

- When writing a letter, instead of “Mr.” or “Ms.” use:
The Honorable _____
Address
City, State, Zip Code
Dear Senator or Representative _____
- Begin e-mail with:
Dear Senator _____, or
Dear Representative _____

The Arc Tennessee values diversity and does not discriminate based on race, ethnicity, religion, age, geographic location, sexual orientation, gender or level of disability.



3. Telephone Calls:

Telephone calls should:

- Convey a meaningful message with helpful information, and
- Be made in a timely manner.

Calls from constituents are the most effective.

It is important to make your call brief and come to the point quickly. Always be polite. If the legislator is not available, leave your message with a legislative assistant or other staff. The Staff member will get your message to your legislator.

4. When you call:

- Identify yourself with your name, city or town of residence;
- If your call is regarding a specific bill, give the bill number and subject matter
- State your support or opposition to the bill and a brief reason for your position.
- Request your legislator’s support or opposition to the bill;
- Let your legislator know your availability to discuss the issue further;
- Leave your phone number;
- Express thanks.

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**151 Athens Way, Suite 100
Nashville, TN 37228
1-800-835-7077
615-248-5878
Fax 615-248-5879
www.thearctn.org
info@thearctn.org**

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Wants You to Know...



**Helpful Hints
For Interacting
with
Policy Makers &
Elected Officials**

Guidelines for Meeting with a Policy Maker

1. Prepare for Meeting

- Make an appointment
- Learn about the policy maker's stand on your issues and on important legislation (is he/she a co-sponsor of the bill, etc.)
- Plan what you want to say
- Decide who will lead the discussion

2. During the Meeting

- Keep introductions short
- Limit chit chat because before you know it the meeting will be over
- Tell the policy maker what you want
- Talk about one or two important issues
- Keep talking about your issues
- Ask to take a photo with the policy maker at the end of meeting if possible (so doesn't interfere with advocacy objectives)

3. Share Your Personal Stories

- Explain why it is important for policy maker to be interested in your issue
- Ask for the policy maker's position on your issues and reasons for it
- Tell about how you are personally affected by the issue
- Explain why your personal story is important and how other people are also affected
- Offer to provide additional information

4. Make Specific Requests of Policy Maker

- Explain why it is important for policy maker to be interested in your issue
- Request specific action by policy maker

(such as co-sponsor a bill, oppose a certain amendment, speak in support of or in opposition to an amendment, visit a program in home community, give a speech)

- Ask for the policy maker's position on your issues and reasons for it
- Offer to provide additional information
- Propose a meeting or visit to program in home district

5. Take Picture

- Take a picture while you are there
- Explain to policy maker how the picture will be used

6. Write Thank You

- Write a thank you for the visit and summarize what you said
- List what you said you would deliver

7. Provide Feedback to The Arc of Tennessee Staff

- Report to The Arc of TN staff about your meeting
- Describe the policy maker's response
- Describe the nonverbal communications by the policy maker and staff
- Report what you promised to provide to policy maker in response to issues raised
- Ask The Arc what follow-up is appropriate and follow through!

Tips on Writing or E-Mailing a Member of the General Assembly or Congress

Senators and Representatives pay attention to their mail (both regular and e-mail). It's good

politics. Responding to constituents is crucial to reelection. Members know your vote can be won or lost by their responses.

Because of security issues, letters sent by U.S. mail are delayed. It is best to contact your U.S. Senator or Representative by email, phone or fax.

The most effective letter is a personal one, not a form letter. The letter should be concise, informed and polite. Some specific tips:

1. Contents of letter or e-mail

- Identify yourself as living in the your legislator's district.
- Try to keep your letter to one page, two pages at most. Don't write on the back of a page, and write legibly.
- State your purpose in a short introductory paragraph. If the subject is a bill, cite the bill number and name. Cover only one issue or subject in the letter.
- Be factual and explain how the legislation will affect you, your family and others. Avoid emotion.
- If you believe the legislation should be opposed, say so. Give an example of how it may be harmful and suggest a different approach.

2. When writing a letter or e-mail:

- Make sure your name and address are legible.
- In e-mail, make sure your name, e-mail address, regular mail address and phone numbers are included. Currently, many legislators only respond by regular mail.