

# **CSWE Advocacy Handbook**

*A Resource Guide for Social Workers*

Prepared by Lewis-Burke Associates LLC, February 2015, April 2021, Updated January 2026

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## Section I: Frequently Asked Questions

### **Why is it important for CSWE members to spend time advocating on Capitol Hill?**

- Members of Congress are in office to serve two main functions:
  1. To represent the interests of the people residing in their state, district, or territory; and
  2. To negotiate policies that are in the best interests of the United States. CSWE members who participate in Capitol Hill meetings will help ensure that our interests—promoting awareness of and funding for programs that benefit social work education and the social work profession—are communicated to our elected representatives.
- Advocacy is the process by which ordinary citizens make their needs known to members of Congress and is key to inducing members of Congress to take action on the issues that are important to us.
- An individual who takes the time to visit their members of Congress puts them on notice that there is an issue that requires their attention.
- Successful advocacy often requires a disciplined, persistent, and concerted effort to communicate an organization's interests.
- If those in the social work education community become complacent and allow others to communicate their interests to Congressional offices, it should not be a surprise when Congress does not provide the needed support.
- It is an opportunity to educate Congressional members and their staff about the vital role of social work in helping meet the needs of the nation.
- Advocating on Capitol Hill is an exhilarating experience. Walking the halls of Congress and viewing democracy in action is one of the most informative and eye-opening opportunities you will experience.
- EVERYONE IS QUALIFIED—no matter title or position. Prior to your advocacy activities, CSWE government relations staff will provide you with information and materials to ensure that you are fully prepared and comfortable for your meetings.
- Any individual who is willing to take the time to visit their Congressional office is extremely respected and viewed as an effective advocate by those on Capitol Hill.

### **What are these meetings like? How long do they last?**

- You will most likely be meeting with the staff member (either a legislative assistant or legislative correspondent) who advises the member of Congress on the issue that you will be discussing. These meetings can happen both in-person and virtually.

- Do not be surprised or discouraged if the staffer you meet appears young and inexperienced; it is his or her job to convey your message to the senator or representative. Treat staff the same way you would treat a member. Staffers are extremely influential.
- Be courteous to everyone, no matter how *they* act, and do not convey a hostile attitude toward Congress, politics, or politicians. Stay on message.
- Be on time but do not be surprised if you are kept waiting when you arrive. Members and staff are very busy and sometimes fall behind schedule.
- Meetings on Capitol Hill can last as little as 15 minutes or as long as 1 hour. A realistic timeframe is about 30 minutes. Be aware of the time and don't prolong the meeting if it would seem forced to do so. The same applies for meeting virtually.
- Congressional offices are small. It is common for spaces to serve a variety of purposes. A waiting area may also include staff members' desks. Do not be surprised if a staff member takes you into the hallway or a public space to hold your meeting. While waiting for your meeting, be mindful that staff members are working and can hear your conversations.

### **What should I do to prepare for my visit?**

- Read all materials provided for you by CSWE or government relations staff.
- Familiarize yourself with the offices that you will visit; peruse the websites of the members of Congress or committees. Read all pertinent biographies.
- Organize your thoughts and be familiar with your talking points.
- Make sure you have materials to leave with the staffer (e.g., one-page summary or CSWE packet of information) and your contact information.
- Due to ethics rules and regulations, members of Congress and staff are prohibited from accepting gifts. Do not bring any gifts, including baked goods and other perishable items. However, we do encourage you to send thank you letters after your meeting.

### **How will I get to Capitol Hill?**

- You can travel to Capitol Hill by taxi or Metro (subway).
- Some offices allow a virtual option for participants and staffers to meet online. However, check-in with the office on their preferred platform of communicating.
- Remember to bring business cards if you have them.

## How should I dress for these meetings?

- You should dress as you would for any professional meeting—formal business attire is expected.
- A significant amount of walking may be involved – wear comfortable shoes but be business appropriate.

## What will I talk about?

- These meetings tend to be very basic and educational; introduce yourself, discuss CSWE, and explain why you are visiting (to ask them to support the issues that are important to CSWE’s mission).
- Present your business cards and any additional handouts at the beginning of the meeting.
- You will educate the staffer about the impact of social work in helping meet the needs of the nation and how important it is to provide sustainable funding for federal social work programs.
- If you are meeting with staff from your congressional district or state, make local connections that your audience will understand (e.g., talk about new developments at your university or the impact social work is having on the local community).
- Don’t worry about being an expert on CSWE. Talk about what you know by using examples from your own experience.
- Try to discuss CSWE’s priorities in simple, common terms that anyone could understand; keep the message focused and brief.
- Do *not* use technical jargon; however, do be specific when discussing legislative context (e.g., “support [specific bill name]).”
- Do *not* assume that members and staff are familiar with your subject. If they are, they will tell you, and then you can elevate the discussion.
- Be a good listener. Do not expect to control the meeting. The best meetings occur when you understand that you are not on your own turf.
- If you don’t know the answer to a question, offer to look into it and provide the answer after the meeting.
- If a staffer should ask for assistance on a related or separate matter, answer the question to the best of your ability by calling on your own expertise, or offer to follow up with them after the meeting with additional information or resources.

## **What should I do to follow up after the meetings?**

- Provide members or staff with any additional information requested.
- Write thank-you letters/emails.

## **Section II: Understanding Congress and Congressional Committees**

### **Overview of Congress**

The U.S. Congress is the branch of the Federal Government that is primarily responsible for making laws, overseeing finances, and declaring war. It is composed of two chambers: the House of Representatives and the Senate.

#### **Senate**

The Senate has 100 Members, with two Senators representing each state. Senators serve six-year terms without defined term limits. The Senate has certain powers the House does not have, such as approving treaties and confirming the appointments of cabinet secretaries and federal judges. The Vice President of the United States presides over the Senate with the President pro tempore, who is selected by the chamber and performs the Vice President's duties in his absence. Each party is represented on the Senate floor by the majority and minority leaders. A meeting of the party members to discuss various pressing issues is called a caucus. Caucuses can also refer to informal groups of Members who share a common policy interest, such as the Congressional Mental Health Caucus or the Congressional Social Work Caucus.

#### **House of Representatives**

The House of Representatives has 435 Members who serve two-year terms without defined term limits. The number of Members from each state is based on population with every state guaranteed at least one Representative. Additionally, a Resident Commissioner represents Puerto Rico and serves a four-year term, and five non-voting delegates represent American Samoa, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The House has certain powers the Senate does not have, such as the ability to choose the President in the event of an electoral tie. Also, the House introduces all bills pertaining to financial measures, such as taxation and government spending. The Speaker of the House presides over the chamber, but she/he can choose any Representative to perform his duties in his absence.

For further information on congressional history, individual members, and committees, please visit <http://www.house.gov> and <http://www.senate.gov>.

### **Legislative Process**

As an advocate, it is important to have a general understanding of the legislative process to determine the best time to engage with policymakers. However, it is not necessary to be an expert on Congress and the legislative process in order to interact with your elected officials.

When a Member of Congress introduces a bill on either the House or Senate floor, they become that bill's sponsor. After a bill is introduced, it is assigned a number beginning with "H.R." if it originated in the House (e.g. H.R. 1106) or "S." if it was introduced in the Senate (e.g. S. 584). The bill is then printed and referred to an appropriate committee by the Speaker of the House, the presiding officer in the Senate, or by the House or Senate parliamentarian.

The committee studies the bill, conducts hearings with expert testimony, makes necessary changes, and discusses its chances to pass. Each committee has jurisdiction over a particular subject, such as Agriculture or Foreign Affairs. The bill can be analyzed by the committee as a whole or referred to a subcommittee, which specifically focuses on a subset of areas under the committee's purview. The committee or subcommittee may hold hearings and call upon individuals and organizations with a strong interest or expertise in the policy area under review. Witnesses share testimonies with the Members of Congress supporting or opposing the proposed legislation. A bill can die if the committee either fails to act or votes against recommending it to the House or Senate floors.

If a bill makes it out of committee, it can go to the floor where it can be debated, amended, and voted on. Sometimes bills don't make it to the floor. The decision as to if or when a bill reaches the floor is determined by the Speaker and the Majority Leader in the House and the Majority Leader in the Senate. In the House, there are very specific rules that determine the conditions and amount of time allocated for general debate, and amendments must be relevant to the bill. The Senate does not have rules limiting debate. The lack of restrictions can lead to a filibuster, in which a bill is purposefully stalled through measures such as unnecessary debate. The Senate can end a filibuster by invoking "cloture," which requires a two-thirds vote to enact. The Senate does not have any rules regulating the relevance of proposed amendments. Sometimes bills are passed as amendments to completely unrelated bills.

To pass in the House, the bill needs a simple majority or 218 votes, and in the Senate, the bill needs 51 votes to pass with the Vice President casting the deciding vote in the event of a 50-50 tie. If the bill passes, it is then referred to the other chamber to be voted on. If either chamber does not pass the bill, it dies, and if both chambers pass the same legislation, it goes to the President. Usually, the House and Senate pass different versions of the same legislation and it is referred to the Conference Committee, which is typically composed of the senior Members of the committees in either chamber that originally considered the legislation. The Conference Committee works to resolve any differences with each chamber's version of the legislation and generates a single, compromised bill that is referred back to each chamber for approval.

If the bill passes both chambers, it is sent to the President who has three options: (1) he can sign the bill, turning it into a law; (2) he could veto the bill and send it back to Congress with a note of his reasons (the chamber where the bill originated can override the veto with a two-thirds vote. If it is overridden in both chambers, it becomes a law); or (3) he could not sign it and if Congress is in session, the bill becomes a law after ten days; if Congress adjourns before ten days has expired and the President still has not signed the bill, it is a "pocket veto" and the bill is dead.

### **How a Member of Congress Decides How to Vote**

Members of Congress are influenced by their personal opinions and backgrounds, staff, constituents, colleagues, interest groups, the President and the Executive Branch, party leadership, and the media. Deciding how to vote requires personal and political calculation. Members of Congress must weigh the issue and bill with the anticipated consequence of the vote.

Many Members of Congress consider constituents' opinions, the strongest influence, in deciding how to vote. As their electorate, constituents determine the political future of each candidate, and a highly publicized vote against the majority can sway the electorate to a new candidate come election season.

As an expert in the social work community and a constituent, your voice is especially powerful. By engaging in advocacy and meeting with your Member of Congress or staff, you have the opportunity to educate and inform, influencing how a Member may vote. Additionally, when advocating for a broad topic or specific piece of legislation, consider all of your audiences. While more likely you will meet with staff than the Member, remember staff are positioned to advise and inform their bosses directly. Speak as if you are communicating with the Member directly. Similarly, when meeting with one Member of Congress or office staff, consider the impact they might have on their colleagues. Members and staff regularly communicate to share information informally, as well as formally through committees, caucuses, and delegations.

### **Implementing Legislation at Federal Agencies**

A bill passed by Congress and enacted into law provides an outline or framework for implementation. It is up to the appropriate Executive Branch agency, which is either specified by Congress through the law or delegated by the President, to interpret each law and develop and implement regulations supporting the law's intent. Regulations explain how laws will be applied, and they ensure uniform applications of laws and guide respective agencies' activities, functions, and operations.

When an agency receives a law to implement, it must follow an open public process to issue the regulation. Proposed rules are then publicized and opened up to rule-making proceedings. Rule-making proceedings allow the public, experts, and other interested parties to testify at public hearings and submit comments on the proposals in a structured, formal setting. Comment periods usually last between 30 and 60 days but can be extended.

Following the open process, the agency then crafts the final rule based on the comments and testimony, rule-making record, scientific data, expert opinions, and facts gathered throughout the pre-rule and proposed rule stages. The agency must demonstrate the final rule will solve the identified problem or accomplish the specific goal, as well as compare the final rule to alternatives in terms of cost and benefit effectiveness. The President also has the opportunity to review the rule prior to its implementation and integration into the Code of Federal Regulations.

## **Congressional Committees**

Congressional committees develop, debate, and approve legislation prior to vote on final passage. Most Members serve on multiple committees and subcommittees.

**House** committees that have jurisdiction over policy areas relevant to CSWE include:

- Appropriations
- Education and the Workforce
- Energy and Commerce
- Veterans' Affairs

**Senate** committees that have jurisdiction over policy areas relevant to CSWE include:

- Appropriations
- Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP)
- Veterans' Affairs
- Special Committee on Aging

The specific jurisdictions of each of these committees are described in the following pages.

## House Committees

### House Committee on Appropriations

<http://appropriations.house.gov/>

The House Committee on Appropriations is responsible for passing legislation each year that allocates federal funding to government agencies, departments, and programs. Each of the 12 subcommittees is responsible for crafting the bill for which it has jurisdiction. These subcommittees review the President's annual budget request, hear testimony from government officials and public witnesses, and draft the spending plans for the coming fiscal year. The Committee is also responsible for supplemental spending bills, which are sometimes needed in the middle of a fiscal year to compensate for emergency expenses.

The subcommittee that funds most federal programs of interest to CSWE is the ***Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies***. This Subcommittee provides funding for the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services, among other agencies.

### House Committee on Education and the Workforce

<https://edworkforce.house.gov/>

The House Committee on Education and the Workforce has jurisdiction that includes, but is not limited to, the following education, healthcare, and labor issues:

- Early childhood and preschool education programs, elementary and secondary education initiatives, higher education programs, and adult education;
- School lunch and child nutrition programs;
- Financial oversight of the U.S. Department of Education;
- Programs and services for the care and treatment of at-risk youth, child abuse prevention, and child adoption;
- Antipoverty programs, including the Community Services Block Grant Act and the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP);
- Pension and retirement security for U.S. workers;
- Access to quality healthcare for working families and other employee benefits;
- Job training, adult education, and workforce development initiatives, including those under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA);
- Worker health and safety, including occupational safety and health;
- Equal employment opportunity and civil rights in employment; and

- Wages and hours of labor, including the Fair Labor Standards Act.

The five subcommittees include Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education; Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions; Higher Education and Workforce Investment; Workforce Protections; and Civil Rights and Human Services.

### **House Committee on Energy and Commerce**

<http://energycommerce.house.gov/>

The House Committee on Energy and Commerce has jurisdiction over health and health facilities (except health care supported by payroll deductions), biomedical research and development, and public health and quarantine. The Committee also has jurisdiction over general energy and commerce issues.

Specifically, this Committee oversees the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), which includes the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), and the Administration on Aging (AOA). This is an authorizing committee.

The six subcommittees include Communications and Technology; Consumer Protection and Commerce; Energy; Environment and Climate Change; Health; and Oversight and Investigations.

### **House Committee on Veterans' Affairs**

<http://veterans.house.gov/>

The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs has jurisdiction over issues relating to veterans' interests, including, but not limited to, the compensation, vocational rehabilitation, and education of veterans; life insurance issued by the government on account of service in the Armed Forces; pensions of all the wars of the United States, general and special; readjustment of service members to civilian life; service members' civil relief; and veterans' hospitals, medical care, and treatment of veterans.

The five subcommittees include Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs; Economic Opportunity; Health; Oversight and Investigations; and technology modernization.

## **Senate Committees**

### **Senate Committee on Appropriations**

<http://appropriations.senate.gov/>

The Senate Committee on Appropriations is responsible for passing legislation each year that allocates federal funding to government agencies, departments, and programs. Another task of the committee is to draft supplemental spending bills, which are sometimes necessary during the middle of the fiscal year to address the costs for emergency expenses.

The committee includes 12 subcommittees that operate under separate jurisdictions. Each subcommittee is responsible for crafting legislation that will distribute funds to the government

agencies, departments, and programs within their jurisdictions. Additional responsibilities of each subcommittee include reviewing budget requests made by the President, holding hearings in which government officials and public witnesses testify, and drafting the expenditure plans for the next fiscal year.

The Subcommittee that funds most federal programs of interest to CSWE is the ***Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies***.

### **Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP)**

<http://help.senate.gov/>

The Senate HELP Committee has jurisdiction over aging, agricultural colleges, arts and humanities, biomedical research and development, child labor, education, health, individuals with disabilities, labor, labor standards and labor statistics, mediation and arbitration of labor disputes, occupational safety and health, private pension plans, public health, public welfare, student loans, and wages and hours of labor, among other issues. The three subcommittees include Children and Families, Employment and Workplace Safety, and Primary Health and Retirement Security.

### **Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs**

<http://veterans.senate.gov/>

Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs has jurisdiction over the compensation of service members; life insurance issued by the Federal Government as a result of service in the Armed Forces; national cemeteries; pensions of all U.S. wars; readjustment of veterans to civilian life; civilian relief of service members; medical care and treatment, vocational rehabilitation, and education of veterans; and several other general affairs concerning service members. The Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs does not have subcommittees.

### **Senate Special Committee on Aging**

<http://aging.senate.gov/>

The Senate Special Committee on Aging has no legislative authority; however, members hold oversight hearings to address issues within various programs and issue reports on fraud and waste problems. Issues addressed include, but are not limited to, affordable senior housing, health care for seniors, older workers, and social security and retirement. The Senate Special Committee on Aging does not have subcommittees.

## **Congressional Caucuses**

Congressional caucuses are informal groups of Members of Congress who organize around a shared interest, issue, or constituency. Caucuses don't pass laws, control funding or have formal jurisdiction (that's the role of committees), though they can influence appropriations conversations. They help translate technical issues into actionable priorities for Members and staff

Congressional caucuses that are especially relevant to CSWE include:

- Senate Mental Health Caucus
- Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth

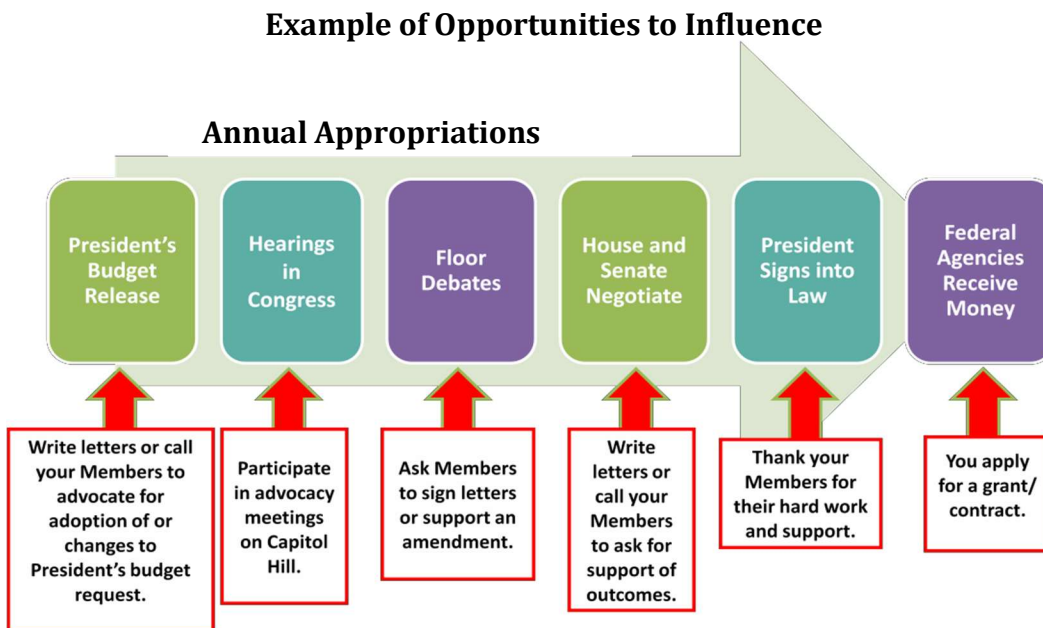
- Rural Health Caucus
- Veteran’s Caucus
- Congressional Social Work Caucus

## Section III: The Basics of Advocacy and Outreach

### Timing of Advocacy Activities

Advocacy activities can target a specific piece of legislation or regulation or more generally be used to educate policy makers on a given topic. Despite what you are advocating for, it is important to consider what might be the best time to engage. For example, some events in Congress are cyclical, such as the annual appropriations process, which starts with the President submitting his budget request for all federal programs and agencies to Congress in early February. The President’s budget request outlines his agenda for the upcoming fiscal year and initiates the Congressional appropriations process. The House and Senate Committees on Appropriations’ respective subcommittees debate the proposed bills introduced in each chamber. Appropriations hearings usually begin in March or closely following the release of the President’s budget request, and each committee seeks to pass their appropriations bills before the annual August recess; however, recently votes have occurred in the fall.

Advocacy activities are most effective if they are timed to coincide with individual office deliberation or committee consideration of bills. It is important to participate in the deliberation process because advocacy efforts too early on, especially written correspondence, may be forgotten or lack significant impact.



## Communicating with Congress

There are many ways to advocate, including but not limited to:

- *In-person meetings in Washington, DC, in your district, and virtual meetings*
- *Letters, emails, and phone calls* – These are most useful when immediate action is needed on a piece of legislation
- *Written or in-person testimony as part of a congressional hearing* – This is a method of advocacy used to get on record regarding a specific topic and/or to serve as an expert resource to inform a policy

In this section, we explain the basics of communicating with elected officials through a variety of different means and also describe how to craft messages that will resonate with your audience.

### Identifying your Member of Congress

Before engaging in advocacy, you should identify your Members of Congress. This is easily accomplished by going online to [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) to find your Representative and [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) to find your Senators. The House and Senate websites provide tools to search for Members of Congress by name, state, or zip code. The search will generate a link to the Member's website where you will find even more information to help inform your advocacy activities.

When identifying your district's Representative in Congress you can search according to your home and/or work addresses, as sometimes your home and workplace may be represented by different House members. You can potentially reach more House members this way; don't feel as though you are limited to engaging with only the Representative who represents your hometown.

### Crafting a Message

Once you have identified the Representatives and Senators with whom you would like to engage, the next step is developing a message that will resonate with them. First consider why you are looking to engage: Are you responding to a CSWE call to action? Are you supporting or opposing specific legislation? Or are you advocating for a specific program or funding level?

Regardless of your reason for meeting, your message should also include an "ask" of some kind, which can be as specific as urging support for a bill or funding for a program, or as simple as asking the office to utilize your expertise as a resource in the future.

Your message should also highlight the broader impacts of social work and social work education by describing how your work is related to real problems. Relate the message to the Member's district or state when possible and try to articulate the impact of social work and social work education community.

The most effective messages are succinct and on topic. You should stay within your own expertise but try to avoid technical jargon or acronyms. It also helps to anticipate questions and have concise answers ready.

## **In-Person Meetings with Members of Congress and Staff**

Once you have identified your elected officials, there are some basic steps to follow for securing and participating in an in-person or virtual meeting, either in Washington or in your home district. There are generally two different periods in the Congressional calendar: days when Congress is in session and therefore considering legislation, holding hearings, and taking votes; and recess periods when Members of Congress are back home in their districts engaging with constituents. Advocacy can occur during both periods. Your message and meeting goals will determine the best option. For example, if you want to meet with your Member of Congress to talk about funding for a specific program at the Department Health and Human Services in the FY 2026 appropriations bills, an in-person meeting in Washington, or a virtual meeting with a staffer in Washington, would likely be most effective. If you are more interested in discussing a local issue or educating them about social work and social work education, you can accomplish that during a meeting in your local district. Educational meetings can also occur in Washington, but it is not always necessary to make the trip for that purpose.

### **Virtual Meetings**

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, Congressional offices have continued to hold virtual meetings. However, much of the preparation and communication with Congressional staff in setting up and executing a meeting has remained the same. If planning a virtual meeting, please check with the Congressional office on an acceptable virtual meeting platform as offices may have different preferences.

### **Requesting a Meeting**

Once you have identified whether you would like to schedule a meeting in Washington or in your home district, the next step is to call the office phone number (which you can find on the office's website) and state you are a constituent interested in scheduling a meeting.

- If you are planning a meeting in Washington, ask to meet with the staff person who handles health and/or education issues.
- If you are planning a meeting in a district office, request to meet with the Congressperson or the district director.

Many staff members in the district offices handle constituent case work and work on issues specific to the district; whereas staff in Washington handle broader legislative issues and national policy. If the Congressperson is unavailable to meet, staff meetings are appropriate and beneficial as staff are knowledgeable about the issues and the Members' positions. To request a meeting, ask for the appropriate staffer's email address to follow up with an email meeting request or go ahead and request the meeting over the phone.

When requesting the meeting, either by email or phone, be sure to include the following information:

- Who you are and your affiliation. Also, state that you are a member of the Council on

Social Work Education.

- Explain why you would like to meet (e.g. to talk about CSWE and the importance of social work and social work education).
- Clearly state your availability or preferred time to meet; provide multiple days and times if possible.
- Include your contact information for follow up.

### **Preparing for the Meeting**

While you do not need to be an expert on the Member of Congress with whom you are meeting or their staff, you should familiarize yourself with some basic information, such as their background, current events, what committees they serve on, any notable legislation they have introduced or supported, how they have voted on issues you care about, and whether they lead or serve on any caucuses of interest. Members' websites include their biographies, committee assignments, press releases, background on the Member's home state or district, and areas of interest.

Websites also provide contact information for the Washington, DC and state or district offices, as well as constituent resources, such as information on visiting Washington, DC; and other constituent resources.

You will also want to craft your concise message before getting to your meeting. Use the process discussed above to organize your thoughts and prepare a message to use in your meeting.

### **Conducting the Congressional Meeting**

Meetings are generally brief, ranging from five to 20 minutes with Members of Congress, especially in Washington, DC. If you are meeting with staff, plan on a meeting as short as 15 minutes or as long as an hour, but don't assume you will have a full hour. It will be important to stick to your message and articulate your "ask" early, as you never know when the meeting will end abruptly.

A typical constituent meeting can go as follows:

1. Thank the staffer or Member for taking the time to meet with you.
2. Introduce yourself, exchange business cards, and provide any materials you brought for the meeting, such as a one pager about your research and/or CSWE.
3. Describe your affiliation, its mission, your role, and why you are meeting with them today. For example, you can say, "I am here today on behalf of the Council on Work Education. I am very concerned about federal support for social work and social work education. Let me tell you how social work education promotes individual, family, and community well-being, and social and economic justice."
4. At this point, the Member or staff may ask you questions. If not, offer to answer any questions they may have and offer to keep in touch.
5. End your meeting the way you started it – by saying thank you.

## **Following Up**

Ongoing and regular communication with your elected officials is a preferred outcome of a meeting. Immediately following your meeting, be sure to send a thank you email and include in it any follow up information you promised. Your thank you note can also include an invitation for the Member or the staffer to visit your institution or lab to see your work firsthand. This will help them gain a better appreciation for social work and social work education.

Find ways to keep in touch. If the Member or staffer expressed interest in learning of future developments in your work, forward them a press release or a positive news story on a recent scientific finding or breakthrough. Find a way to keep them interested in CSWE.

Finally, report back to CSWE with any feedback from your meeting. Lewis-Burke is here to assist with follow up and would be happy to meet with any office you found to be particularly helpful or interested in learning more about CSWE's activities.

## **Success Can Take Many Forms**

It is important to remember that success can take many forms. Not every meeting will be a homerun. Sometimes just having the opportunity to teach an office about social work and social work education is a win.

Examples of successful meetings include, but are not limited to the following:

- A staffer may take the meeting, listen to your message, and thank you for coming.
- Another staffer may be slightly more engaged – they may listen to your message, but not commit to taking any action on your “ask.”
- Another staffer may listen to your message, ask questions, and request additional information so that they can make an informed decision.
- And the best-case scenario would be if the staffer listens to your message, says they will take action on your “ask,” and requests to stay in touch on a regular basis. Don't be discouraged if your meetings don't go like this. Advocacy is a long term, consistent effort.

## **Writing a Letter or an Email**

Correspondence by mail and email are popular options for communicating with Members of Congress. Each day congressional offices receive hundreds of letters and emails. Email is preferred over regular postal mail as mail must be screened at an off-site location, delaying its arrival to Capitol Hill by more than a week.

When writing to your elected officials, use the same tools as those used to craft your message for a meeting. Messages should be written clearly and concisely; state why this issue is of importance and how you would like the Member of Congress to act. Also, include some of your personal background as an expert in the field and any pertinent information about your organization and CSWE. Specify whether you would like return correspondence and provide the appropriate contact information.

Keep in mind constituent letters and emails are most effective when sent to coincide with a vote, hearing, or other event. Messages that are direct, informative, based on fact, and relate to the Member's district or state are most effective. Member websites include mailing and email

information.

## Making a Telephone Call

When preparing to make a telephone call, craft your message clearly and concisely. Similar to a meeting and a letter, your message should include an “ask” and explain why it is important to you as a constituent and member of the social work community. The difference with a phone call is that you have less time to make your case than if you were meeting in person or writing a letter. It is always helpful to write out a short script of what you would like to say. Keep it brief.

When calling, you may ask to speak with the Representative or Senator directly, though you will likely be passed off to a staff member. Therefore, you may choose to be connected with the staff member who handles health and/or education issues. If they are not available, you will be asked if you would like to leave a message. Staff members answering the phones generally cover a variety of issues; so be prepared with a clear message, ask, and facts. You can also ask to leave a message on the appropriate staff voicemail or leave a message and request a return call. Be prepared to provide your address and telephone number.

In addition to using the House and Senate websites to obtain your Senators’ and Representative’s office phone numbers, you can call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and provide your legislator’s name and request to be connected with the office.

## Helpful Links

Council on Social Work Education  
<http://www.cswe.org>

Department of Health and Human Services  
<http://www.hhs.gov>

U.S. House of Representatives  
<http://www.house.gov>

Health Resources and Services Administration  
<http://www.hrsa.gov/>

U.S. Senate  
<http://www.senate.gov>

Indian Health Service  
<http://www.ihs.gov/>

White House  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov>

National Institutes of Health  
<http://www.nih.gov>

Department of Education  
<http://www.ed.gov>

Department of Veterans Affairs  
<http://www.va.gov>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services  
Administration  
<http://www.samhsa.gov/>

HealthCare.gov  
<http://healthcare.gov>

## Section IV: Navigating Capitol Hill

### **Congressional Office Building Security**

Before entry into any one of the congressional office buildings, all visitors are screened by a magnetometer, and all items that visitors bring inside the building are screened by an X-ray device. Your assistance is needed to help expedite the security screening process. Please refrain from bringing items larger than a purse or briefcase. Laptops may need to be removed from any case during the X-ray process. Shoes do not need to be removed, but jackets should. Picture ID is not required.

Prohibited items\* include:

- Weapons and explosives
- Aerosol and non-aerosol sprays (prescriptions for medical needs are permitted)
- Any liquid, including water
- Food or beverages of any kind
- Cans and bottles
- Bags larger than 14" wide x 13" high x 4" deep
- Knives, razors, and box cutters
- Mace and pepper spray
- Gift-wrapped items

*\* Please note that exceptions can be made if a prohibited item is determined to be necessary to serve "childcare, medical, or other special needs."*

# One-Page Summary Guide

## Please Remember to...

- Read all preparation materials.
- Familiarize yourself with the member of Congress whose offices you will be visiting.
- Develop specific talking points.
- Prepare handouts and bring business cards.
- Dress as you would for any professional meeting.
- Plan your travel ahead of time to ensure promptness.

## DOs and DON'Ts...

- **DO** be courteous to everyone.
- **DO** be on time.
- **DO** be a good listener.
- **DO** offer specifics when discussing legislative context (e.g. “support [specific bill name]”).
- **DO** offer to provide further information after the meeting.
- **DON'T** prolong the meeting if it would seem forced to do so.
- **DON'T** be surprised or discouraged if the staffers you meet appear young.
- **DON'T** be surprised if you are kept waiting when you arrive.
- **DON'T** be surprised if you meet in a hallway or other multipurpose space.
- **DON'T** use technical jargon.
- **DON'T** bring gifts for the Member or staff.

## Follow-Up...

- Provide any additional information requested.
- Write thank-you letters.