

NETWORKING WITH LEGISLATORS

The success of our legislative program is contingent upon the contact you make with members of the legislature. This initial contact is important because future correspondence with your elected officials will have more influence on their thoughts and actions if they know you, what you stand for, and how concerned you are about issues at hand.

We encourage you, particularly during the times when your legislators are in their districts, to get acquainted with the members of the state legislature from your community.

This get-acquainted social should cover an explanation of NASW-PA legislative goals and programs, explain your role as a social worker (or social work student) and other NASW-PA priorities. Below are some rules for a successful networking session:

1. Limit the group to 10 to 12 people.
2. Keep the meeting informal.
3. Be a good listener.
4. Keep the meeting short.
5. Thank the elected official for any past assistance.

Other Beneficial Activities

1. Contacting the legislator's office for general information about schedules.
2. Confirming the date and time of the activity via e-mail or letter to the legislator's office.
3. Sending announcements to a limited group with the request that they let you know whether they will attend.
4. Requesting that guests arrive 15 minutes before the scheduled arrival of the elected official.
5. Introducing the guests to each other, and brief them on the goal of the social event.

When the legislator arrives, the host or hostess should be certain that she or he meets each guest. After the introductions, it might be most convenient to have the legislator and guests place chairs in an informal circle and discuss the issues very briefly.

Several members of the audience should be primed to ask questions to keep the conversation moving smoothly and without awkward pauses. After the event, send a letter of thanks to the legislator for her or his appearance. It will be appreciated.

We know that you will enjoy this activity. It will also mean that your legislator will know more about NASW-PA and will be more responsive to your subsequent letters, visits, and communications.

An Idea for an Event

1. Try to arrange for the legislator to visit with division leaders occasionally, *but not during the electoral campaign*, to keep them abreast of concerns and/or success stories in the community. If they are

available, invite them to be a featured speaker at a special occasion, such as any division activities that are scheduled.

2. Be sure that the chapter leadership emphasizes the nonpartisan nature of NASW-PA in terms of enhancing the practice of social work. We are concerned about the issues that affect social workers and their clients – not party labels.