



# Advocacy in Action

## Hosting Your Lawmaker

***Hosting state lawmakers in your community is an excellent way to share your story and influence the legislative process. Your advocacy can make a difference. Be assured — your lawmaker wants to meet his or her constituents to learn about the issues that are important to those who send them to Des Moines.***

To help you plan, promote and execute a successful legislative visit, LeadingAge Iowa has prepared a step-by-step guide and resources to help you make the most of this opportunity for your organization and the people you serve.

Consider LeadingAge Iowa your partner in hosting a successful visit. We can contact your lawmaker on your behalf, provide information on important legislation, participate in your visit, and follow up after your visit. We can also provide background information on issues that are important to LeadingAge Iowa's members.

### **Before the Visit**

#### **Send an Invitation Letter**

Use the [sample invitation letter](#) as a model to send to your legislator. Invite your lawmaker to your community as far in advance as possible. Use email for the initial invitation and be prepared to follow up with your lawmaker's phone. Every Iowan has one state senator and one state representative; consider coordinating with both to schedule a visit at the same time.

#### **Prepare Your Organization**

It's important that your residents, clients, family members, staff, board and volunteers know about your visit and are willing to be a part of it. Ask them to share a few remarks during the visit. Post information throughout your community and work with staff and residents to prepare them to ask your lawmakers about issues of interest.

#### **Develop an Organizational Fact Sheet**

Use the provided [sample fact sheet](#) as a model to develop an overview of your organization's commitment to older adults and the greater community.

#### **Coordinate Media Relations**

Ask the legislator if it is okay to include press coverage. It is up to the legislator whether or not the press should be involved. If media coverage is agreeable with the legislator, use our [sample media advisory and press release](#) as a start to your media efforts.

#### **Distribute Schedules to Everyone Involved in the Visit**

Once the schedule is finalized, distribute it to all participants and send a copy to the legislator.



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### During the Visit

You can use the sample agenda in this guide to host a short but significant visit, but remember to be flexible and do your best to accommodate your lawmaker's schedule.

#### **Greet the Legislator and Staff Members (3-5 min.)**

Your organization's leaders should be on hand to greet the legislator and potential staff when they arrive on site. You can also have a resident/client and staff member accompany the legislator and the president or director on the tour. Following brief introductions, begin the tour promptly.

#### **Tour Your Organization (15-20 min.)**

This is the best time to show your organization's work in action. For example, visit an exercise class or a computer lab where a class is in session. Arrange in advance for a faculty member and student to demonstrate what they have been learning. Show off a new pool or a renovated dining room. Be sure to introduce the legislator to people, and don't forget to take pictures of his or her interactions throughout the tour.

#### **Meet with Residents, Family Members, Staff, Board and Volunteers (30-35 min.)**

At the end of the tour, invite the legislator to make a few remarks and answer any questions residents, family members, staff, board, and volunteers may have. A conference room is an ideal location.

### After the Visit

Send a thank you letter. Feel free to use the [sample thank you letter](#) as a guide.

If a LeadingAge Iowa staff person is unable to participate in the tour, let us know how the tour went. If any additional requests were made by the legislator, we can follow up with his or her office with the requested information.

***LeadingAge Iowa is a resource to assist you in hosting your lawmakers. Please contact us to help in your planning and preparation. Thank you in advance for your advocacy on behalf of seniors and their caregivers.***