

## *Key Points for Personal Visits with Legislators*

Personal visits with your legislator are an effective method of grassroots advocacy. These visits lay the groundwork for future communication with the legislator and his or her staff. To make your meeting more effective:

- **Be On Time.** Capitol Hill and the district offices are busy places and time is of the essence.
- **Be Prepared.** Know your issue and the impact of the legislation you support and the impact it will have on your patients, profession, community and Medicare
- **Identify Yourself.** Identify yourself as a constituent by providing your address and congressional district. Secondly, identify yourself as an O&P professional.
- **Establish Rapport.** After introductions and handshakes, start the meeting with a comment about mutual interests – friends, activity in the state, a recent vote – to tie you or your profession to the legislator.
- **State the Purpose of Your Visit.** Tell the Member who you represent, what you want to talk about and why you are talking with him or her. If you are advocating for a specific bill, be sure to refer to it by number, explain its status and what action you would like the Member to take.
- **Select a Spokesperson.** If there are two or more people going to the appointment, identify a spokesperson who can lead the discussion and ask other members of the group to speak as the discussion moves along.
- **Use Your Expertise and Share Success Stories.** You are there to share your expertise on the issue you're discussing. Be prepared to share brief anecdotes and success stories to make your point.
- **Be Constructive and Pleasant.** If there are problems with a particular program or bill, admit it and identify alternative solutions. Do not threaten or make negative comments. You are looking to continue the relationship and will probably need the legislator's support on other issues in the future. In the meantime, feel confident that you have shared your information in positive manner.
- **Listen Carefully and Answer Questions Truthfully.** Allow the legislator to share his or her insights or positions with you. Though you may not agree with the views expressed, this gives you the chance to respond based on your knowledge and experience. Listen carefully and identify issues of concern to the Member. Answer all questions to the best of your ability. If you do not know the answer to a question, say you will find the answer and get back to them once you do know.
- **Summarize Major Points.** Wrap up the meeting by summarizing the major points of discussion and leave behind a fact sheet with your business card.
- **Leave Promptly.** At the end of your allotted time, thank the Member and his or her staff member for their time and leave promptly.
- **Follow-up.** Send a thank you letter to the member and his or her staff and take the opportunity to again summarize your main points. If you have promised to send additional information, do so promptly.