

CHILDREN'S CARDIOMYOPATHY FOUNDATION

Requesting a Meeting with Your Member of Congress

Meetings with Members of Congress and/or their staff are terrific ways for cardiomyopathy advocates to communicate with policymakers on issues of interest and priority. Visiting with them enables you to educate your Representatives about your concerns, offer yourselves as a resource, and establish a relationship that can prove mutually beneficial over time. If you cannot make the trip to Washington, DC, visiting with the Member or their staff “back home” in the district is also an option.

1. Find your Representative's contact information

- Look up your Representative's offices online at www.house.gov. You will need the office phone number and address. Call the office and ask for the name and e-mail address of the scheduler in charge of the Congressman's schedule.
- Look up your Senator's offices online at www.senate.gov. Again, you will need the office phone number and address. Call the office and ask for the name and e-mail address of the scheduler in charge of the Congressman's schedule. If meeting in the state, your Senator will have several offices, simply choose the one closest to you. When you call, ask for the name and e-mail address of the scheduler in charge of the Senator's state schedule.

2. Send a letter requesting a meeting to the scheduler

- Using the sample request letter as a template, create a personalized letter to send to your Representative or Senator. The letter needs your full name, contact phone number, e-mail, etc., as well as your title, degrees, and other relevant information.
- The letter should go out attached to an email to the Member's scheduler. If requesting a meeting with your Representative or Senator, rather than a staffer, be sure to mention in your e-mail that this is a request for a member-level meeting. The cover sheet also should include your full name, contact phone number, e-mail, etc., as well as your title, degrees, etc.

3. Call the scheduler to follow-up on the request letter after it has been sent

- If you do not receive a reply e-mail acknowledging receipt, you should call the office no more than two days after your letter is e-mailed to ensure that it was received.
- If the office did not receive the letter, confirm the correct spelling of the e-mail address and re-send the meeting request.

4. Call AGAIN – Ask for an answer to your request

- The week following the original e-mail, call the office to see if the scheduler has an answer for your meeting request. Most likely you will be put into the scheduler's voicemail, so be prepared to leave a detailed message with your name, contact information, a brief summary of your meeting request, and the date and time you emailed your request.

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- If you speak with the scheduler, ask if the Member will be available for a meeting. If no answer is available, ask the scheduler when the best time to follow-up would be.
- It is very likely that the scheduler will ask if you would be willing to meet with a Congressional staff member instead of the Representative or Senator. Be polite in your request for a Member-level meeting (meaning the Representative or Senator him/her-self) if at all possible, but understand that the Members of Congress are extremely busy and might not be able to take a meeting. If this is not possible, a meeting with a staff member will be acceptable.
- In some cases the scheduler will arrange the appointment with the staffer for you. However, most of the time the scheduler will give you the name of the staffer you are to contact yourself. If possible, ask the scheduler for the staffer's direct line or e-mail address.

5. Confirm the appointment

- If you are scheduled to meet with your Representative or Senator, be sure to thank the scheduler and carefully record the details of the meeting. Repeat the details back to the scheduler to ensure you have them all correct.
- If you are scheduled to meet with a staffer, be sure to carefully record the details – including the time, room number, and building name.

Helpful Hints

Be persistent and polite throughout this process. The Congressional schedule is very busy and Members of Congress and their staff often are hesitant to commit to a meeting too far in advance. The key to getting a Member-level or staff meeting is a lot of follow-up, so you need to place your requests early to allow time to finalize the details.