



Advocacy Summit Talking Points

Advancing Health Equity and Access to Psychological Services



Background Research

Before your meeting, go online and gather some background information about your Members of Congress to learn more about who you are trying to influence. People love to talk about things they enjoy —where do your interests overlap with theirs? Where in the state did he or she grow up? Where did he or she go to college?

Begin thinking about how you can weave your advocacy goals into the policymaker’s legislative priorities. What committees or caucuses does the legislator sit on? What legislation has he or she recently introduced? Go online to your legislator’s website and find his or her “Issues” or “Priorities” page. What are some of your legislator’s priority areas that intersect or align with your advocacy goals?

My Advocacy Goal:

To persuade my Member of Congress to support policies that would increase access to mental and behavioral health services by supporting parity and investments in the psychology workforce.

Senator _____ 's Priorities

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Notes

Legislator’s committee assignments, caucus memberships, personal interests, etc.

Senator _____ 's Priorities

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Notes

Representative _____ 's Priorities

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Notes



Start to Build Rapport

At your meeting, introduce yourself as a constituent and a psychologist. Although you are representing the American Psychological Association, remember to include the name of your university/institution, or organization you work for. Based on the research you did above, are there any mutual interests you might want to spend a few moments talking about? Feel free to mention where in the state/district you're from or grew up in to make the conversation more personal. Spending a few minutes chatting about what your audience (the Member of Congress or his/her staff) enjoys can help create a friendly atmosphere to continue the conversation.



Lay the Groundwork for the Meeting. Make it Personal!

Next, explain the purpose of your meeting today. You are here to discuss federal support for addressing health equity and increasing access to psychological services.

Why is this issue important to you, and why should it be important to your Member of Congress? Before getting into a broader discussion about a specific policy or piece of legislation, remember that it's your passion and personal story that makes a meeting memorable. Consider sharing your own personal story of why you first became, or hope to become, a psychologist. What are the mental and behavioral health needs in your community? What population(s) in your community are you passionate about helping (e.g. older adults, children, those suffering from chronic illness, veterans, victims of abuse, etc.)?



Share Relevant Data

Start to frame the legislative issue by providing one or two key data points about the unmet mental and behavioral health needs in your community which impact constituents represented by your legislator. These data points should be as specific to your Member's district or state as possible, and emphasize the need for more psychologists or increased access to services in your community as a matter of health equity. For example:

In my hospital alone, we have seen instances of youth self-harm increase by 40% compared to two years ago. Our adult waiting list grew by 50%. There is a significant shortage of providers, including psychologists, and many patients are not getting the help they need.



Present the Issue. What's the Problem?

Next, use anecdotes to underscore the contributions being made by psychologists in addressing the mental and behavioral health needs of your community, particularly those disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

Your message has the greatest impact when coupled with a compelling story. Discuss a few of the barriers you and/or other psychologists face in trying to provide these services in certain communities, including the challenges being posed by COVID-19, low reimbursement rates, and recruitment challenges.



Connect it to Your Legislator's Priorities

Explain how untreated mental health issues can negatively impact other domains of life, such as poor health outcomes, lower levels of educational attainment, and less economic stability. Based on the background research you conducted on your legislator, how do these factors impact some of his or her priorities? In what way(s) are expanding access to mental and behavioral health care in your district/state in your legislator's interest?



Present the Solution: Your Legislative Requests

Present your legislator with your "asks" - solutions that will help address the problems mentioned above. Ask your Member of Congress to:

Workforce:

- Support \$30 million for the Graduate Psychology Education (GPE) Program and \$25 million for the Minority Fellowship Program (MFP) in FY23 Appropriations
- Support the reauthorization of GPE and MFP
- Support reimbursement for psychology interns and residents for supervised services provided in Medicare

Parity:

- Co-sponsor The Parity Implementation Assistance Act (H.R. 3753/S.1962)
- Authorize the Department of Labor to assess penalties on health plans and administrators for violating the mental health parity law



Express Appreciation for the Visit

Finally, thank the legislator or staff for giving you the opportunity to meet with him/her and reiterate that you hope you can count on them to support these important bills/programs. Ask if there is any further information that you (or APA) can provide. Let them know you will follow up with them after your meeting, and would like to be kept abreast of any progress on these issues