Interviewing Candidates
For GAC Liaisons

THE CANDIDATE(S)
• Research their background, profession, community involvement, previous elected positions.
• Identify any connections between background of interviewers and candidate, such as university or shared interests. Avoid references to political party affiliation, religion, sexual preference, etc.
• If incumbent, what is their position? Committee service? Bills authored or passed?

THE APPOINTMENT
• Team members can split questions, share issue information or have a nurse story related to the issue. Note responses and follow-up information.
• Designate a nurse point of contact to share available times, location and meeting agenda with candidate, as well as follow up after the interview.
  • Provide candidate with cell phone number in case of delayed arrival or need to reschedule.
  • The location and time should be convenient for all, neutral and provide space for private conversation, e.g., a coffee shop during non-peak times.
  • Use an after-interview debriefing to get feedback and consensus among team. Have point of contact send any promised information and thank them.

For groups of candidates, consider all availabilities, including constituents. You can interview candidates for more than one district together or all candidates for one district at a time. Space appointments to allow 10 minutes between interviews. One team member could serve as “greeter” between appointments in case candidates arrive early.

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**DO’S AND DON’TS FOR AN EFFECTIVE INTERVIEW**

**Do:** Send a reminder for the interview appointment; include contact number for unscheduled delays.
**Do:** Be prepared on the issues. Know the facts.
**Do:** Be specific about how the issue affects constituents.
**Do:** Be honest, direct, positive and brief about each issue.
**Do:** Keep it simple; avoid jargon.
**Do:** Share your story and experiences.
**Do:** Be prepared to list support and opposition to issue.

**Don’t:** Be offended by delays or missed appointments.
**Don’t:** Be argumentative or abrasive.
**Don’t:** Hesitate to admit if you do not have an answer. Attempt to get the information and share with candidate after the meeting.
**Don’t:** Discuss political party affiliation or express commitment to vote or not vote for candidate.
**Don’t:** Distort or exaggerate the position of the opposition. Maintain credibility of information that you are sharing.
CONNECTING WITH LEGISLATORS
Interviewing Candidates

For GAC Liaisons

With hundreds of legislators in Texas, TNA relies on candidate interviews to know who to support with Nurse PAC funds and also who could be a strong ally for nursing and health care during the legislative session if they succeed in their run for office.

INTERVIEW

- Arrive 15 minutes early and assign questions to nurses.
- Greet candidate.
  - Introduce nurses (name, practice area); identify constituent.
  - Find commonalities, such as shared interests.
  - Provide overview on TNA as an advocate group since 1907.
- Get to know the candidate, why they are interested in position, and anything about candidate’s background that particularly prepares them to serve constituents and Texans.
- Transition to health care and nursing issues. Take notes on candidate responses.
  - Listen first to discover what the candidate wants to know or already knows.
  - Share overview of health care and nursing practice issues, including who already supports or opposes the issue.
  - Provide anecdotes about why it needs to be addressed. Real nurse or patient stories can illustrate the true impact of legislation and help the candidate understand what nurses and Texans need.
  - Ask what the candidate understands about the health care needs of their constituents. Do they have any specific concerns about health care issues as they relate to their constituents? Try to make it personal for them.
  - Ask what their source for health care information is. Do they have any health care professionals in their social network? Offer your support as a resource.
  - If incumbent, ask who on their staff coordinates information about health care issues, e.g., who to contact.
- Allow for discussion and provide space for the candidate to ask questions. Watch for communication clues that the candidate might want to ask something or make a comment.
- Be polite and courteous; respect interview time.
- At the end:
  - Ask if they have further questions and thank them.
  - Summarize key take-away points.
  - Provide printed contact information.
- Share the information from the interview with TNA GAC.

MATERIALS TO PROVIDE CANDIDATE

- The Nursing Legislative Agenda Coalition priorities
- Any relevant TNA 1-pagers or policy positions from the most recent legislative session
- Contact information for your team members with TNA's website (texasnurses.org)

Don’t forget to follow up with a thank you note and any additional information.