

## *Facility Visit Guidelines*

A facility visit/tour by members of Congress provides an unmatched opportunity to educate them and their staff about the role orthotics and prosthetics plays in the overall health and well-being of patients. Use the visit to educate them about the role O&P plays in the community and show them how federal health care dollars are being spent. A first-hand experience will go a long way to increase your legislator's understanding of O&P services. In addition, it can provide press opportunities for legislators and your facility, and give legislators a chance to meet with constituents.

A good tour takes careful planning. The following are guidelines for setting up and conducting a site visit with your member of Congress:

- **Invite Your Legislator.** Send a letter to your representative and his or her staff inviting them to visit. Outline who you are and what you would like to show them. Include how much time you suggest be allowed for the visit (usually one to two hours). Include directions to the facility.
  - Follow up with a phone call to their scheduler to see if the invitation has been received and its status. Keep in mind that you will have to be flexible and arrange the tour around the legislator's schedule. In addition to formal recesses, members of Congress are most likely to be in their home districts on Mondays and Fridays.
  - Don't be discouraged if a visit is not scheduled immediately. Be persistent.
- **Draft a Schedule.** Plan to have your staff assist your visitors in touring the facility.
- **Prepare Your Message and Keep It Simple:**
  - “The O&P profession helps people. O&P devices are custom devices and a high level of skills is required to provide them.”
  - “Suppliers without the necessary skills and facilities are providing many highly technical custom O&P services.”
- **Determine Press Activities.** Your legislator may request to have the local press present. If so, work with the legislator's staff to coordinate these activities. Allowing the media to participate may help guarantee a legislator's visit.
- **Prepare to Visit the Facility.** Prepare for the visit the same way you would prepare for any other business or sales presentation.
- **Engage Your Legislator During the Tour.** Walk them through each step of patient care. You may want to:

- Let your visitors know the time, expertise and detail that go into fitting and rehabilitating the patient. Try to schedule patients who are real success stories. Emphasize the labor-intensive nature of O&P and highlight custom devices.
- Talk about ABC/BOC certification and training.
- Make an impressive display of what happens between initial patient contact and reimbursement. Write each step of the process on a sheet of paper in large print. Place these steps, with the forms for each step, on the walls of your meeting or conference room.
- **Reimbursement Procedures.** Once they have seen the complexity of the services you provide, describe to them, step-by-step, the process you must follow to be paid for the devices. Explain the documentation required by Medicare and other insurers. Detail the review process and describe the steps required to appeal a denial. They will probably be surprised to learn how much time your office staff spends documenting care for reimbursement.
- **Photographs.** Take plenty of photographs and be sure to send copies to AOPA to use in AOPA's *Almanac* or other publications. Also, if you are unable to have the media present during the tour, send local reporters a follow-up summary and a photograph for their use.
- **Summarize.** Finish the visit by explaining how Medicare cuts and more complex regulatory requirements will affect you and your patients. Discuss the impact of rising costs without a corresponding rise in reimbursement.
  - Your visitors will have questions about your work and the patients you treat—the visit will go by very quickly. Give your card to the legislator and his/her staff.
- **Follow-up.** Once the tour is over, send a thank you letter to the legislator and any staff who attended.
  - Reiterate the key issues you discussed and offer to assist the member of Congress and his/her staff with O&P related problem solving. If there were any positive articles in the local media, include copies with your letter. Finally, include a photo of your patients with the legislator as a reminder about how important O&P services are to consumers.
  - If you are inclined, offer political support.
  - Contact AOPA's Government Relations Staff and tell them about the event. They can assist you with any follow up information that was requested. This helps the government relations staff in their efforts on Capitol Hill.

If you have any questions regarding a facility visit, please call the AOPA Government Relations staff at (571) 431-0876.