

# How to Advocate

## A Call to Action



A publication of



**NAADAC**  
NAADAC.ORG

THE ASSOCIATION FOR ADDICTION PROFESSIONALS

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A Publication of NAADAC, the Association  
for Addiction Professionals

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## Introduction

At its core, advocacy consists of carrying a personalized message supporting a specific cause or policy change to the people who make or implement those policies. Within NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals, advocacy begins with individual members who share the desire to shape a public policy agenda that meets the demands of the professional workforce, and assists other addiction counselors, social workers, nurses, psychologists and other addiction treatment, prevention, intervention and recovery support professionals.

NAADAC is a member-driven organization that represents the interests of addiction professionals and those they serve. NAADAC's Government Relations Department helps facilitate communication between NAADAC members and all facets of the federal government regarding addiction, co-occurring, and other behavioral health issues and legislative objectives. Members serve as advocates, educators, and policy partners, helping decision-makers understand who we are, what we know, and what we do. NAADAC's staff work hard to ensure that NAADAC's voice is recognized – not because it is the loudest, but because it is well informed.

NAADAC's staff and leadership are well trained and qualified to meet with legislative members at the local, state, and national level. We also work arduously to develop partnerships and coalitions to promote the issues currently affecting addiction professionals. By highlighting addiction issues, NAADAC strives to make these concerns a top priority to policymakers. All of these education efforts revolve around NAADAC's vision, which states, "NAADAC is the premier global organization of addiction-focused professionals who enhance the health and recovery of individuals, families and communities:"

NAADAC is in constant communication with members of Congress, Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), and federal agencies, such as the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), National Institute of Alcohol and Alcoholism (NIAAA), and the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA). NAADAC also works with many other prevention and treatment organizations, including the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), American Association for the Treatment of Opioid , Inc. (AATOD), Addiction Technology Transfer Center Network (ATTC) and NIATx, National Council for Behavioral Health, National Association of Addiction Treatment Providers (NAATP), NALGAP, the Association of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Addiction Professionals and their Allies, and the National Center for Responsible Gambling (NCPG). Through these efforts, NAADAC helps your voice to be heard effectively on Capitol Hill.

## NAADAC's Public Policy Goals

Each year NAADAC reevaluates its focus and legislative goals. NAADAC's Public Policy vision highlights several of the major challenges and issues NAADAC is addressing with lawmakers and how we believe these challenges can be best met based on previous successes and failures.

NAADAC's first mission is to continue educating policymakers and the general public about the need for the valuable work of the addiction professional, challenges facing the clients we serve, and the importance of prevention, treatment, and recovery

support. NAADAC works to dispel the myths and discrimination surrounding the diseases of addiction by promoting the following facts:

- Alcohol, tobacco, and other drug disorders are America's number one public health problem; they require a serious, consistent and continuous public health response.
- Prevention and treatment are effective.
- Substance use disorders are treatable brain disorders.
- Patients must receive high quality substance use disorder services and the public must be protected.
- Addiction counselors must adhere to strict standards of training, certification, and ethics, and therefore, are the most qualified and effective at treating the diseases of addiction.
- Every American should have healthcare coverage, which includes access to substance use disorder services.

In addition, NAADAC members and staff regularly meet with policymakers to educate them on the state of the profession and gain support for various legislative initiatives. Currently, there are a multitude of addictions or addictions-related issues that are active in Congress. Each issue is in varying stages of the legislative process and requires the same amount of constant attention and support. The following are some of the priority policy issues that NAADAC is moving forward for our members:

- Ensuring that both health care reform and insurance parity for substance use disorders are fairly and effectively implemented;
- Growing and developing the addiction professional workforce in the 21st century;
- Increasing federal and state funding levels for addiction treatment; and
- Prevention, treatment and recovery support.

These issues are extremely important to NAADAC and consume a great deal of time from our dedicated team based in Alexandria, Virginia. The central mission of your Government Relations Department is to promote these issues and get your voice heard on Capitol Hill.

In addition to direct communication with government officials, the NAADAC staff is here to assist you in becoming an advocate. You, the stakeholder, are an essential component in shaping America and affecting public policy for all addiction professionals. The following information provides step-by-step guidelines on how to become involved in improving the addiction profession by contacting legislators, overseeing how federal dollars are spent and securing the future of the addiction workforce.

## **The Importance of Effective Advocacy**

A central component of advocacy is to educate your Public officials for or against a specific cause important to you. Through this method, you are able to provide information to your legislators on how the issue will impact the people they are elected to serve. In turn, they will use the information to determine their position on a current issue of importance. Advocacy is a vital part of our legislative system and represents the best way citizens, short of voting, can impact legislation. This is one of the true pillars that the "American Dream" was built upon. Done correctly, it is one of the most tools

used to facilitate change. With over 39,000 NAADAC constituents across the nation, you are not alone.

While advocacy may seem intimidating, as an informed NAADAC member, you have the knowledge and experience to educate your representatives about addiction issues.

Advocacy does not require a full-time commitment to be effective. Whether you choose to express your opinion as a constituent by sending an email, faxing a message, making a phone call or meeting with your representative in person, each action will help make your vision a reality. Any amount or combination of these methods contributes to getting your voice heard and takes us one step closer to achieving our goals as addiction professionals.

Your time invested in advocacy can be shortened if you utilize the resources available to you as a NAADAC member. Our Government Relations Department is able to assist you with the legwork of advocacy. As a part of your membership services, we can assist you in scheduling appointments, research your issue, and locate your representatives. Our office and staff are open to you and can easily be reached by emailing [advocacy@naadac.org](mailto:advocacy@naadac.org) or by calling 800.548.0497 Monday to Friday from 9 am to 5 pm (EST). We are available to promptly provide you with the contact information for your federal representatives, supply you with current updates concerning legislation important to you, as well as inform you of NAADAC's official position on the issue. We have an extensive list of documents we can email, fax, or mail to you, including position papers and the current year's policy agenda and vision statements. Some of these documents are available online on NAADAC's website at [www.naadac.org/advocacy](http://www.naadac.org/advocacy).

One simple way for members to participate is to sign up for our electronic newsletters, or visit [www.naadac.org/advocacy](http://www.naadac.org/advocacy) for regular updates.

## Structure of the United States Congress

The next step of advocating effectively is to briefly familiarize yourself with the United States Congress. As you may already know, Congress is divided into two houses: the Senate (the upper chamber) and the House of Representatives (the lower chamber). Legislators in both the Senate and House of Representatives are equally important targets for advocacy, as they both vote on legislative issues concerning addiction.

Congress is the primary focus of NAADAC's governmental affairs effort since most of the appropriations and authorizing legislation for which we advocate are at the federal level. Below are descriptions of each House, as well as relevant information to help in this process.

The **U.S. House of Representatives** consists of 435 members. Each Representative represents a designated geographical district within their state, and the number of Representatives per state varies depending on population (but always equals 435 in total). Representatives should always be addressed as Congressman, Congresswoman, or Representative. Serving in two-year terms, Representatives often have very close ties within the communities they represent due to the relatively short term between their election cycles and localized geographical dispersion of their constituents.

The **U.S. Senate** consists of a total of 100 members. Each state is represented by two Senators, regardless of its population. Senators are elected to six-year terms and represent the entire state, not just one district like a member of the House of Representatives.

## How a Bill Becomes a Law

Below is the process of how a bill generally becomes a law after a member of Congress introduces it in either the House or Senate.

The parliamentarian and leadership of either chamber receives the bill and refers it to a committee where the chairperson and their respective staff determine which subcommittee - if any - is to receive it. If a bill is going to “die,” meaning that the bill will not be discussed during Committee business and will expire at the conclusion of the two-year Congress, it will usually fail at this stage. If the committee approves the bill but does not win a vote on the floor of the respective chamber, then it is merely referred to as a loss.

The subcommittee provides the forum where the bill is likely to receive its most thorough consideration. The subcommittee may also call witnesses to testify for or against it. Witnesses may include experts regarding the issue being debated or officials of a federal agency. If a majority of the subcommittee approves, the bill will go to the full committee where it must be approved by majority vote before it goes to the House or Senate floor.

If the House or the Senate passes the bill, it then is moved to the other chamber where it is referred to a committee. If a majority of the committee approves, it goes to the floor. Approval on the floor means that both the House and Senate have separately cleared the bill and conferees from each chamber then are selected to work out any necessary compromises or differences between the House and Senate on the bill and write a conference report. Final passage comes when the House and Senate approve the conference report.

Once passed by Congress, the bill is then sent to the White House for presidential action. If the President signs the legislation, it becomes law. The first three digits of the signed bill (now called a Public Law) denote the acting Congress that approved the bill. Therefore, if a bill is signed into law by the President between January 2013 and December 2015 (i.e. the 114th Congressional session, the first three digits after the term “Public Law” would be 114. Legislation not considered in a two-year Congress does not automatically carry over to the next Congress. These bills must be reintroduced in the new Congress.

If the President sends the unsigned legislation back to the originating chamber and notes his/her objections, the bill has been vetoed. In order for Congress to override this veto, making it law without the President’s signature, a two-thirds majority must be in favor of the legislation.

For your reference, please see the chart of the Legislative Process on the last page of this manual.

## Congressional Staff Members Who Can Assist You

Meeting directly with a Member of Congress can be very difficult given their heavy legislative schedules. For this reason, each Congressional office has an extensive staff to meet with constituents and filter information to the Member. It is important to recognize that meeting with a staffer can be as effective as speaking to the Member, since your views will hopefully be repeated to the member of Congress in a condensed

version. Also, each individual staffer is assigned to specific issues, such as health, and educates the Member on these issues.

At times, the staff member you meet with will not be knowledgeable about the issues you are discussing. This is your opportunity to present new information to the Member via their staff and potentially, influence his/her opinion regarding this matter. Your role can work most specifically on addiction issues.

Now that we have established the importance of the Member's staff, it is equally important to know who they are and how to contact them. Each Member has at least two offices, perhaps more, from which he/she conducts business - the Washington, D.C. office and their district office(s) located in the Member's home state and/or district. The Member divides his/her time between the offices. Each location plays a key role in relaying your stance on an issue to the Member.

The staff at the Washington, D.C. office is distinctly different from the staff at the district office. The Washington, D.C., office has a considerably larger staff that mostly monitors legislative issues. The district office(s) are overwhelmingly concerned with specific constituent issues. If you are unable to travel to Washington, D.C. for a meeting with a staffer, discussing your issue with a staff member in the district office can be just as effective, since they also maintain constant contact with the Representative or Senator. The district office is open, even when the Member is operating out of his/her Washington, D.C. location. When the Senate or House of Representatives is not in session, the Member tends to travel around his/her state or district; therefore, you have a better chance to talk with them during this time. Below is a list of the staff members and their roles for each office to better assist you in identifying the appropriate person to address your advocacy.

## Washington, D.C. Office:

**Chief of Staff:** Each member of Congress has a Chief of Staff, sometimes referred to as the Administrative Assistant or AA. This person is the highest-ranking staff member in the Washington, D.C., office and serves as a consultant to the Member on most issues. The Chief of Staff is also the person who is in charge of discerning both political and public policy issues. The Chief of Staff oversees all staff and projects involving the Member. Sometimes, though rare, the Chief of Staff is assigned to a particular legislative topic, such as health. In such cases, you will be able to schedule an appointment with him or her.

**Legislative Director:** The Legislative Director, often called the LD, is the second highest-ranking staff member in the Washington, D.C., Office. While this person is generally assigned his/her own legislative topics, he/she is also responsible for overseeing all areas of legislative activity. The LD frequently speaks directly to the Chief of Staff and Member to brief them on current developments, meetings, or issues from constituents. It is not very easy to contact an LD or schedule an appointment with one of them, due to their busy schedules and level of responsibility. Unless the LD is specifically assigned to the legislation you want to discuss, you will most likely be referred to a Legislative Assistant.

**Legislative Assistant:** There are usually several Legislative Assistants, or LAs, assigned to different broad topics of legislation, such as environment, health, or labor.

For discussing issues related to addictions, you should ask for the person responsible for health legislation. More often than not, they will refer you to the Health LA. This person is relatively easy to contact and will most likely be the target of your advocacy. He/she knows the Member's stance on particular issues and will be able to relay your interests to the Member.

**Legislative Correspondent:** These are usually more junior staffers who do research and write legislative correspondence, conduct legislative research and assist Legislative Assistants as needed.

**Scheduler:** This staff member schedules the Member's daily appointments and meetings while he/she is in Washington, D.C. Although the Scheduler does maintain close contact with the Member, he/ she does not meet with constituents to discuss legislative issues. However, if you are determined to meet with the Member directly, you should contact his/her Scheduler. This will be the only person, short of the Chief of Staff, who can arrange an appointment for the Member.

**Staff Assistant:** While Staff Assistants have the least contact with the Member, they hold a very important role in the Washington, D.C. office. They are the people who answer the phone, transfer your calls to the appropriate person, and provide you with helpful information regarding your issues. The Staff Assistants usually research specific questions or concerns you may pose, as well as administrative tasks such as photocopying and faxing. Even though this person is not the ideal candidate to discuss legislative issues, they can connect you with the one who is more appropriate to meet your needs. Regardless, you should always treat this person, as well as all staff members, with a high level of respect and courtesy.

## District Office:

**District Director:** The District Director is more commonly found with members of the House of Representatives than with the Senate. This person is in charge of the district office(s). Although they serve a similar purpose as the Chief of Staff, they are easier to contact and deal more specifically with constituents and special projects while the Member is in the district. They have direct access to the Member on a constant basis and can arrange a meeting with him/her to convey your thoughts on an issue. It will be significantly easier to schedule an appointment with the District Director than the actual Member, as the District Director has more time to meet with you.

**Scheduler:** The duties of the Scheduler in the district office are very similar to the Washington, D.C. office. He/she manages the Member's schedule while in the district. This includes public appearances and constituent meetings. If you would like to meet with the Member instead of traveling to Washington, there are several opportunities to do so while he/she is traveling within the district. Arranging this type of appointment can be considerably easier in the district office than in the Washington, D.C. office.

**Constituent Services Representative (Caseworkers):** Constituent Services Representatives perform similar duties to Legislative Assistants, but in the district office. These assistants handle constituent concerns, such as Social Security, education, Medicare, Medicaid, incarceration issues, or veteran's issues. Their work is largely performed by undertaking casework, which is a specific issue a staff member is working

on for a constituent. These issues are usually short-term, such as finding out what happened to a constituent's Social Security check. In addition, Constituent Services Representatives also assist individual constituents with personal questions or concerns involving government agencies and programs. For your purposes, communicating with a Constituent Services Representative may be helpful, but generally it is not necessary. Since these aides work in the district and not in Washington, D.C., they are not as knowledgeable about current legislation as a D.C. staffer, nor can they funnel your concerns to the Member in the most functional way. However, Constituent Services Representatives in the District office can be very helpful for gaining contact information for other staff members or answering procedural questions.

**Staff Assistants:** Staff Assistants in the district office serve the same purpose as the Washington, D.C. office. Again, they have the least contact with the Member, but can provide you with vital information to facilitate easier communication with the appropriate staff members. If you would like to merely express your opinion concerning a bill currently before Congress, the staff assistant will take down your name and contact information to later inform you of the Member's position on the issue. For more in depth discussions about a certain issue, it is recommended that you contact the District Director or the appropriate Legislative Assistant in the Washington, D.C. office.

## Contacting a Member of Congress

In general, there are four ways to communicate with a Member or his/her staff: written or faxed letters, emails, phone calls, and in-person meetings. The following information will guide you through the proper procedures to successfully get your voice heard by the appropriate person.

While there are several ways to get in touch with policymakers, as mentioned above, two basic requirements should be met regardless of the form of communication you use:

- **Know what the situation is.** Your call or e-mail will not be effective if the action you're asking the legislator to take isn't possible: how can she vote for your bill if it was already approved by her committee a month ago? Aside from wasting an opportunity to ask for something doable, a lack of knowledge about what's happening with a particular bill or regulation sends the signal to the legislator or bureaucrat that you don't care that much.
- **Know what your legislator's position is,** if any. As with point number one, not knowing your legislator has already cosponsored the bill you're asking her to cosponsor shows you're not paying attention. And if you're not paying attention, why should your legislator? Your legislator may not have acted yet, but they may have, and if you're really that concerned about the issue you should find out.

The first step in communication is determining the legislative district in which you reside and the Representative and Senators that represent you and your region. There are several ways of accomplishing this task. The quickest and easiest way is to use [http://www.senate.gov/general/contact\\_information/senators\\_cfm.cfm](http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm) to look up your Senators, and <http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/> to look up your Representative. Of course, you are always welcome to contact NAADAC's Department of Government Relations for this information. Using your zip code, we can easily identify all your legislators.

However, if you already know your congressional representative by name, you can get his/her contact information by visiting the Senate web site at [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov), or the House web site at [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov), or by calling the Capitol Switchboard at 202.224.3121. The Capitol Switchboard will give you each Member's extension that corresponds to either the Senate prefix of 202.224- or the House of Representatives prefix of 202.225-, respectively. By calling the office directly, you can ask for the mailing address and fax number for the Member. Regardless of how you contact the office, to receive better service, it is advisable for you to identify yourself as a constituent early in the conversation.

All federal and most state legislators have websites that provide additional information about themselves, including committee assignments, biographical information, position statements and contact information. It is important to become familiar with your legislators before initial contact is made. This will better equip you to address an issue in a way that might be received more favorably with a Member who has traditionally disagreed with your stance. This can be helpful for framing your comments about a particular issue prior to communicating with a Member of his/her staff.

After locating the contact information for your representatives, the next step in the advocacy process is to actually contact the individual you wish to address. You may do this by calling the Washington, D.C. office or district office and simply asking for whom you should be speaking. Begin by stating that you are a constituent and are interested in writing a letter, speaking to the appropriate person over the phone, or scheduling an appointment about a particular issue. Very briefly state what issues you are interested in and wait for their questions. They will either ask you for more information to better direct your call, answer your question right then, or send your call to the voicemail of the appropriate staff member.

You should not be discouraged if your needs are not met on the first phone call. Remember, the staffer you wish to speak with maintains a very busy schedule and usually does not answer direct phone calls from constituents. Make a note of the date, time, and name of each person you spoke to in the office. You will have more credibility the next time you call if you are able to mention someone you spoke to previously. Also, note the name and title of the person with whom you leave a message. This will allow you to directly ask for the appropriate person on your follow-up call. It might take several attempts and messages before your objective is complete. Regardless of the result of your calls, do not get discouraged. Remain calm and courteous; remember, each phone call is a step closer to achieving your goal of getting your voice heard.

## **Congressional Correspondence**

Public officials and their staffs pay careful attention to their correspondence (i.e. letters, faxes, e-mail) since it forms the major body of public and voter sentiment on pending legislative activity.

However, the volume of contacts they receive - especially e-mails - has skyrocketed over the past few years. According to a 2005 survey by the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF), entitled "Communicating with Congress: How Capitol Hill is Coping with the Surge in Citizen Advocacy"<sup>1</sup>, Members of Congress are attempting to respond

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<sup>1</sup>Found at [http://www.cmfweb.org/storage/cmfweb/documents/CMF\\_Pubs/ewe\\_capitolhillcoping.pdf](http://www.cmfweb.org/storage/cmfweb/documents/CMF_Pubs/ewe_capitolhillcoping.pdf)

to roughly four times as many contacts as they were ten years ago, with virtually no additional staff. As the report states, “most of the increase in volume has resulted from citizens working through some kind of organized campaign, rather than on their own.”

Although Congressional offices like the fact that more people are engaged in the policymaking process, they’re not too thrilled about the form letters and e-mails which make up an increasing proportion of the contacts they receive. More than ever, offices value direct, heart-felt personal e-mails and letters. As stated by one House staff member CMF talked to, “One hundred form letters have less direct value than a single thoughtful letter generated by a constituent of the Member’s district.” Advocates must respond to the issue of the vast quantity of e-mails and letters offices receive by increasing the quality of their e-mails and letters in order to cut through the noise.

## How to Address Letters

United States Representatives  
The Honorable Jane Smith  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

United States Senator  
The Honorable Jane Smith  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Congresswoman Smith:

Dear Senator Smith:

Here are some tips for writing correspondence to your legislator. Please note these same guidelines are also applicable if you choose to communicate via email or fax.

- State that you are a member of NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals (write out full name), and a concerned addiction professional in the first paragraph.
- State the purpose for writing the letter in the first paragraph, outlining your issues for discussion and your opinion for each.
- If your letter is referencing a specific piece of legislation, you should identify it by number. This information can be found at <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/thomas.php>.
- Be as concise and to the point as possible, limiting the length to approximately one page.
- Be convincing of your viewpoint and specifically state how the public policy affects you and your profession.
- Address one issue in each letter, taking special care to address each issue to the appropriate person.
- Include your full contact information or business card in case the Member wishes to formally respond to your letter, or discuss an issue with you further.
- Remember, mail is processed very slowly in Washington, D.C., due to security concerns, so it could take several weeks for your mailed letter to reach the correct office.
- Be patient with this process. If you do not receive a response to your letter, follow up with a phone call to ensure that it arrived safely. This is also a good opportunity to arrange a phone conversation with the appropriate person to discuss the letter. You may also send a copy (or cc) to the NAADAC office, so we can follow-up for you, as well.
- If you choose to email your concerns, please remember that there is usually one staff

member who responds to each letter and to address your letter to the attention of the Health Legislative Assistant.

Consult the following sample letters to each House as a guide for expressing your own ideas:

### **Letter to the Senate:**

*Dear Senator (Last Name):*

*I am writing to you today as a constituent and as a concerned Addiction Professional. I am a member of NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals and have been working in this field for 22 years. I know firsthand the destruction addiction can leave in its wake, and feel very strongly that the passage of S. 3526 will alleviate some of the damage for millions of victims of addiction.*

### **Letter to the House of Representatives:**

*Dear Representative (Last Name):*

*I am writing to you today as a constituent and as a concerned Addiction Professional. I am a member of NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals and have been working in this field for 22 years. I know first hand the destruction addiction can leave in its wake, and feel very strongly that the passage of H.R. 3526 will alleviate some of the damage for millions of victims of addiction.*

## **Follow up, follow up, follow up!**

After you send in a letter or an e-mail, or make a phone call, it's highly likely that one of two things will happen.

You wait, and wait, and wait .... It is highly likely that you won't get a response back for at least three to four weeks (Some Members' offices will respond via e-mail more quickly). If it's been over four weeks and you haven't seen anything, you need to do two things. Check on the status of the legislation you contacted them about. Has the bill already been voted on? Was it already reported out of committee? In other words, is your original request still pertinent? Contact the office again. If the status of the legislation has changed, send a second letter or e-mail thanking the legislator for voting the right way (or expressing disappointment that the legislator voted the wrong way), or making an updated request for action. If the issue is still pending and nothing's changed, call the office and politely check to make sure they received your original e-mail or letter, and offer to send it again if necessary.

You get a letter back on your general topic that doesn't address your specific issue. Take a deep breath, and remember that more than 300 million letters and e-mails are sent to members of Congress each year. After you've done that, either call or write the office back and politely state that while you appreciate the response, you'd still like the legislator to address your particular issue (i.e., either take the action that you requested, or explain why they won't).

Notice the repeated use of the verb "politely:" Don't get frustrated; just respectfully make it clear that you care enough about the issue to continue paying attention. Consistent attention to an issue is what gets results.

## Phone Calls

Telephone calls work, too, and can be especially important when time is of the essence and the issue you are concerned about will be addressed in the next few days. When you call, you may not be able to speak directly with the legislator, but you can be assured that your message will be relayed to him or her by the staff person you speak with.

The same rules apply to phone calls as to other forms of communication:

- Be prepared! Know what you're going to say, what you want the legislator to do, what the bill number is, what stage in the process it's at, and any other relevant information.
- As with letter writing, keep the message simple and concise. Your phone call should take no more than three to five minutes to complete.
- Be sure to leave your name and address, and ask for a letter from your legislator in response to your call.
- Be courteous. Legislative staff work long hours for surprisingly low pay, and have many demands and pressures on their time. They are there to help you, but they are much more likely to do so if you are pleasant to them.

Although you will have done your homework before calling, don't be afraid to ask questions. You can learn a lot talking to staff about the political field of play regarding your issue; for example, timelines for committee action.

## Making Your Case to a Congressional Office

If you decide to meet personally with a Member or his/her staff, here are some tips to be prepared and concise during your conversation.

Dress professionally and be on time for the meeting. Bring business cards, agency or state related materials and other materials for a public relations packet for each member who you are planning to visit. Bring notebook paper to take notes.

Address the Member or staff member as Mr., Mrs., or Ms., whichever is appropriate.

Introduce yourself as a constituent, member of NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals, and a professional in the addictions field. Provide him/her with a brief description of your background.

Thank the Member/staff member for meeting with you and for the Member's previous support of addiction issues.

Begin your discussion with a presentation of your concerns, supported by research.

As you are speaking, provide one-page handouts for the staffer to solidify the information you are presenting, making sure to include references. The more information you can provide for them, the better your argument will be and the more convincing you will sound. If you set up a phone meeting, fax or email your handouts to the staffer so they have something tangible from you with information regarding your issue.

Remember that you are probably one of the first people educating the staffer on this issue. They probably know little about the addiction profession, so be prepared for an array of questions. Try to brainstorm on possible questions and have prepared answers and data to solidify your opinions.

It's a good idea to confine yourself to a few cohesive topics related to the addiction profession. Otherwise, you could decrease the force of your argument and complicate your legislator's efforts to act upon it.

Briefing is important. You will have roughly 15 minutes to make your case.

Beware of the non-factual argument. Never embellish facts or misstatements concerning an issue. The staffer will conduct his/her own research about the issue, and your credibility will be in imminent danger. If you do not know the answer, say, "I am not sure, but I will find out for you; and then, follow through in a matter of days. Please see the following chart for a list of resources that can help you locate useful information for your meeting.

Be educated on both your viewpoint and opposing ones. If you are speaking to a Member or his/her staff who has not shown support for addiction issues in the past, you must tailor your conversation and research, anticipating his/her dissent. Acknowledge his/her viewpoint, while gently providing thought-provoking information for them to consider.

Remain courteous and respectful at all points of the conversation and never allow yourself to raise your voice or engage in a heated debate.

At the end of the conversation, state that you will contact them in a week's time to answer any questions he/she may have on the issue. Provide him or her with your business card or contact information in case they would like to contact you in the interim. Remember to shake hands and thank him or her for the meeting before you leave.

Once your meeting is completed, it is advisable to promptly email or fax the staffer in order to thank them for their time. This not only shows good manners, but also reminds the staffer about your conversation. Each time you can convey your message to a staff member, you move one step closer to influencing the Member's opinion.

## **Building Rapport with Legislators**

You can enhance your effectiveness as an advocate by establishing a relationship with a legislator - or a member of his/her staff - that is based on more than simply asking them to do something (or not do something) once or twice a year. If you get to the point where your name is recognized, so that when an addiction-related issue comes up the legislator or staffer thinks of you, you've accomplished your goal. Getting to this point does not guarantee that a legislator will do what you want them to do, but it means they'll likely check in with you before acting on addiction-related issues. There are several ways you can foster a relationship with legislators.

Invite a legislator to address a meeting of your organization. Be flexible about the topic of the talk, suggesting general issues like health, or even how addiction counselors can work more effectively with their legislators. A legislator may not be comfortable addressing issues that are highly specific to the addiction counseling profession because they do not have enough information to make a good presentation. This is fine. Just get them there. You can educate them later.

Invite your legislators to visit a program that you administer or work in. Legislators like to learn about what's going on in their district. If it is appropriate and would not be

disruptive or invasive of the privacy of other participants, invite legislators to visit and learn more about a program or service you provide to the community.

If a legislator has done something noteworthy for the addiction counseling profession or on issues that are important to the profession, recognize what they have done by presenting an award. But only recognize real accomplishments and effort. Don't present an unearned award just to try to gain access and favor. It won't work and will only embarrass you and the legislator.

Attend "town meetings" and other forums sponsored by your legislators. If you get the chance, introduce yourself and let him or her know what you do. If there is no "burning issue" you need his/her help with at the moment, that's fine; just say hello, thank them for coming out to speak, and ask for the name of the staff member you should contact if you want to talk about an addiction-related issue in the future. You're building a relationship so that when you do need help you'll be more likely to get it.

Volunteer to work in political campaigns. If there's a candidate you support, call his/her campaign headquarters and offer to volunteer. Even if you can only spare one night to help out, legislators appreciate any and all the help they get. They and their staff will remember that you helped out and consider you a "VIP" because of it. (Working in campaigns can be a great way to network, too. You might find yourself stuffing envelopes one night next to a physician who might later give you client referrals).

REMEMBER that political work is fine for individuals, but is prohibited for 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organizations. Most addiction counseling organizations are tax-exempt, and are thus prohibited from engaging in any form of political advocacy. In that case, your focus will be to educate and inform your legislators.

## Keeping Track of Your Legislative Objectives

Now that you have made initial contact with your representatives, it is as equally important to follow the progression of the issues affecting addiction professionals so you may send a follow-up letter referencing new developments. Many of the issues you might be concerned about have pieces of legislation associated with them in Congress. The bill could be making its way through the Committees, or it could have been presented in a previous year and waiting to gain momentum again. You can track the status of a bill by:

- Visiting <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/thomas.php>, and entering the bill number (e.g., H.123, or S.123), or
- Calling or emailing NAADAC's Department of Government Relations.
- Your legislator's office.

If there have been any developments or revisions to the bill, consider how this affects your argument. If you feel the revisions are not beneficial to you or would like to express your thanks to the Members involved, this may be a good opportunity to send a follow-up letter to the staff member you spoke to earlier either by phone or a letter.

Maintain contact with the staff members with whom you have communicated. Most importantly, do not get discouraged by the slow progression of your issues. The legislative process is thorough and lengthy, but it does work and it takes time. Remember, YOU are their resource person - be consistent in your communication!

## **Building Coalitions and Alliances**

As a bill progresses, it is important to develop and maintain contact with other professionals who feel as passionately about addiction issues as you. Building coalitions and alliances are vital to educating and affecting change in legislation. Other professionals and organizations in the addictions profession could also be advocating for the same issues. By uniting your efforts, your message will have a stronger voice. The more people you have vocally supporting your cause, the more successful you will be.

As always, you may contact NAADAC's Department of Government Relations to work with our ever-growing list of supporters and coalitions, as well as obtain their contact information. The Internet is also a good resource for finding other organizations that will support your cause. Many organizational websites, including NAADAC ([www.naadac.org](http://www.naadac.org)), contain position statements and information concerning specific issues that will inform you of their stance. Finally, your peers are also an excellent resource to gain allies on addictions issues. Some may wish to be more involved but are unaware of the process. Together, your voices will be louder and you will make a difference for all addiction professionals.

## **State and Local Advocacy**

The information presented in this booklet is not only applicable to the federal policymakers, but in large part to the state and local levels, as well. Through the same process outlined above you can identify, contact, and communicate with your state and local legislators to advocate change closer to your home. Advocacy is effective at all levels of government, and your focus should not be limited to the federal legislative branch.

In addition, federal legislators maintain close contact with state officials to keep abreast of issues in their districts and home state. They return to their districts often, and this could be a great opportunity for you to maintain communication. For example, you might choose to attend a town hall meeting where a legislator is present or arrange a site visit to your office for a legislator. If you do arrange a site visit, you might want to discuss this event with your provider's public affairs person. The legislator is usually looking for media opportunities, and there is no question that one involving the mantra "Recovery Works" will be beneficial to the professional, the provider, and to the legislator. These represent proactive opportunities to continue discussing your issues and keep your agenda fresh in the legislator's mind. Remember, anything you can do as an Advocate in Action can make a difference!

## **State Government**

State governments are set up very similarly to the federal system with an Executive (the Governor) and a Legislature (the State House). Most states have both a state senate and state house of representatives, but there are a few exceptions.

## **Local Government**

Depending on where you live, you could have a city, town or county council that administers local concerns. A quick look online at your city's website or a call to your local town hall will clarify which system operates in your area. Local government also

tends to follow the federal model with a Mayor or County Council Chair and members of a city or county council who represent local districts.

A key point to recognize is that the staffing resources for state and local legislators are reduced, so there will be fewer layers of people to navigate and they may be more receptive if you have resources to offer.

If you have any additional questions regarding this manual, please contact NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals, by email at [advocacy@naadac.org](mailto:advocacy@naadac.org) or by calling 800.548.0497 and asking to speak with a member of our Government Relations staff or NAADAC's Executive Director, who directs the Government Relations Department.

## Terminology and Acronyms

In order to effectively communicate your ideas to a Member and his/her staff, you should be familiar with the terminology associated with Congress and the legislative process. It is important to use the correct terms when addressing a Member or his/her staff so that your concerns can be accurately expressed. The following is a list of terms that you might encounter while advocating for your issue:

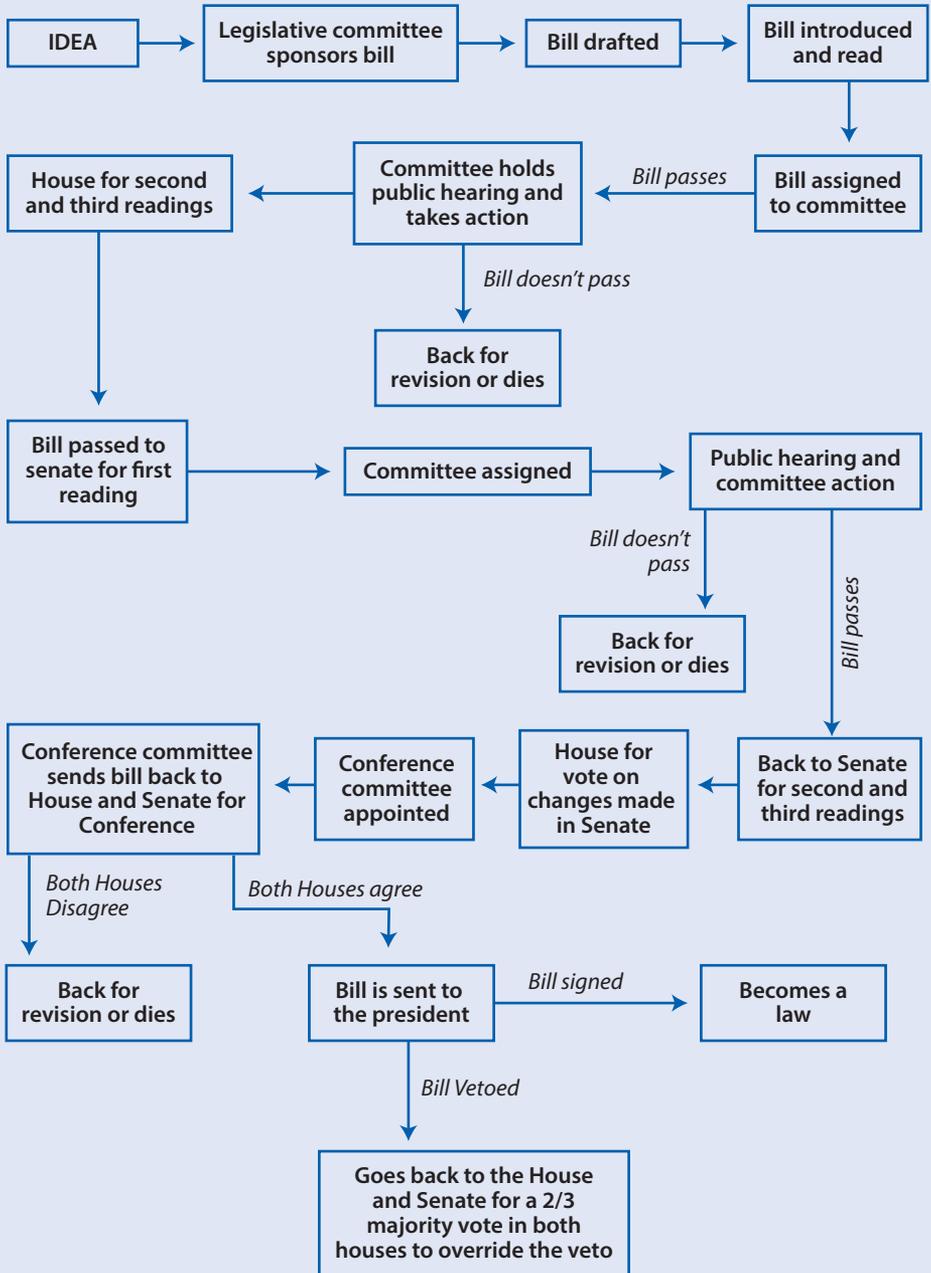
- **Act** - Legislation that has been passed by both houses of Congress and signed by the President/Governor. This may also occur if Congress votes to override a presidential/ gubernatorial veto. An Act is official law.
- **Amendment** - Proposal by a member of Congress to alter the language or stipulation in a bill or act.
- **Appropriation** - A budget act that authorizes the spending of public money for a specific purpose.
- **Bill** - A proposed law. Bills usually propose changes or additions to existing policies. Congressional Members of a conference committee, which is composed of Senators and Representatives named to work out differences between same-subject bills passed by both chambers.
- **District** - A geographical area designated for representation by a Representative, local city councilperson, or state legislator. Districts are created based on population.
- **Engrossed Bill** - Official copy of a bill passed by the House or Senate.
- **Fiscal Year** - A 12 month period for using federal funds, beginning October 1 and ending September 30.
- **Hearing** - Committee sessions allowing for witnesses and professionals in specific subject matter to testify on a particular issue. These people may include specialists, legislators, or spokespeople for groups affected by the policy or bill under scrutiny. The public and press may only attend "open hearings."
- **Joint Resolution** - Resolutions adopted by both houses used to propose Constitutional amendments, create interim committees, provide for the printing of legislative publications, give directions to an agency or officer, express legislative approval of some kind of temporary action to be taken, or to authorize expenditures out of the legislative expense appropriations.

- **Lobby** – A group seeking to influence the passage or defeat of legislation. Lobbying is, in general, the same things as advocacy.
- **Quorum** -The number of Members of a legislative body who must be present before business may be conducted.
- **Resolution** - A formal statement of a decision or opinion by the House or Senate or both.
- **Unanimous Consent** - A time-saving procedure for non-controversial measures whereby measures are adopted without a vote.

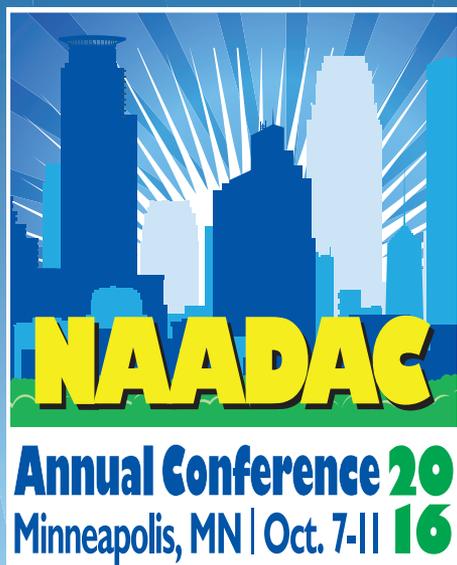
In addition, while researching your issues of interest, you might come across confusing acronyms. The following is a list of common acronyms in the addiction profession:

AA	Alcoholics Anonymous
AMA	American Medical Association
ASAM	American Society of Addiction Medicine
ATTC	Addiction Technology Transfer Center
CSAP	Center for Substance Abuse Prevention
CSAT	Center for Substance Abuse Treatment
HHS	Department of Health and Human Services
ED	Department of Education
DOT	Department of Transportation
DSM-V	Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition
HRSA	Health Resources and Services Administration
IOM	Institute of Medicine
NAADAC	NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
NAATP	National Association of Addiction Treatment Providers
NALGAP	National Association of Lesbian& Gay Addiction Professionals and their Allies
NASADAD	National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors
NIAAA	National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism
NIDA	National Institute on Drug Abuse
NIH	National Institutes of Health
ONDCP	White House Office of National Drug Control Policy
SAMHSA	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration

# How to Advocate: The Legislative Process



# Save the Dates!



NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals invites you to join us at its 2016 Annual Conference, *Embracing Today, Empowering Tomorrow*, October 7–11, 2016 at the Hyatt Regency Minneapolis.

[www.naadac.org/2016annualconference](http://www.naadac.org/2016annualconference)



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