

## Take Your Pharmacy's Legislator to Work



As an independent pharmacy owner, it is essential to meet with your lawmakers and invite them to visit your pharmacy to discuss issues affecting your practice and patients. Lawmakers are elected by you as their constituents. They must hear from you to provide insight into the pharmacy practice and understand how they can change laws beneficial to your business and patients regarding Medicare, Medicaid, and other critical issues like PBM reform.

Here are some tips on effectively preparing for a meeting with your legislator and scheduling a tour of your pharmacy.

### **Step 1: Set an Appointment & Follow-up**

Call the legislator's office to request an appointment and tell them what issues you wish to discuss. You should contact the local district office that is nearest to your community. Have several dates in mind and ask what would be convenient for the legislator's schedule. Make sure to call again closer to the date of the meeting and reconfirm the appointment schedule. A legislator's schedule is hectic and subject to change at a moment's notice. Ask the staff person how much time you have with the legislator. Have a schedule so that you do not "chat" until the clock runs out. Ask the staff person how much time you will have and plan accordingly. Most meetings last about 30 minutes max.

### **Step 2: How to Conduct the Tour**

Be on time for your appointment and be patient. Act naturally, as with any regular visitor. A simple familiarization tour of the daily workings of a community pharmacy is informative enough. Interaction with patients and staff is essential—maybe joining the pharmacist behind the prescription counter to chat with patients.

Don't bend on them with your political stance on issues, but save some time during their visit to raise community pharmacy's issues. Just seeing your daily operations should ensure that the

legislator never looks at community pharmacy care in the same way as before the tour. You will have achieved your purpose and established yourself even more as an "expert" resource.

### **Step 3: Stick to the FACTS!**

What can your pharmacy show as far as your commitment to the community and the numbers, including minor business aspects? For example, the years you have been in operation, how many prescriptions you fill a year, how many patients you treat a year, the number of employees you have, and any decrease over the last three years due to business conditions. Give the legislator a one-page paper describing the issue and the solution. We can provide you with simple issue briefs on many pharmacy legislative topics.

### **Step 4: Prep for Questions & Ask for Support**

Be prepared for questions from the legislator and expect the staff people, who usually come along, to take notes and learn from the experience. Know the number of your patients you serve monthly, how many are on Medicaid and Medicare, and other primary community service data for your pharmacy. Include this data in a printed Pharmacy Profile to hand out to the legislator and their staff members. If the legislator asks you a question to which you don't know the answer, advise the legislator that you will follow up on the issue and get back to him or her.

It is also essential to ask the legislator to take a specific action – ex: Support or oppose a bill or amendment, become a co-sponsor of a bill, etc. Be sure that when they leave, your legislator knows that you are an informed, professional resource should they need information and insights about health care concerns. Volunteer yourself as a source of local expertise on pharmacy-related health care issues.

### **Step 5: Send a Thank You**

Leave the meeting open-ended for further discussions—and ALWAYS follow up with a personal "thank you" note. Make sure the thank you note summarizes the main points you made in the meeting and what the legislator said. To make the most significant impact, send a thank you note by email and copy any staff members that may have attended.

### **Closing Thoughts**

Scheduling a pharmacy tour with a legislator is something all pharmacists should do. It helps to build relationships with the legislator, and establishes pharmacists as an information resource on health care issues.

Not sure where to start? Through our partnership with Aspire Health, Keystone can provide legislative talking points and advocacy resources to set your pharmacy up for success. For any questions, please connect with your Keystone Business Consultant via email at [info@kpparx.com](mailto:info@kpparx.com).