

TIPS TO MAKE YOUR CONGRESSIONAL VISIT A SUCCESS

BEFORE THE MEETING

- ✓ **Familiarize yourself with materials**, including the Member's bio and information on afterschool in your state. Take note of the Member's particular interests and think of ways to tie afterschool to them.
- ✓ Check to see if the Member joined the Afterschool Caucus. (*See list in packet.*)
- ✓ **Support talking points with brief stories** that relate to afterschool and why additional resources are needed. For example, include a success story of a student who had been struggling or how growth of a particular program helped your community.
- ✓ Do a **brief run-through** before the meeting and keep track of the time.
- ✓ **Before entering the office, review the talking points and determine who will cover each topic.**
- ✓ When you arrive at the office, check how much time you will have and adjust accordingly.

DURING THE MEETING

- ✓ **Don't be disappointed if you meet with a staff member.** In fact, sometimes meeting with staff is better; some Members rely on staff to dig deep into issues. By getting to know a staffer, you can **become one of his/her community resources.**
- ✓ **Don't assume** the Member or staffer knows a great deal about afterschool. Members of Congress and their staff work on hundreds of issues and therefore rely on experts like you for information on particular programs.
- ✓ **Use the talking points** as a suggested guide for the meeting. You'll find that the meeting will quickly turn into a conversation and that time will go by faster than you expect.
- ✓ **Make sure you ASK the Member/staff to support increased funding** for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program and CCDF, to co-sponsor S. 326/HR 4086, to support STEM afterschool, and to join the Afterschool Caucus.
- ✓ **Listen** to what the Member/staff is interested in or concerned about, connect afterschool to those issues.
- ✓ **Stay on message.** Don't bring up individual requests. It's easy to take the meeting off topic, so stick to the talking points. Likewise, try not to get distracted by prolonged conversations about people or places you may have in common with the staff or Member. Try to stay on topic as much as possible.
- ✓ **You don't need to know every answer.** If you don't have an answer to a question, offer to research the information and get back to the office as soon as possible. This provides a great opportunity to continue interaction with the Member/staff.
- ✓ At the end of the meeting, **thank the Member/staff for his/her time** and encourage him/her to visit an afterschool program. Invite him/her to a *Lights On Afterschool* event in October.
- ✓ Before leaving the office, ask for an **email address or fax number** (mail takes months to arrive in Congressional offices).

AFTER THE MEETING

- ✓ Every member of your group should **send a thank you note.** (*See sample in your packet.*)
- ✓ **Follow up** on any unanswered questions that came up in the meeting. Pass any questions you can't answer along to the Afterschool Alliance and we will follow up on your behalf.
- ✓ **Group Leaders should fill out the Feedback Form and return it to the Afterschool Alliance.**

Have fun and remember that this could be the beginning of a great relationship!