Advanced Messaging: Effective Communications in an Era of Budget Cuts

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How to Effectively Communicate with Fiscally Conservative Members of Congress

- Strive for a long term relationship with the member and office
- Present the CBHC as a local business/employer
- Describe the work that you do, people that you help and provide data/information on your successes/outcomes
- Engage other partners from the community to validate the effectiveness of your organization
- Offer specific ways the member can be supportive
Developing Long Term Relationships with Members

A relationship does not develop from one conversation, it takes time and a lot of work...

- Meet with members both in the congressional district and in DC multiple times a year
- Attend local town hall meetings and speak personally with the member
- Invite the member and staff (local and DC) to tour the facility
- Invite the member to attend press events you have organized
- Meet with the member as part of other groups, such as Chamber of Commerce or with local law enforcement officials
CBHCs are Local Businesses/Employers

Paint a picture of the organization as an employer:

✓ Highlight board members and others who are CBHC supporters from the business community

✓ Discuss your annual operating budget – sources of revenue

✓ Provide information about the size of your organization relative to other employers in the area

✓ Highlight the number of employees:
  • Describe the type of jobs offered – well-paid professional positions, with benefits
  • Explain that community partners rely on you as a purchaser of goods/services

✓ Share state Information about the economic impact of CBHCs, especially with Senators
What are Community Behavioral Health Centers

✓ Provide an overview of the people who receive care at a CBHC:
  • Types of conditions
  • Client mix (children/adolescents; adults)
  • Socioeconomic characteristics

✓ Describe type of care provided:
  • Clinical care
  • Supportive services- housing, food assistance
  • Job supports/training

✓ Provide data on your successes/outcomes:
  • Stabilize conditions – reduce costly in-patient care
  • Ensure individuals are not a danger to themselves/others
  • Help individuals reengage with their families, the community, and optimally return to employment
CBHCs and their Network of Community Partners

✔ Develop relationships with non-traditional partners:
  • Include business leaders on your board
  • Join the local Chamber of Commerce
  • Create a partnership with local law enforcement
  • Cultivate relationships with local and state elected officials, both Republicans and Democrats
  • Seek out support from relatives of clients who are recognized leaders in the community

✔ Use these partners to demonstrate the important role CBHCs play in the community.
Opportunities to Support CBHCs

✓ Identify multiple ways members can be supportive:
  • Co-sponsor legislation
  • Sign letters of support for local, state or federal projects
  • Tour your facility
  • Attend important events

✓ Your request must be specific, you should follow up with the office, and if needed, you should make the request multiple times

✓ Keep in mind that members may not support a request until a relationship is established