effective communication with elected officials

*Communicating with your elected official doesn’t have to be complicated or include every last detail or piece of information. Effective communications are clear, concise, honest and to the point. Elected officials depend on constituents and advocates like YOU to inform them on issues and help guide their decisions, so communicating with your elected officials is an important civic responsibility that can result in real changes that impact your health center.*

## GETTING STARTED

• Select the best communications approach. Communications isn’t just about sending a press release, making a phone call, or responding to an email. It’s about all of that, and more! When communicating with your elected official, “what” you communicate is as important as “how” you communicate.

• Think about the best way to tell your story, to share your information, and to ask for the support of your elected official in as clear a way possible.

• Remember that talking with an elected official is no different than speaking with one of your peers. Speak clearly, thoughtfully, and always with respect.

• Before any meeting, carefully plan out what you are going to say so you can maximize your time spent with your elected official. Clearly lay out your goal for the meeting and stick to your objectives.

## DURING A MEETING

• **Be Polite**: Avoid personal criticism and always be polite. You may not agree with your elected official on all the issues, but you need to maintain a positive and respectful relationship – remember you will NEED to work with them for the duration of their term.

• **Always Say THANK YOU**: Thank your elected official for their time and attention and express appreciation for past or future support.

• **Offer Yourself as a Resource**: Offer to act as a resource for more information on the issues. Always include your name, telephone number, and/or email address in case your elected official would like to get in touch with you. Encourage them to be in contact with any questions or if they need additional information.

## FOLLOW-UP AFTER THE MEETING/HEALTH CENTER VISIT

• **ALWAYS follow up your conversations with policymakers and their staff with a “Thank You” note via email and/or handwritten letter**. This should be done within two weeks of your meeting. In your follow-up note it is appropriate to briefly restate your issue and your main points. With your email/letter, include any additional information your elected official may have requested or that you promised to provide.

• **Share Information**: Provide feedback on your meeting to your state association and NACHC so that they may also follow up with your elected officials, if needed.

• **Keep a Record**: Let NACHC and your PCA know about the success of your meeting and what you discussed.