

PLAN CAPITOL LOBBYING DAYS

One of the most effective ways to let elected officials know your organization's views on the issues is through grassroots lobbying. Lobbying provides legislators with the information they need to make the best decisions for their constituents. The education you can provide may be critical to the decisions they make.

Elected officials pay attention in mass numbers. It is important for the elected officials to hear both sides of the issue before making their decisions. They want to know the cause and effect the issues will have on both sides.

- 1) **Determine the date (at least three months in advance).** Look up the legislative calendar at <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/>. Give plenty of time to coordinate your efforts and gather other supporters. It is recommended to have at least two lobby days a year in order to keep the topics fresh. We suggest February and March. Coordinate the dates with other suppliers, advocate groups, opinion leaders in your community. Big numbers says a lot to legislators!

- 2) **Determine your format for your lobby days** – Groups have all different formats in which they lobby at the Capitol. You can plan a social event, forum or reception inviting all legislators to attend. Maybe an ice cream social or breakfast. Just be sure you will be able to address each legislator individually. If the venue is not within walking distance from the Capitol, you may need to provide transportation. Also make sure the venue is large enough to accommodate all invited guests. Is it accessible to people with disabilities?

- 3) **Email legislators when you are coming**

- 4) **Recruit advocates (ongoing, at least three months in advance)** Remember, big numbers says a lot to legislators! Reach out to your supporters and other suppliers in the state, health care workers, physicians, physical therapist, advocacy groups, and local politicians. The best way to recruit people to your team is by talking to people about the issue. Ask for their support

- 5) **Gather the contents for your lobbying packet. (ongoing, have ready two weeks prior to event)** You will want the following items prepared for your lobby day:
 - a) Key points of the DME licensure bill and why it's important for the state
 - b) An agenda of the day's activities/meetings/appointment list
 - c) A map of office locations
 - d) Talking points on the issue for everyone in your group. (email/mail to attendees at least a week before the event)

- 6) Prep your group - Meet with supporters in person or via or conference call 1 week prior to event**
 - a) The purpose of your prep meeting is to make sure everyone is well educated on the issue.
 - b) Prepare for possible questions from the legislators. Think of both sides of the issue. Why might someone oppose your issue? What would your rebuttal be?

- 7) Invite media to your lobby day (two days prior to event)** Media can play a powerful role in your event. If the media covers your lobby day and mentions the issues about which you will be meeting with legislators, pressure will be added to the legislators to support your view. Send a press release to local media in your area and press at the Capitol. Designate someone to take pictures at the event. You will want to these for any press releases.

- 8) Day of the event** -Make sure to arrive early and gather your group to go over materials and the plan one more time!

- 9) After the event** - Immediately following the event, you will want to send a press release to your newspapers. VGM's Action Center can help find your local newspapers, contact information. <http://www.vgmdclink.com/action-center.php>. You will also want to write/email a thank-you note to the elected officials and participants. This will remind them of issue and any promises that were made.