

Advocacy Brief

Legislative Sessions in NC are different based on the year. In odd years (2015, 2017, etc.) session starts in January and runs through the summer. In even years (2014, 2016, etc.) session is shorter, starting in May and ending within a few months. Things move quickly during session so it is best to establish a relationship with your state Representative and Senator as soon as possible. They are elected into office to represent their constituents (Y-O-U) and they need to know the work that is done in their communities.

How do I find who represents me?

There are several ways to do this:

- 1) NASW-NC has an *Engagement* system which allows you to find your legislators. From our website, (www.naswnc.org), find the Advocacy tab and allow it to drop down. Click on *Take Action* and it will direct you to a new site. At the top of this site, you will see “Find Your Elected Official” on the right hand side with further instructions.
- 2) The legislative website (www.ncleg.net) also makes it easy to find your legislators. Look for the tab “Who Represents Me?” at the top. This option gives you several ways to look up your legislators with detailed instructions. Once you find out who represents you, the legislative website is a great resource to find their contact information both in Raleigh and back in the district. You can find email addresses, mailing addresses, and phone and fax numbers.

How do I begin talking with them?

How would you begin any other conversation? Introduce yourself- where do you live, what do you do, how long have you been a social worker, etc. Tell them *I am a social worker!* Tell them if you are involved with the National Association of Social Workers, NC Chapter. Tell them why you are contacting them (to get to know them, to talk about a specific bill, etc). Be professional in your conversation. Remember, you are not just representing yourself; you are representing your profession, your employer, your clients, etc. Be detailed in your information- don't assume they know something. Spell out lettered credentials (Masters of Social Work, Licensed Clinical Social Worker).

Still nervous? Call or email Kay Castillo at the chapter office for help with your message or current legislative concerns you might want to talk with them about.

What do I do after the visit/call?

Follow up with a thank-you in the form of a quick email, phone call or handwritten letter to let them know you appreciated their time. This also gives you a chance to follow through on your message to them (give them one last punch!). Also, contact Kay Castillo at the chapter office to discuss how the visit went and what NASW-NC staff can do to follow up with this legislator.