



Advocacy Summit Talking Points

June Grassroots Fly-In – Protect Children Online



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? What was their occupation before coming to Congress?

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 ask my members of Congress: to sponsor (House) or co-sponsor (Senate) the Kids Online Safety Act and support funding for youth mental health research, and sponsor legislation to authorize a Youth Mental Health Research Initiative.*

Senator _____'s priorities:

Notes

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

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Senator _____'s priorities:

Notes

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Representative _____'s priorities:

Notes

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



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 keeping social media companies accountable for the online well-being of children and adolescents, and to support funding for youth mental health research.

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. *How are you seeing the effects of social media play out in your community / with your patients? 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 presence or effect of social media on youth. 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:

"Children and adolescents are social media natives who spend a lot of time exposed to and generating content. According to MorningConsult, 50% of Gen Z spends 4+ hours a day on social media. This could expose them to a lot of problematic content. For example, Instagram includes [90,000 unique pro-eating disorder accounts](#) with a reach of 20 million followers. Our hospital system alone has seen a 10% increase in young patients with eating disorders in the past 5 years."



Present the Issue. What's the Problem?

Next, use anecdotes to underscore the contributions being made by psychologists in addressing issues such as social media addiction, treatment for eating disorders, etc. You may also wish to refer to [APA's health advisory on social media use in adolescence](#).

Your message has the greatest impact when coupled with a compelling story. Discuss a few of the issues you and/or other psychologists face in trying to meet the needs of child and adolescent patients.



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 support the following proposals:

- Kids Online Safety Act - cosponsor in the Senate, sponsor in the House.
- Sponsor legislation to authorize a Youth Mental Health Research Initiative (House and Senate).



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.