

10 Tips for a Successful Hill Visit in Olympia

1. **Find out about your legislators.** Learn everything you can about your Senators and Representative in your district. Go to www.leg.wa.gov for a complete listing of your lawmakers. You can also learn about their respective backgrounds and legislative interests.
2. **Contact your Representative and Senators.** Call your lawmaker's office. Request that the Appointment Scheduler set up a meeting on the day you'll be in Olympia. Try to schedule your meetings 3 - 4 weeks in advance, if possible. (You may be asked to fax or e-mail a request in addition to your oral request. The office will give you their fax number/e-mail address.)
3. **Explain who you are and why you want to meet.** Tell them you would like to meet about early education issues.
4. **Confirm your appointment(s).** Before attending your meeting make sure it is still on and you have the appropriate materials available at your briefings.
5. **Be prepared for your visit.** Become familiar with the issues. Know all sides of the argument. Bring business cards and any "drop off" materials to leave with legislators.
6. **Figure out in your group what everyone is going to say and their role.** Everyone should be assigned something to say and one person should serve as the "facilitator" for the Hill Visit. The facilitator's job is to make sure everyone has a chance to speak. You might also appoint someone the recorder. The recorder's job is to describe the experience, but more important to ensure that any commitments are written down and any follow up questions are taken care of.
7. **Be prompt and patient for your visit.** Lawmakers have very busy schedules, so you'll need to be on time and flexible. Keep your visits to 15 minutes or less.
8. **Be to the point, politic and polite during the meeting.** Then ask for something to be done. Concentrate on one or two issues, and request that the legislator take a specific action, such as co-sponsoring a bill. State your position clearly and concisely. Express your views reasonably and do not argue.
9. **Follow up afterwards.** Send thank-you letters to your legislators, emphasizing key points and following up with any requested information. If you met with helpful staff, let the legislator know. Ask to be kept informed about the issues you discussed.
10. **Continue to be an advocate for the kids and families.** Continue building relationships with lawmakers by offering to host visits at your ECEAP or Head Start site, attending a local fundraiser, and making visits to their offices in Olympia offices the next time you are in town.