

## Tips for Legislative Visits

**Be punctual and friendly.** Legislators and staff are just as busy as you, so be sure to arrive on time for your visit. Greet the legislator and/or staff representative with a firm handshake and thank them for their time. Introduce yourself by giving your name and the name and location of the health center or organization you are representing.

**Deliver your message.** All written materials, briefs, and school health center representatives must be prepared in advance to “be on message” with the central theme of the day to ensure the focus stays where it is most needed. Stay positive and suggest solutions. Encourage your legislator to work with people in your community and your organization to find a solution.

### **SAMPLE**

#### **The California School Health Center message:**

School based health increases access to comprehensive care for children and youth who need it the most. School-based health promotes learning because kids can't learn if they are not healthy.

1. There are 243 school health centers in California.
2. School health centers help keep children out of higher cost health care services.
3. School health centers are a key support for the family.
4. School health centers keep kids healthy and in school.

**Ask for a commitment.** Ask the legislator directly about his or her willingness to champion school-based health centers. Identify points for follow-up and invite the legislator and staff to visit a school health center in his or her district.

**What happens when issues are raised that you did not expect?** Answer directly if you know the topic. If you don't know, it's OK to tell them so and offer to get back to them with the information.

### Tips for communicating with the legislator:

- ❑ **Know your legislator.** Review his/her biography (available on the web.) Learn their party affiliation, committee and subcommittee membership and past record on the issue you will be discussing. Knowing these facts will help guide your discussion and demonstrate that you have adequately prepared for the visit.
- ❑ **Remember: You're the expert!** Legislators and staff usually know little or nothing about our issues. Be sure to explain all acronyms, programs, funding sources and which agencies administer the funds.
- ❑ **Be Political: Put a community face on the issue.** Legislators want to represent the best interests of their district or state. Wherever possible, demonstrate the connection between what you are requesting and the interests of the legislator's constituency. This is one reason it is valuable to include the perspectives of youth, parents and families.