

Advocacy Training Resource

Difficult Scenarios at Advocacy Visits

Difficult situations may arise in your advocacy visits, from an inappropriate comment from a lawmaker, to a 501(c)(3) violation, to not having enough time, and everything else in between. While it is hard to anticipate every scenario, below are difficult situations that might arise. To prepare for your meetings, review the situations with those joining you on the advocacy visit and discuss how best to respond.

Consider using this resource if you have additional time during your advocacy visit training.

What do you do when...?

- You are meeting with your newly elected representative, who is thrilled to see you, and knows many of your delegates personally and wants to chit-chat with them and tell “campaign stories.”
- Your representative is known for being long-winded and loves an audience. He is a strong supporter of gun violence prevention and has been talking for more than 10 minutes about this issue and his role and commitment. You need to move on.
- Your senator is known to be supportive of many NCJW issues, but not at all on reproductive rights. He is on the record supporting two of the three key issues, but not on ensuring access to abortion. He opposes lifting the Hyde Amendment restrictions. Knowing this, you aren't sure how to approach this issue in your lobby visit.
- You introduced your delegation to your representative and gave some background on NCJW. Just as you are about to have a member present the first issue, your representative launches into a talk about his last trip to Israel and how important it is to have a strong policy that supports Israel.
- You thought you had arranged for a meeting with your senator, but when you arrive, you find that you will be meeting with his staff on immigration and reproductive health.
- The aide to your senator/representative wants to discuss in detail the role of the faith community in providing social services, especially abstinence-only sex education. She points to several faith groups in your state who demonstrate positive results in these efforts. She

keeps emphasizing that the ultimate goal is getting kids the important and vital information that the only safe sex is no sex.

- You know your senator or representative agrees with you on all your issues. How do you make the best use of your time during your appointment?
- Your current meeting is running long and your next meeting begins in 20 minutes.
- A member of your delegation is presenting the NCJW position on immigration to your representative. He continuously interrupts her to add information about what he has done on this issue, even though he has publicly expressed opposition to a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants currently living in the United States.
- During a meeting, an NCJW member tells the legislator or staffer the wrong information about NCJW's position on the issue.
- When you walk into the senator's office, she sees one of NCJW's leaders and thanks her for helping on her election campaign last fall.
- Your representative wants to argue with your group after every issue is presented and seems determined to convince you that her stance on the issues is the right one. One of the NCJW members is equally determined to argue back and convince her that the NCJW positions are the feelings of her constituents.
- As you are presenting the NCJW talking points on an issue, your senator brings up another similar piece of legislation she is sponsoring. You are not there to discuss the additional piece of legislation.
- You are meeting with an aide of your senator or representative. The aide becomes disrespectful and antagonistic to your delegation.
- Your senator is very, very late getting to her meeting with your delegation. She apologizes but says she only has 10 minutes for you. How do you respond?
- You are meeting with staff and they seem to be in a hurry to get through the information, especially where they disagree with NCJW positions.