

## Sample Legislative Meeting Agenda & Worksheet

*Below is a sample meeting agenda and policy talking points to help you think through the framework of your meetings with your Senator(s) or Representative(s) and/or their staff members. If more than one person attends, think about who will chair the meeting and who will cover each agenda item. Use the sample meeting agenda to help you fill in information on the meeting agenda worksheet.*

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### MEETING AGENDA

#### 1. **Introductions (BRIEF)**

- Everyone introduces themselves and their agency and says **one or two sentences** about their involvement with the issue of homelessness. If there are more than 3 people in the meeting, the Chair might want to do the introductions.
- Mention any relationships you have with acquaintances of your Senator or Representative.

#### 2. **Thank the Senator / Representative for something**

- *We would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your staff for your dedication to improving policies that will allow us to better address youth homelessness in (COMMUNITY).*
- What is the Senator's / Representative's history of support on this issue?
- Thank him or her for something specific. For example, co-sponsorship of or work to support legislation, a federal appropriation for your agency, or visiting your program recently.

#### 3. **Purpose of the meeting**

- *We are here today to talk to you about the local progress being made in (COMMUNITY) to implement solutions to youth homelessness and how we can work together to advance our progress. Specifically, we ask that you work in support of providing increased resources for RHYA programs in the FY 2011 Appropriations Act in order to expand our ability to serve homeless youth and to improve our data on youth homelessness on a national scale.*

#### 4. **Tell local stories of personal and community-wide success**

- Members of Congress are more likely to support your request when you can demonstrate how much you have accomplished with the resources that you have. It shows you can obviously put the resources to good use.
- Share any community or program-related outcome data. Describe what you do and concretely explain why your program works. Relate RHYA funding to your city's success.

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- Tell the story of how you (or a youth you know) benefited from a local homeless assistance program.
  - Share information about your community's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness.
  - Discuss any involvement of interesting partners in the community who have come together in your local movement to end youth homelessness (i.e. business owners, community organizations, local leaders / elected officials).
5. **Describe how this policy issue will impact homeless people and programs in your community.**
- See "Sample Talking Points" below.
6. **Make a SPECIFIC ask**
- *We ask that the Senator/Representative contact Appropriations Committee leaders right away to express his/her support for providing an INCREASE for RHYA programs in the final FY 2011 Appropriations Act in order to allow HHS to conduct a national incidence and prevalence study of youth homelessness, as required by the 2008 RHYA reauthorization.*
7. **Response from Member / staff**
- Think about what questions you expect the Member to ask, based on past contact with him/her.
  - If the meeting is with staff (not the Member), the staff will have to ask their boss before giving you an answer. Ask when you can follow-up with him/her.
  - If the Member of Congress is there, you should ask "Who on your staff can I follow up with?"
  - If you get a maybe/no response to your policy request, ask what additional information you can provide to help them decide and/or address their concerns.
  - If you get a ...
    - **Yes:** Say: "Wonderful!"
    - **Maybe:** Ask: "Is there any additional information I can provide to help you decide?"
    - **No:** Say: "Is there a reason why you will not do this? Is there any information I can provide that might address some of your concerns? (This is an excellent opportunity to keep the lines of communication open.)"
8. **Closing**
- Summarize any commitments made by the Member / staff
  - Repeat any questions you need to answer in follow up (that you couldn't answer in the meeting).
  - Thank them and ask when and with whom and when you should follow up.
  - Invite them to see a local program next time they are at home (April recess).
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Sample Talking Points:  
How Does RHYA Funding Impact Your Community?

- ◆ **Scope of the Problem.** Studies indicate that over 1 million youth are homeless each year in America. In 2010, RHYA programs made over 500,000 street outreach contacts with homeless and at-risk youth, of which less than 24,000 received access to a shelter bed.
  - *Share local data on the extent of youth homelessness in your community.*
  
- ◆ **Impact of the Problem.** Once homeless, many youth face survival on the streets, recruitment by gangs, exposure to drugs, and sexual exploitation by adults.
  - *Share the story of a youth whose life has been affected by homelessness.*
  
- ◆ **Policy Solution to the Problem.** RHYA programs are the ONLY federal program targeted specifically to unaccompanied, homeless youth, and data demonstrates how effective and important these programs are. In 2009, nationally, Transitional Living Programs exceeded the federal targets for safe program exits and for program youths' participation in community service activities.
  - *Discuss the importance of local RHYA programs and the need for youth housing and services.*
  - *If you have local data or information on RHYA program outcomes (especially exits to permanent housing!), share your successes.*
  
- ◆ **Challenges.** One of our biggest obstacles is that we don't have a solid source of national data about the scope or nature of the problem. The 2008 RHYA reauthorization required HHS to conduct an incidence and prevalence study on youth homelessness, but additional resources (approx. \$3 million) are needed.

## Meeting Agenda Worksheet

Meeting with \_\_\_\_\_

### 1. Purpose of the meeting

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Specifically we would like the Senator / Representative to:

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**2. Introductions (BRIEF)**

**3. Thank you**

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**4. Tell stories of success**

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**5. Describe how this policy issue will impact homeless people and programs in your community**

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**6. Make the ask**

We ask that Senator / Representative contact Appropriations Committee leaders to express his/her support for including increased resources for RHYA programs in the final FY 2011 Appropriations Act in order to increase national data about the scope of youth homelessness.

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**7. Response and Questions**

Think about what questions you expect the Member to have based on past support of specific issues or past contact with him or her.

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Think about how you will respond to questions the Member or staff might have.

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**8. Closing**

Thank you for

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Summarize any commitments made by the Member / Congressional staff.

Repeat any questions you need to answer in follow up (that you could not answer in the meeting) and any additional information you need to provide.