

Tips for Talking to Your Legislator on Youth Advocacy Day

When you dress nicely, it conveys respect to your legislator and shows that you are taking your meeting seriously.

1. **Dress Nicely.** There is no need to dress fancy, just be sure that you are clean and presentable.
2. **Introduce Yourself.** Tell the legislator your name and be sure to mention that you are here for Youth Advocacy Day and are part of ASK-Y.
3. **Start with a compliment.** If you know anything about the legislator or have heard them speak at other events, it is a great idea to mention this. If not, don't worry about it, just be sure and thank them for taking the time to meet with you.
4. **Clearly and directly state the issue you want to discuss** "I'm here to talk with you about the bill to extend Medicaid to Foster Youth up to age 21" or "I want to talk to you about helping homeless youth by funding the housing trust fund". It is best to address just one or two issues in a meeting.
5. **Know the facts about your issue.** Feel free to bring notes in with you or the one-pager that ASK-Y provides about the bill to extend Medicaid. Remember, legislators have many bills that they are looking at. They don't know as much about this bill as you do and they may need to you to provide information.
6. **Share how this bill will affect you personally.** Facts and Stats are great, but the most important thing you can do for legislators is educate them about how the bill affects real people. Let them know why you care about this bill and why they should care. If you have experience with the foster care system or homelessness, you can provide valuable information that can help legislators see the human side of the bills we are trying to pass.
7. **Be a good listener.** After you make your pitch, allow the legislator to respond and listen respectfully.
8. **Be honest.** If a legislator asks you a question and you don't know the answer, DON'T MAKE IT UP! Just be honest and tell the legislator that you don't know but can get back to them with the answer. Be sure that you write down the question and the legislator who asked it. If you're not sure how to find the information, other ASK-Y members can help.
9. **Ask for a commitment.** Ask the legislator for their support on the bill. For example, "can we count on you to support extending Medicaid to 21 for foster youth?" or "can we count on you to support homeless youth by supporting the housing trust fund?"
10. **Thank them for their time.** Again, it is so important to be polite and respectful. Be sure and thank them even if they didn't agree with you or make the commitment you asked for.

Legislators like to hear from the folks living in their district, but it means even more to them when they hear from advocacy groups like ASK-Y. When you tell them you're from an organization, that means you represent more people than just you.

Many of us have lots of opinions about politics but if we bring up too many issues in one meeting, the message can get watered down.

Let them know how it would affect YOU if Medicaid were extended to 21 for foster youth or if the housing trust fund were fully funded.

Just because a legislator doesn't agree with you today, doesn't mean that they won't agree with you in the future. Being polite builds bridges.