

POLICY MAKER

Education Toolkit



About NACBHDD

The **National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors (NACBHDD)** is the premier national voice for county behavioral health and intellectual/developmental disability authorities. We work to strengthen the local public safety net by providing a national forum for state, federal, and local collaboration, education, advocacy, and shared solutions that drive policy.

About this Toolkit

While the structures of local systems vary by state, the need to engage with our intergovernmental partners to better serve our communities is a constant nationwide. This resource is meant to aid those who are seeking to connect with policymakers on the state and federal level with the goal of education and engagement.

How to use this Toolkit

Relationships with relevant policymakers can vary widely. Whether you are just beginning outreach and regularly collaborating with officials, this toolkit is meant to give you a “buffet of ideas” on how to make the most out of meeting with policymakers.

BEFORE

BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND



Start the process with the question “what is the goal of the meeting?” It could be as broad as simply informing them of the work of your organization and trying to build a relationship. Or it could focus on a specific issue or action. Either way start by thinking of the outcome you would like from this meeting.

DO YOUR RESEARCH



Who will you be meeting with? What is their role in policy development? What information would be most helpful during this meeting? By starting with these questions and some quick research you can prepare for a productive meeting.



IDENTIFY RESOURCES & WORK TO HIGHLIGHT

Your work serving the community is multifaceted and it may be difficult to pick specific projects or activities to highlight. When in doubt start with the basics: what you do, who your organization serves, and why it is important to the community.

DURING

REACH THE HEAD, HEART, & FEET

There are two general approaches to sharing information, logical (head) and emotional (heart). Logical appeals include studies, statistics, and background information. Emotional appeals include storytelling, appeals to values, and individual experiences. Both

are valid. Whatever approach you choose, do not forget to have the meeting lead somewhere (feet). In other words, think what the next steps could be and present your information to lead them there.



ENGAGE IN A DIALOGUE

It might be tempting to use all the time in the meeting to share the work of your organization, but a better alternative is to ask questions and learn more about their priorities as well. As you learn more about their priorities you can better calibrate what information and resources may be most helpful.

IDENTIFY THE “WIN-WIN”

It is important to ground ourselves in the fact that all intergovernmental partners are serving their communities. They might have different approaches and responsibilities, but the end goal is the same. What is one small way that you can help them serve their community?



AFTER

FOLLOW UP WITH MATERIALS & RESOURCES



An underappreciated aspect of policymaker education is following up with materials that are referenced in the meeting. Try to send follow-up materials within a week of meeting.

CHECK-IN PERIODICALLY

Relationships take time and effort. If you have a newsletter or communications list, adding them to the distribution list is an easy way to maintain the line of communication.

IDENTIFY AREAS OF COLLABORATION

As your relationship grows with the policymaker there may be ways to work together. Examples include joint events, briefings, and information sharing.



Helpful Resources



Scan the QR code to access helpful resources when preparing for meetings with policy makers.