Talking Points

Effective advocates must give legislators and their staff persuasive information in a short period of time. To help make the most of the meetings you will have about Older Americans Act (OAA) reauthorization, n4a has developed the following framework and talking points.

**Make sure your Member understands who you are and what your organization’s role is in providing services to older adults.**

- The MOST IMPORTANT conversation you can have is ensuring that Members understand what your agency does, who you serve and why the programs you administer are critical to their constituents.
- Be prepared to speak about the current and future demographic realities for older adults in your Member’s district or state.
- Address both the need for home and community-based services—and how cost-effective these services are. Share personal stories/anecdotes about older adults who have been served through your agency’s programs.
- Offer to serve as a resource to for case managers who often receive constituent requests for services. This will help make their jobs easier when they work to solve constituent concerns.
- Bring informational materials from your agency and from n4a to leave with staff.

**Once you establish a rapport, pivot to the importance of supporting the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act.**

- The OAA expires on Sept. 30, 2019, so Congress needs to reauthorize (i.e., update and reconfirm its commitment to) the law.
- Educate lawmakers and their staff about the OAA and what it means to their constituents. Make the connection between the local programs your agency provides and the federal Older Americans Act.
- **Key Priorities for OAA Reauthorization**
  - *Meet Growing Needs by Making Bold Investments:* Federal funding for OAA has fallen far behind growing needs and costs as the nation’s population of older adults continues to grow at a rapid pace. We ask that lawmakers include authorization levels that double funding for OAA over five years.
  - *Meet Consumers Where They Are by Protecting Local Focus and Flexibility:* The locally focused, person-centered service delivery model is essential to ensuring that OAA enables older Americans and caregivers to get the services they need to age in their homes and communities. Congress should reject any proposals to change that service delivery model.
  - *Foster Innovations in Service Delivery:* From investments in research and demonstration to bolstering business acumen, there are steps lawmakers...
can take to encourage ongoing innovation in aging in place through the OAA!
✓ **Increase Access to Services**: As the population ages, the services and supports that older Americans need and want also change. Congress should ensure that the OAA allows Area Agencies on Aging the flexibility they need to adapt to shifting needs.

**TIPS FOR CONGRESSIONAL VISITS**

In-person meetings with your Members of Congress and/or their staff are crucial to effective advocacy. Here are a few quick tips to make your visits successful.

**Be Prompt**
✓ Be on time for your meetings but know that you may be kept waiting. Be flexible to help ensure that your meeting gets off to a positive start!

**Be Patient**
✓ Be prepared to encounter last-minute changes.
✓ Treat everyone you encounter as a potential ally. Whether you meet with the Member or junior staff, see your meeting as an opportunity to build relationships.

**Be Prepared**
✓ Have your talking points and materials ready for the meeting. But have a succinct pitch on hand in case your meeting is cut short.
✓ For joint meetings with other advocates, be sure to plan in advance who will say what in the meeting.
✓ Leave behind informative materials like short fact sheets, statistics on your PSA, etc. (and of course please use n4a’s advocacy resources).

**Be Persuasive**
✓ Be clear about what you are asking for (e.g., OAA reauthorization and increased investments in its programs) and why it is needed.
✓ Know your audience. Consider a Member’s background and connection to the issues you are discussing.
✓ Use numbers. Make the case for why you need additional resources with current data and statistics. (How many individuals are on your waiting lists? Is that an increase over last year?)

**Be Passionate**
✓ Use anecdotes to bring your programs and services to life. Build on this with real life examples of how your agency serves older adults.
✓ Passion is catching! Share yours!

**Be a Professional Resource**
✓ Ask the Member or staff what you can do for them. If they ask questions you can’t answer, promise you’ll get back to them later. Also follow up with n4a if
there are any federal policy questions you can’t answer or issues that we can help you address.

✓ Follow up after the visit. Send a thank you note/email and then suggest a next step that will take your relationship with the Member’s office to a higher level.

✓ Stay in touch. You now have, at the very least, the name of a staff member who is tasked with following aging issues. When n4a sends out an *Advocacy Alert* asking you to call or email Congress, cc: that staffer or call them directly with your concerns.