**How to…. meet with an elected official**

Meeting with an elected official can have a big impact. It shows them that you really care about a particular cause and informs them how they can help. Meeting with an elected official can appear daunting but follow the steps below to help you prepare for a successful meeting.

# **Step 1: Find who your elected official is**

You want to make sure you are targeting your message to the right person, so it’s important to know who that is. For federal representatives you can search via postal code on the Parliament of Canada website: [www.ourcommons.ca/members](http://www.ourcommons.ca/members) or [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca). Each provincial and municipal legislature will also have its own list of candidates on its website. For more information, please see our guide on how to navigate government.

# **Step 2: Call your elected official**

Once you have the correct contact details for the official, call their office to set up a meeting. Elected officials will have administrative staff who will likely answer your call. Treat them the same as you would the elected official. Introduce yourself and give a summary of the issue you would like to discuss with the legislator. Elected officials have busy schedules and would not be able to meet immediately, so don’t leave your appointment to the last minute if your campaign is time sensitive.

You can also email the official, but this also runs the risk of your email getting lost among the thousands of emails that the official receives every week.

Make sure you understand how much time the legislator is giving you for the meeting. Meetings can be as short as 15 minutes, which means preparation is essential.

# **Step 3: Prepare for the meeting**

Legislators have multiple meetings per day. Practice your message so it is clear, concise, and contains your key messages. You do not need to be word for word perfect, but you do need to feel confident and comfortable. While preparing, choose a portion of your personal story as a way into the conversation about the wider issue. You don’t need to be an expert on everything to do with the subject but contact CNIB to gather any fact sheets or information to support your message and leave with the official.

Most importantly, don’t forget to double check the date, time, location of the meeting and how you are going to get there in advance. Some government buildings also have additional requirements (photo ID, prohibited items, etc.), so make sure you know what they are.

# **Step 4: The meeting**

Arrive 15 minutes early and let the front desk know you’ve arrived. While the meetings may start late, end early or be shifted altogether, it is important to be early, flexible and courteous.

Appropriate clothing for any meeting will be neat and professional.

When attending a meeting at a provincial or federal legislature you should wear business attire – a jacket or suit being appropriate.

A meeting in a government official's riding office may be less formal – casual business attire may be sufficient.

**The meeting should be divided into five parts:**

1. Introduce yourself including why you are an advocate. You want to get your unique story across within a concise amount of time.
2. The goal of the meeting should be outlined immediately after introducing yourself. Briefly outline the issue and include the impact to yourself and/or the community and some facts/figures that support what you’re saying.
3. Listen carefully during their response; you ideally want to be able to tell what part of your message resonated with them. Answer questions briefly or commit to sending answers after the meeting if you’re not sure.
4. Sum it up with next steps and take notes to ensure you remember what has been said so that you can refer back and follow up as needed.
5. Leave behind a fact sheet summarizing your “ask”. Keep it short – one page, if possible, and include your contact information should they have any further questions. The leave-behind is the document they will pass along to others if they are interested in your issue.

Many decision makers now have official social media accounts. If the meeting went well, ask the decision maker if you can take a photo with them to put up on social media to thank them for the meeting.