



Tips for a Successful **VIRTUAL MEETING** with Your Tennessee State Legislator

Keep in mind that your goal is to develop an ongoing relationship with your elected representatives, as well as to influence their position on specific issues or bills.



Know your legislator. The state website at: capitol.tn.gov can help you find out and tell you a little about who they are.

Find out what committees your legislator serves on. Are they relevant to your issues?



Look up their website, Facebook and Twitter accounts. Most TN legislators talk about the issues that matter to them online.

In addition to your own state representative and senator, you may want to think about establishing a relationship with other legislative leaders who chair relevant committees or serve other leadership roles.



Prepare ahead of time. Write down key points to discuss in the meeting as well as any questions you might have. Practice what you want to say. Appointments move quickly, sometimes lasting only 5 to 15 minutes. Be prepared to make your case simply and efficiently but also to make a personal connection if you can.

Limit your topics. Focus on a single issue or bill, two at most. Don't risk confusing your legislator or weakening your case by bringing up too many issues at once.



Your legislator may not know about the needs and experiences of those with disabilities. Be patient if they make a mistake and take time to educate him/her in plain language. Do not use jargon or acronyms.

Do not be intimidated. Legislators will view you as the expert on the issue and on your life experience.



In Your Virtual **MEETING**

Set the Stage

Choose a quiet, well-lit place to have your video-conference.

Dress for Success

Your legislator will likely be in business-casual wear.

Prepare for technical difficulties

Log on 5-10 minutes early to check that your computer, microphone and speakers are working. Have a back-up plan with your phone handy so that you can call your legislator.

Courtesy

Always be courteous to legislative staff members and legislators.

The Introduction

When speaking to a legislator or staff member, quickly identify yourself, the issue you would like to discuss, and the fact that you are from his or her district.

Share Your Personal Story

It will help you make your point.

Respect Time Limits

Be brief; prepared; clear; honest; accurate; persuasive; timely; persistent; and grateful.

Don't Forget to Listen

The appointment is for both of you to talk and share ideas.

Agree to Disagree

Don't debate with a legislator or give ultimatums such as "I won't vote for you if you do not support my position." Respect the legislator's right to disagree with you.

Thank You

At the end of the meeting thank the legislator and/or the staff for their time. Follow up with an email or a written thank you note (they love when you include a family photo) and remind them of your main points. Thank your legislator with a quick post to your own social media or theirs!

HAVE FUN!

With each meeting you will become more confident and effective.

Stay Connected

After your meeting, follow your legislator on Facebook, Twitter and/or Instagram.

