

“People in Recovery,  
Families, Friends



Your Voice is a Capitol Investment  
for Addiction Recovery”

Developed by MOAR, Massachusetts Organization for Addiction Recovery

February 16, 2011

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## **Policymaker Education Basics**

### **COMMUNICATION TIPS for Building Dialogue with Your Elected Legislators**

- Be Credible
- Be Convincing
- Be Clear
- Be Concise
- Be Consistent
- Be Creative
- Be Committed
- Build Coalitions
- Celebrate Victories

#### **When Calling:**

You can always reach your Senators' and Representative's offices by calling the State House Switch Board, which is 617-722-2000. When connected, identify yourself as a constituent and representing organization. Ask to speak to the Legislative Assistant (L.A.) who handles the issue you wish to discuss. Share your name, address, purpose, brief sharing of your story, willingness to provide more information, and request for follow up. Exit with the name of the contacted assistant for the future.

#### **When Writing:**

Writing is the preferable way to voice your constituent opinion to your elected officials however; it is not the timeliest. When an issue is not urgent, a letter is a very efficient way to communicate and it usually generates a written response from your Representative or Senators. You want to state your position clearly and concisely.

Address Your Letter to :

Senator or Representative [insert name]  
The State House  
Boston, MA 02133

#### **When E-mailing:**

Your e-mail should be just as formal as a written letter, it just gets there faster.

## **VISITING THE STATE HOUSE**

### **Policymaker Do's and Don'ts**

#### **Do**

- Identify yourself and say whom you represent immediately on each contact. Policymakers meet hundreds of people and they can't remember everyone.
- Know the issue and the status of the legislation. Refer to the legislation by number.
- Know your legislator. Have some idea of his/her position on the issue, past votes on similar legislation as well as legislative and personal interests can help you tailor your arguments. Here your state organization can be particularly helpful.
- Be brief. Legislators are very busy.
- Be specific and practical. Relate arguments to situations in the legislator's home district.
- Thank legislators.
- Keep the door open for further discussion even if you don't agree at this time. "Politics make strange bedfellows" is not without foundation.
- Talk with legislators even if their positions are opposite yours.
- Think of yourself as a consultant to a legislator. You have expertise and insights that help the legislators understand the bill.
- Be honest. Never lie. Acknowledge opposing arguments and any political liabilities.
- Ask the legislator for support.
- Leave behind a one-page fact sheet summarizing your position. Highlight important facts and arguments. Include your name, address and telephone number so you can be reached if there are questions.

#### **Don't**

- Back legislators into a corner.
- Don't overwhelm them with too much information or jargon.
- Get into lengthy arguments.
- Be afraid to say you don't know. Offer to find out and send the information back.
- Confront, threaten, pressure or beg.
- Expect legislators to be specialists. Their schedules and the number of bills make them generalists.
- Ask the impossible.

## **MEETING WITH YOUR STATE SENATOR OR REPRESENTATIVE**

Personal meetings with policy makers are among the most powerful opportunities to make the case for substance abuse prevention and treatment. Lawmakers need to hear from constituents and experts that prevention, treatment, and recovery are more effective and economical than law enforcement and incarceration as strategies to address a wide range of community health and safety problems. You can help by reinforcing this message on the local level, including it in meetings with your Representative or Senator.

Meeting with a legislator presents particular advocacy challenges. Generally, legislators are charismatic and charming people, eager to hear the views of their constituents. However, their goals in a meeting may differ from yours. You will want him/her to act, or make a commitment to support your aims. On the other hand, the member may be inclined to avoid controversy and balk at making a clear commitment to you. Expect ambiguity, but don't give up.

### **BEFORE THE MEETING**

#### **KNOW YOUR LEGISLATOR**

Be prepared to appeal to his/her personal, professional, and legislative concerns. For starters, learn something about the district and the member's election record. How did he/she vote on other prevention and treatment issues? On similar issues? Use this information to develop a realistic sense of what you can expect to accomplish during the meeting.

#### **PLAN AHEAD**

Be sure to tell the scheduler the purpose of the meeting. Send (or fax) the office brief, summary information and a list of people who will attend the meeting. In addition, find out if your legislator holds public meetings in his/her district. At those gatherings, you can raise your concerns in public, perhaps with the media present.

#### **SPEAK WITH A UNIFIED VOICE**

Recruit leaders from local coalitions, VIP's, and articulate program participants and alumni who know the value of the programs to attend the meeting. Plan and decide your strategy with participants well in advance of the meeting. Designate a facilitator and a note taker who will record everything the member says during the meeting.

### **DURING THE MEETING**

#### **HAVE CLEAR, LIMITED GOALS**

Keep the discussion to one message and one or two main points. Be specific about what you want the lawmaker to do. Repeat your message in as many different ways as possible

#### **PROVIDE SUCCINCT WRITTEN MATERIALS AND HELPFUL VISUAL AIDS**

Focus on how prevention, treatment, and recovery support services meet critical community needs. Point to success stories and to programs that have generated productive citizens and saved taxpayer expenditures. Demonstrate: that prevention, treatment, and recovery support services save money; work; and that much of the community relies on these services. Invite the legislator to make a personal visit.

## **FYI**

### **Sample Agenda for Policymaker Education Meetings**

- Designate one person to be the primary spokesperson for the meeting.
- Be brief with your introductions.
- Discuss the major accomplishments of your program—highlight outcomes, key groups involved, and number of volunteers.
- Use a fact sheet, as well as, legislative alerts to educate your members
- Ask how you can have a continuing working relationship with the member and their staff on alcohol and drug issues.

#### **▪ Materials to Leave with Members or Staffers**

- A one-pager describing your coalition/program. This document should highlight successful and innovative programs.
- Sample publications, posters, t-shirts from your group.
- Relevant Legislative Alerts

### **Note:**

#### **LEGISLATIVE STAFF**

Legislative Assistants are often the staffers you will want to speak to. Different staffers handle different issues. When calling, ask to speak to the assistant who handles your issue.

### **MAKE THE MOST OF ANY OPPORTUNITY FOR SMALL TALK**

Use introductions strategically to create a personal rapport and relationship. Use your knowledge of the member's background to develop common ground.

### **AFTER THE MEETING**

What you do after the meeting can be just as important as the meeting itself. Follow-up and persistence will be necessary to achieve your goals.

### **EVALUATE THE MEETING**

Immediately following, discuss what happened at the meeting. Were your goals accomplished? Why/Why not? What commitments did the member make, if any? What follow-up is required? Did you promise to provide additional information? What points were best communicated during the meeting? Which were weakest? A written summary prepared by the note taker and distributed to meeting participants will be a helpful tool for follow-up and ongoing advocacy efforts.

### **MEETING OUTCOME**

Was a commitment made: Does he/she want/need additional information? Did you have any particular problems communicating your message? What concerns did the member raise during the meeting?

### **SEND A THANK YOU LETTER**

Be gracious and polite, no matter how badly the meeting went. Include in your letter any information you promised to provide the member. Restate your concerns and what you want. Suggest how the member can help you, even if he/she does not entirely support your position. Remind him/her about the consequences of his/her position; who will be helped or hurt by his/her vote

## THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

### Steps in the Legislative Process – How a Bill becomes Law!

#### Step One

Bill is introduced.

#### Step Two

Bill is assigned to a committee for consideration.

#### Step Three

The committee holds a public hearing. This gives interested parties an opportunity to give public testimony for the bill. Testimony is the oral version of your supportive letter with purpose, personal meaning, stats, and facts. It is an opportunity to put a face to the cause. It is important to be brief and succinct.

#### Step Four

The full committee considers the bill, marks it up and reports it out, by majority vote of the committee members. If it receives an “out to pass”, the bill is passed favorably, and goes to the next committee. Bills with a cost must be reviewed by House and Senate Ways and Means Committee, one branch at a time.

#### Step Five

Once a bill passes the committee process, it goes to appropriate branch floor for a vote. Members can offer amendments (changes) on the floor. A majority vote passes or rejects the amendments. Any amendments that pass become part of the bill. A final majority vote passes or fails to pass the bill.

#### Step Six

The bill is sent to the next branch, where it must go through steps 2 through 5 as outlined above. If the bill passes the House; it must go to the Senate or vice versa.

#### Step Seven

After both chambers pass their versions of the bill, a Conference Committee is appointed (made up of members of the House and Senate Committees that considered the bill) to resolve the differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill. If there are no differences; the bill goes to the Governor.

#### Step Eight

The governor either signs or vetoes (rejects) the bill. He/she can pocket veto the bill. This means that after 10 days, if he/she does not provide a signature, the bill dies.

#### Step Nine

The state legislature can override (reject) the veto by a 2/3 vote of both branches. The move must begin in the House.

## **Summary of the steps in the budget process**

### **Step 1: Governor's Budget**

The budget begins as a bill that the Governor submits in January (or February if at the start of a new term) to the House of Representatives.

### **Step 2: House Ways & Means Budget**

The House Ways and Means Committee reviews this budget and then develops its own recommendation.

### **Step 3: House Budget**

Once debated, amended and voted on by the full House, it becomes the House budget bill.

### **Step 4: Senate Ways & Means Budget**

At this point, the House passes its bill to the Senate. The Senate Ways & Means Committee reviews that bill and develops its own recommendation.

### **Step 5: Senate Budget**

Once debated, amended and voted on, it becomes the Senate's budget bill.

### **Step 6: Conference Committee Budget**

House and Senate leadership then assign members to a joint "conference committee" to negotiate the differences between the House and Senate bills. Once that work is completed, the conference committee returns its bill to the House for a vote. If the House makes any changes to the bill, it must return the bill to the conference committee to be renegotiated. Once approved by the House, the budget passes to the Senate, which then votes its approval.

### **Step 7: Vetoes**

From there, the Senate passes the bill to the Governor who has ten days to review and approve it, or make vetoes or reductions. The Governor may approve or veto the entire budget, or may veto or reduce certain line items or sections, but may not add anything.

### **Step 8: Overrides**

The House and Senate may vote to override the Governor's vetoes. Overrides require a two-thirds majority in each chamber.

### **Step 9: Final Budget**

The final budget is also known as the General Appropriations Act or "Chapter nnn of the Acts of 20xx." The final budget consists of the Conference Committee version, minus any vetoes, plus any overrides.



## **Supportive Resources for Capitol Investment for Recovery**

- Faces and Voices of Recovery [www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org](http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org)
- The Johnson Institute [www.johnsoninstitute.org](http://www.johnsoninstitute.org)
- CADCA- Community Anti- Drug Coalitions America [www.cadca.org](http://www.cadca.org)
- NAADAC -The Association for Addiction Professionals [www.naadac.org](http://www.naadac.org)
- NEAAR- New England Alliance for Addiction Recovery [www.neaar.org](http://www.neaar.org)
- ABH- Association of Behavioral Healthcare [www.abhmass.org](http://www.abhmass.org)
- FAMM- Families Against Mandated Minimums [www.famm.org](http://www.famm.org)
- RHC- Recovery Homes Collaborative [www.recoveryhomescollaborative.com](http://www.recoveryhomescollaborative.com)
- BPHC-The Boston Public Health Commission [www.bphc.org](http://www.bphc.org)
- SAFE MA-Supporting an Alcohol Free Environment
- AIDS Action Committee [www.aac.org](http://www.aac.org)
- Read the book, another great resource *William White's Slaying Of The Dragon*

### **MOAR - Contact Information**

**MOAR, Massachusetts Organization for Addiction Recovery**

**30 Winter St., 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Boston, MA 02108**

**Maryanne Frangules, Executive Director**

**Mellisa Prefontaine, Office Manager**

**Toll Free 1-877-MOAR or 617-423-6627**

**Fax 617-423-6626**

**E-Mail: [maryanne@moar-recovery.org](mailto:maryanne@moar-recovery.org)**

**Website: [www.moar-recovery.org](http://www.moar-recovery.org)**

MOAR, MA Organization for Addiction Recovery, is an affiliate of NEAAR, New England Alliance for Addiction Recovery, and a member of Faces and Voices of Recovery.

MOAR is a nonprofit, membership organization, of people in recovery, families, and friends, educating the public about the value of addiction recovery to the public.

MOAR has a fiscal sponsor, Third Sector New England with funding from MA BSAS/DPH and The Boston Public Health Commission

MOAR takes full responsibility for this document.

## ***A PUBLIC POLICYMAKER TELEPHONE ACCESS GUIDE***

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Governor, <i>Deval Patrick</i></b>   | <b>617-727-3600</b>  |
| <b>Lt Governor, <i>Timothy Murray</i></b>   | <b>617-727-3600</b>  |
| <b>Department of Public Health Commissioner,<br/><i>John Auerbach</i></b>   | <b>617-624-5200</b>  |
| <b>Department of Public Health, Director,<br/><i>Bureau of Substance Abuse Services, Michael Botticelli</i></b>     | <b>617-624-5151</b>  |
| <b>Department of Public Health, Constituent Liaison,<br/><i>Bureau of Substance Abuse Services, James Hiatt</i></b> | <b>617-624-5102</b>  |
| <b>Senate President <i>Therese Murray</i></b>   | <b>617-722-1500</b>  |
| <b>Senate Ways and Means Chair<br/><i>Senator Stephen M. Brewer</i></b>   | <b>617-722-1540</b>  |
| <b>Senate Clerk's Office</b>  | <b>617-722-1276</b>  |
| <b>Senate Lobby</b>   | <b>617-722-1455</b>  |
| <b>House Speaker<br/><i>Representative Robert DeLeo</i></b>   | <b>617-722-2500</b>  |
| <b>Assistant Majority Leader<br/><i>Senator Steven Tolman</i></b>   | <b>617- 722-1280</b>   |
| <b>House Ways and Means Chair<br/><i>Representative Brian S. Dempsey</i></b>  | <b>617-722-2990</b>  |
| <b>House Clerk's Office</b>   | <b>617-722-2356</b>  |
| <b>House Lobby</b>  | <b>617-722-2000</b>  |
| <b>Mental Health Substance Abuse Committee Co- Chair<br/><i>Senator John F. Keenan</i></b>                          | <b>617-722-1494</b>  |
| <b>Mental Health Substance Abuse Committee Co-Chair<br/><i>Representative Elizabeth Malia</i></b>                   | <b>617-722-2060</b>  |
| <b>To Find Your Legislator's Name and More<br/><i>State's Citizen Information Number:</i><br/><i>online:</i></b>    | <b>1- 800-392-6090<br/><u><a href="http://www.wheredoivotema.com">www.wheredoivotema.com</a></u></b> |
| <b>To Find Legislators, Committees, Bills, etc.<br/><i>online:</i></b>  | <b><u><a href="http://www.mass.gov/legis">www.mass.gov/legis</a></u></b>                             |