What is LEAD?

LEAD stands for Legislative Education and Advocacy Day. LEAD offers an opportunity for social work students to learn about the legislative process and the importance of advocacy by gaining experience at the statehouse. Lobbying legislators for policy changes that are important to our clients and the social work profession are key components in social justice.

This is an opportunity for you to join other social workers and social work students from around the state to rally at the Statehouse. There will be opportunities to:

1. Learn more about proposed legislation;
2. Visit and explore the Indiana Statehouse and see how the General Assembly works;
3. Hear from members of the General Assembly at the rally; and
4. Schedule an appointment to visit with your elected official and share your thoughts on proposed legislation.

Why Advocacy?

Advocacy is all about making necessary changes to the legislative system so we can better serve our clients and create a fair and unbiased system. As social workers, it is our responsibility to advocate for our clients and the profession to elected officials and others who have the power to create change. Throughout the profession’s history, social workers have sought to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources and opportunities that allow them to meet their basic needs.

2023 marks the NASW-IN 24th LEAD day. For 24 years social work students, professional social workers, and legislators have been coming together to discuss the needs of clients and the social work profession. Great strides have been made in social justice, civil rights, and professional licensing laws. Students like you make the difference!
What You Will Need to Know

The Indiana General Assembly: Find out more about Indiana’s Senators and Representatives, previous sessions, legislation, how to contact your legislators, and the upcoming 2023 General Assembly Session here: [https://iga.in.gov/](https://iga.in.gov/)

Finding Filed Legislation:
All the legislation that will be filed for the upcoming session can be found online at [http://iga.in.gov](http://iga.in.gov). You can search for legislation by clicking on the legislation tab or through the search function, click on “Bills” and type in the bill.

Remember Your Social Work Skills & the NASW Code of Ethics
Social workers are responsible for ensuring the voices of those they serve are being heard on various levels. Social workers are challenged with communicating the issues and concerns of those served to policy makers to pave the way for continuous change by:

- Affirming positive intention
- Finding common ground
- Building long-term relationships
- Understanding of person-in-environment
- Addressing stereotypes and misconceptions tactfully

**NASW Code of Ethics**

6.04 Social and Political Action
(a) Social workers should engage in social and political action that seeks to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources, employment, services, and opportunities they require to meet their basic human needs and to develop fully. Social workers should be aware of the impact of the political arena on practice and should advocate for changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions in order to meet basic human needs and promote social justice.
(b) Social workers should act to expand choice and opportunity for all people, with special regard for vulnerable, disadvantaged, oppressed, and exploited people and groups.
(c) Social workers should promote conditions that encourage respect for cultural and social diversity within the United States and globally. Social workers should promote policies and practices that demonstrate respect for difference, support the expansion of cultural knowledge and resources, advocate for programs and institutions that demonstrate cultural competence, and promote policies that safeguard the rights of and confirm equity and social justice for all people.
(d) Social workers should act to prevent and eliminate domination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against any person, group, or class on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, or mental or physical ability.
How a Bill Becomes a Law

The diagram below indicates the steps by which a bill introduced in the Senate or House becomes a law with possible actions at each step. Bills may originate in either house of the General Assembly except for revenue-raising bills, which must be introduced in the House of Representatives.
Visiting with Your Legislator

A face-to-face meeting with your legislators is an excellent opportunity to discuss the issues and bills that you advocate for and their impact on you, your family, your agency, the clients you work with, and your community and state. The following guidelines may be helpful as you begin visiting your legislators:

- Always call ahead for an appointment and briefly explain the purpose of the meeting.
- Be on time and professionally dressed (NO JEANS).
- Keep your comments to the point and limit your presentation/discussion to the time scheduled, unless the legislator extends the meeting. (Refer to sample letter and phone call for some suggestions on how you might organize your comments.)
- Use bill numbers and titles when possible. Tell the legislator why the issue is important to you and to other constituents in his/her/their district.
- When possible and appropriate, bring consumers of services with you to talk with the legislators.
- Ask the legislator for his/her/their position on the issue and how he/she/they will vote. If supportive, thank him/her/them for the support. If undecided or not supporting the bill or issue, ask if you can provide additional information on the issue.
- Make sure to communicate your “ask.” What are you wanting them to do to support the issue?
- Always be courteous, even if the legislator disagrees with your position on the issue.
- Leave information for the legislator to review after your meeting.
- Thank the legislator for his/her/their time and send a thank you note.
Advocacy Letter and Email Template

Make sure you personalize the letter to strengthen its impact, but stay brief and to the point. Try to keep the letter to one page. You can use this letter and send by email.

Your street address
City, State, Zip code
Phone Number
Email Address (for letters)
Date

The Honorable (Full name of Legislator)
(Your State Name) State (Senate/Assembly/House of Representatives)
Address

Dear Senator or Representative (Last name):

My name is (your first and last name) and I am a registered voter who resides in your district. The legislation addressing (describe exact name of bill before legislature, and issue concisely) is of paramount interest to me because I am a social worker. This issue directly impacts (my students, my clients, my profession, the way we as professionals will be able to function effectively, etc.)

I am primarily concerned about (describe major specific concern within the larger issue) because (Choose up to three of the strongest points that support your position and state them clearly.) Other aspects of this same issue that affect (Include a personal story. Tell your representative why the issue is important to you and how it affects you as a social worker and/or the clients you work with).

Thank you for your consideration of my viewpoint on this matter. I believe it is an important issue, and would like to see the legislation (pass, fail, or be amended) to ensure effective practices for the social work profession.

Sincerely,

(Your name)
Calling Your Legislators

Ask to speak with Representative/Senator or their Legislative Assistant (LA). You will most likely speak to an assistant or leave a voicemail message.

- Before you call, write down the main points that you want to include in your conversation. Practice what you are going to say.
- Ask to speak directly to the legislator.
- Identify yourself and where you are from (city, county).
- Be brief and concise. State the purpose for your call.
- Express your appreciation if the legislator is supportive of your issue. If the legislator is undecided, offer to provide more information.
- If you know the bill number and title, be sure to refer to it in your conversation.
- Be prepared to spend more time if the legislator wants more information.
- Remember to be courteous and to thank the legislator or staff person for his/her/their time.
- Send a follow-up letter restating the substance of the call and the legislator’s position on the issue as it was understood (whether there was direct contact with the legislator or with his/her/their staff). Again, thank the legislator for his/her/their time.

The content of a phone call to a legislator is very similar to that of a letter. Be prepared to answer questions and provide additional information. Following is a sample phone call script that you can use as a guide for calling legislators.

Sample Call Script:

“Senator/Representative (last name), my name is... and I am a resident of (city) in (county). Thank you so much for time, and I am calling today to ask your support of (describe your issue in a sentence or two).”

In another few sentences, tell them why you have concerns about this issue. You may use your professional experiences and/or provide important pieces of information referencing research data in brief and concise manner.

“What is your position on support for this critical area? Can we add the Representative/Senator to the list of supporters?”

Give the legislator an opportunity to express his/her/their opinion without interruption. If the legislator indicates that he/she will support the action on a bill that you support, thank him/her/them. If the legislator indicates that he/she/they is undecided or that he/she/they is not in favor of the action on a bill or does not support a bill or issue you support, politely ask them to reconsider and state again how important it is for your clients to receive these services or for the profession to be strengthened.
• Offer to meet with the legislator and/or provide additional information about the impact of reduced funds for services or lack of support for your issue.
• Offer to be a resource for questions or concerns, and be sure the office has your contact information. For questions you can’t answer, offer to find the answers for him/her/them.
• Offer the legislator your name and phone number in case he/she/they has additional questions at a later time.

NEVER SAY WHAT YOU DO NOT KNOW TO BE TRUE! Just let them know you will get back to them immediately with the answer. Legislators appreciate honesty and you will be viewed as having credibility.

Be sure that you get the name and email of the person you are speaking with.

“Thank you so much for your time speaking with me on this important issue. I will follow up with an email and provide additional information in regard to your question earlier.”

After the call, follow up with an email or mailed thank you note and reiterate your request.

Get to Know the Legislative Terms

**Amendment** A proposed change to the language in a bill by adding, substituting, or omitting a portion of the legislation before final passage.

**Appropriation** Legislation that funds an agency or program by directing the expenditure of money from the Budget Office.

**Authorization** Legislation that authorizes or permits the expenditure of funds for an agency or program, with the actual spending to be approved by the appropriations committees.

**Bill** Legislation introduced in either the House or the Senate. House bills are designated by the prefix “H.B.,” Senate bills by “S.B.”: and then followed by the bill number. Bill numbers are determined by the order in which bills are introduced.

**Caucus** A meeting of members of the same political party to determine the party’s position on legislative issues. May also be used as a verb.

**Committee** A subdivision of members of the House and Senate that prepares legislation for action by the parent chamber. Each committee has jurisdiction over certain subject matters and considers legislation pertaining to their jurisdiction. Most committees are further subdivided into subcommittees.

1. **Standing Committees** are permanent committees in the general field of legislative activity.
2. **Joint Committees** have members from both the House and the Senate.
3. **Conference Committee** made up of members from both chambers. Its purpose is to resolve the differences between the House and Senate version of a bill.

**Committee Process** Once bills are introduced, they are referred to one of the committees where hearings are held, where amendments are considered, and the committee reports its recommendations to the legislative body.

**Constituent** Any citizen residing in a district or state represented by a House Representative or a Senator.

**Co-sponsor** One who joins in sponsoring legislation. Co-sponsorship is a public demonstration of support for a measure.

**Executive Session** A meeting of a Senate or House committee (or, occasionally of either chamber) that only its members may attend.

**Expenditures** The actual spending of money, as distinguished from the appropriation of it.

**Filibuster** A time-delaying tactic used by a minority in an effort to prevent a vote on a bill that probably would pass if brought to a vote.

**Fiscal Note** The statement of the estimated amount of increase or decrease in revenue or expenditures and the present and future fiscal implications of a pending bill.

**Fiscal Year** The state’s annual accounting period, which begins July 1 and ends the following June 30. The fiscal year is designated by the year in which it ends.

**H.B.** The initials “H.B.” before the number designate a bill originating in the House.
**Hearings** Public meeting and discussion on a proposal scheduled by a committee; a session of a legislative committee at which supporters and opponents express their views. The committee announces hearings from one day to many weeks in advance and may invite certain persons to testify. Persons who request to testify may be turned down by the committee, but they are often allowed to either appear in person or submit a written statement for the record.

**Introduction** The original presentation of a bill.

**Joint Committee** A committee made up of members of both the House and Senate.

**Joint Resolution** Just like a bill, a joint resolution requires the approval of both houses and has the force of law if approved. Joint resolutions are generally used in dealing with limited matters, such as a single appropriation for a specific purpose.

**Lay on the Table** Postponement of the matter before the house, which can be brought up later for consideration by a motion to “take from the table.”

**Legislative action** The preparation, research drafting, introduction, consideration, modification, amendment, approval, passage, enactment, tabling, postponement, defeat, or rejection of a bill, resolution, amendment, motion, report, nomination, appointment, or other matter by the legislature or by a member or employee of the legislature acting or purporting to act in an official capacity.

**Legislative Services Agency** Statutory bipartisan service and administrative agency maintained by the legislative council to provide legal and bill drafting, impartial research, and technical and other services for the General Assembly.

**Marking Up a Bill** Going through a measure, usually in subcommittee and committee, taking it section-by-section, revising language, and penciling in new phrases. If the bill is extensively revised, the new version may be introduced as a separate or “clean bill” with a new number.

**Majority Leader** Floor leader, spokesperson, and strategist for the majority party.

**Minority Leader** Floor Leader for the minority party.

**Ranking Member** The most senior member of a committee from a particular party. Most often used to refer to the most senior member of the minority party.

**Re-committal** Sending a bill back to the committee that reported it for consideration.

**Report** Both a verb and a noun. A committee that has examined a bill refers it to the parent chamber by “reporting” its views and recommendations regarding the measure. A “report” describes the purpose and scope of a bill, along with supporting reasons. Opposing views as well as supplemental views of other members of the committee may be included.

**Resolution** A resolution deals with matters entirely within the prerogatives of one chamber. It does not require passage by the other chamber and does not carry the force of law. Most resolutions deal with the rules of a chamber or are used to express the sentiments of a single house.

**Roll Call** The vote on an issue before the body; either by an electronic tabulating machine or by voice vote with names of members being called in alphabetical order by reader and recorded.
S.B. The initials “S.B.” before the number designate a bill originating in the Senate.

**Sessions** Period during which the legislature meets.
1. Long Session (first regular): session which meets in odd numbered years; must be completed by April 29.
2. Short Session (second regular): session which meets in even numbered years; must be completed by March 14.
3. Regular Technical: one-day session which meets at the option of the General Assembly no sooner than 30 days after the official end of a regular session; limited to the consideration of vetoes, conflicts or technical errors in bills passed in the immediate previous regular session.
4. Special: session called by the governor as provided by the constitution; limited to 40 calendar days.

**Sponsor** The member of the legislature who introduces legislation.

**Standing Committee** Regular committees of the legislature set up to perform certain legislative functions. Members are appointed by the President Pro Tempore in the Senate and by the Speaker in the House.

**Suspend the Rules** A motion to expedite passage of legislation whereby any member recognized by the Speaker may “move to suspend the rules and pass the bill.” This requires a two-thirds vote in the House and majority in the Senate.

**Table, Motion to** A means of disposing of a bill or other matter for an indefinite period of time.

**Veto** The action of the governor disapproving a measure.

**Veto Override** Passage of a bill over the governor's veto, requires a constitutional majority of both houses.