why that issue is important. You should not ask them for anything (support, votes, etc.) that would be lobbying which you cannot do as an employee or trainee receiving or traveling on federal funding.)*

3. When you talk to your Member of Congress, connect your experiences to larger issues for people with disabilities and others in the community:

Describe how being employed or trained by the UCEDD, LEND or IDDRC and being trained to be a leader in [your discipline] is going to improve lives in your community. Connect your story to legislation or funding that the Member of Congress can impact. *(Remember: You can educate them about the importance of funding, but you cannot ask them for more funding.)*

Provide a personal story, especially if you have a personal experience with disability. 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.

4. Prepare your materials.

Bring a branded folder for each person you will meet with that contains data, brochures, pictures of individuals or your program, etc. that will make your story credible and memorable. Be prepared to leave a copy of your materials with your Member of Congress and their staff, along with your business card or one from your program so they can follow-up with any questions or if they need more information.



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Day of Meeting

1. Clearly and concisely state the purpose for the meeting, introduce what you do in your program and its importance, and invite your Member of Congress or their staff to visit your program.
2. Keep it local: Bring district or state specific information and facts, especially those that cannot be found on-line such as personal stories or internal research. Position yourself as a long-term local resource and expert for them.
3. Staff are incredibly key to changing policies for persons with disabilities. While it may be nice to have the Member of Congress in the room, you always want your issue heard by the staff member who covers this issue in depth and advises the Member of Congress.

After the Meeting

1. Follow-up with the office. Remember to exchange business cards and send thank-you emails, and any photos taken. Follow-up communications can leave a lasting impression and foster future relationships.
2. Part of your follow-up should be to meet with your Member of Congress again in your state or territory and organize a visit to your Center or program (coordinate this with your director or program supervisor).
3. Plan to email AUCD staff about who you visited, how it went, and any handouts you shared. AUCD will follow-up as needed to help facilitate a lasting relationship and answer any future questions about our Centers, programs, and policies impacting people with disabilities.
4. Contact your Center / University and inquire if they will post your story and photos. Your visit is important and Members of Congress also enjoy being tagged in positive posts or seeing a photo of them with constituents in a local newsletter.