

Minnesota HomeCare Association

Provider Advocacy Outreach Toolkit

“Our mission requires us to be the voice for those who have home health care needs. We work diligently to represent home care clients, their families and caregivers so they can focus on their health care goals. Together our voice is stronger. Let’s keep educating decision makers.” Darla Thompson, Recover Health

Why Should I Advocate?

You are a provider of home care, but you are also a constituent. As such, you are the ideal person to convey to lawmakers the importance of home care. You have the power to educate them about the impact of home care on their community, and to engage them on important issues. Without your help, lawmakers may not realize the ability of home care to support jobs, to lower health care costs, and to improve lives of those in their district. At MHCA, we want to make it easy for you to take action.

How can I make a difference?

1. Use our online [Advocacy Center](#) to send a customizable email about current legislative issues. Simply select an issue and enter your information to send your representatives an email.
2. Attend [Home Care Day at the Capitol](#) – March 4, 2020
3. Request an in-district meeting.
 - a. Meet at your office or in a client’s home
4. Follow MHCA on [Facebook](#) – make sure to like and share our advocacy posts!



*“As home care workers, we provide an essential resource and lifeline to protect the quality of life for our elders and for many of our most vulnerable Minnesotans. We must continue to organize and make our voices heard to secure the living conditions necessary to ensure that access to home care services continues to grow, and that the people we serve are able to live with dignity. We as home care workers have a responsibility to our colleagues, the people we serve and their families, and to our communities to share our experiences with our lawmakers and build a prosperous, caring future for the state of Minnesota.” Representative Hunter Cantrell
(Representative Cantrell has been a home care worker for seven years.)*

Mission: MHCA represents and supports Minnesota home care providers committed to high quality home care services.

Vision: MHCA will shape the home care landscape to improve and sustain quality care services.

How do I arrange a meeting with my lawmaker?

There are two types of meetings you can schedule with your lawmaker. One takes place at the Capitol (St. Paul or D.C.), the other is an in-district meeting. An in-district meeting takes place within a lawmaker's district (i.e. not at the Capitol). These meetings can take place in your office, a local coffee shop, or your client's home (necessary for Medicare patients!)- whatever works best for both you and the lawmaker.

The first step – if you don't already know it – is to find who represents you. You can find this information [online](#). You will also need to determine if you wish to speak to your state or federal representative. If you have questions about this, don't hesitate to reach out to MHCA.

The next step is to contact your lawmaker. You can call his/her office or send an email request. Just remember: they are very busy, it may take a few days to receive a response so plan accordingly. If you haven't heard from someone within 2-3 days, you may wish to follow up using another method of communication.

When requesting a meeting, it is important that you use the correct title (Representative, Senator) and state the reason for your request. It is also important to note that you are a constituent (or serve clients in the lawmaker's district). If you are granted a meeting, don't be surprised if it is a brief (15-20 minute) time slot, or with a staff member. Remember: lawmakers can be incredibly busy but establishing that relationship is so valuable!

What should I do to prepare for my meeting?

If you are attending Home Care Day at the Capitol, review the materials sent ahead of time. Otherwise, you will be trained and prepared when you arrive at the Capitol. Make sure to bring business cards if you have them!

If you are planning an in-district meeting (or meeting at the Capitol outside Home Care Day at the Capitol), the following tips will set you up for a successful visit:

- Do your research. Does your lawmaker sit on a key committee? Does s/he know much about home care, or will you be doing a lot of educating? Feel free to reach out to MHCA – we're here to help!
- Review sample scripts/materials from MHCA or visit our YouTube channel for ideas on how to talk to your lawmaker!
- Be sure to dress appropriately. Business casual is preferred.
- Bring a pen and paper to take notes.
- If you are running late or need to reschedule, let the office staff know as soon as possible.
- Remember that lawmakers are regular people who have been elected to represent your community. Don't be intimidated!

What should I do during the meeting?

The day is finally here! You have taken time away from work, have spent time lining up the visit and preparing – you're set! The following may be helpful as you walk into your meeting:

- Be on time! If you're running late, let the office know.
- Feel free to start with some small talk but keep it to a minimum.
- Be flexible. It's common for lawmakers to be late and/or to be called out of a meeting. If a staff member needs to step in, s/he will relay your information to the lawmaker. Staff can be some of our best allies!
- Be sure to address your lawmaker as "Representative" or "Senator" (as appropriate) unless s/he asks you to do otherwise.
- Keep it simple when discussing industry issues.
- Be sure to listen carefully – this is often just as important as speaking!
- Be prepared to answer questions, but don't be afraid to say you need more time to research an issue. Remember: MHCA is here to help!
- Remind your lawmaker that you represent not only yourself, MHCA, and your agency, but X clients (their constituents!) as well!
- If you are not on a home visit, invite the lawmaker to come to a client's home. S/he can really get a better understanding of what home care is all about.
- Thank the lawmaker for their time and promise to follow up with any material requested.

I'm done now, right?

Congratulations, you've completed your meeting! The hard work is done, there are just a few loose ends to tie up before you move on to your next advocacy conquest.

- Follow up with a thank you letter, highlighting the main points of the meeting. Remember to keep it brief! Include any requested follow-up material.
- Please complete the meeting form on the [MHCA website](#). This gives MHCA staff and lobbyists valuable information.