

August Is Congressional Recess Education Month

Invite Your Members of Congress to Visit Your Agency

As members of Congress return to their districts during the month of August - August 11 – September 5 for the House and August 9 - September 7 for the Senate - the National Council urges you to invite your Representatives and Senators to visit your agency while they are back home. Use this opportunity to continue forming relationships with those who represent you in Washington and their staffs.

For additional information on how to prepare and make the most of your visits, please refer to pages 13-15 of the [National Council's Public Policy Guide](#).

Prepare for Your Visits

Planning can help to make your visit run more smoothly. Some factors you may wish to consider as you plan for your visit:

- Who will be invited to the visit in addition to your member of Congress? Others you may wish to invite include: local and state officials, your member of Congress' district staff, and community allies (local law enforcement, etc.)
- What will you show your member of Congress during their visit? Most members of Congress know little about community behavioral healthcare – what programs and facilities can you share to help them learn more about what your organization does and who you serve in your community?
- Who will take part in the event? Consider having a variety of people on hand to represent your organization, including: employees, board members, and consumers

Materials For Your Visits

In order to make your visit as successful as possible, the National Council suggests preparing a packet of materials to leave with the Representative or Senator. Items you may wish to include:

- Your organization's most recent annual report
- A list of board members
- Descriptions of your programs and other organization highlights
- Business cards
- Overview of issues that affect your organization or state
- Your calendar, so that you can establish a date for a future site visit to your organization by the Representative or Senator and/or their legislative staff

You may also wish to have someone act as a photographer during the visit to capture your Representative or Senator's visit to your organization. Offer to share these photographs and to send out a press release describing the visit and your organization.

Facts and Figures for Your Visits

Having answers to the following types of questions will help prepare you for your visits. In addition, if you have met with the Representative or Senator in the past, keep in mind any areas of particular interest or concern.

- How many consumers does your organization serve annually?
- How many people does your organization employ?
- What do case management and/or rehabilitative services look like at your organization? Give examples of what these services are and what they can do for consumers.
- What would changes in the definitions of case management and/or rehabilitative services mean for your organization?

Key Issues

The National Council suggests focusing on the following key points in your visits:

- **Sign on as a co-sponsor in support of the Community Mental Health Services Improvement Act**
- Support increased funding for addictions treatment, research, and prevention

Contact the National Council

Please let the National Council know when you have scheduled an appointment by contacting Allison Fort at AllisonF@thenationalcouncil.org, or (301) 984-6200, x235. This allows the National Council to track and follow up on your efforts.