How to Manage Questions and Reactions

During your Hill visits, Members will have a variety of reactions to what you are saying. The following provides guidance on how you should follow up to ensure you get the most out of your Hill visits.

If your elected official says...

“This sounds great! I’ll sign on to everything!”

Thank them and let them know that you’ll be in touch to follow up. If possible, find out who their mental health/addictions, and/or health legislative assistant (LA) is for both their DC and local offices. Sometimes, members agree to take specific actions, but will forget if not prompted. Also, make sure to let the National Council know about any commitments you may have received.

“I’m interested. Are there letters being circulated about this bill? What can I do?”

Thank them and refer to the immediate actions/requests that are listed on the fact sheets. Let them know that you will keep them posted on any future actions, such as signing on to a circulating letter. If possible, find out the name of the local staff person as well as the D.C. staff person to follow up. Make sure you let the National Council know about any commitments you may have received.

“Sounds Interesting. I’d like to learn more.”

Members of Congress, especially those recently elected, are often unwilling to make commitments the first couple times they are asked. This is in part because they simply cannot agree to everything that is asked of them and are eager to learn more about an issue before making a decision. If you get this reaction, thank them and let them know you’re happy to serve as a resource. Find out the name of the appropriate staff people and follow up with them. Let the National Council know of their interest.

“I’ve always opposed federal funding for mental health and addictions issues.”

Be polite, but persistent. Let them know that while you disagree with them, you hope that the member or staff might be willing to take some time to visit your agency in the district and learn more about the valuable services your agency provides to the community – services that are an entirely appropriate and worthwhile investment of federal funds. If possible, find out the name of the local staff person as well as the D.C. staff person to follow up.