



national down syndrome society®

# Advocacy & Public Policy

## In-District Congressional Meeting Toolkit Plain Language

**A plain language explainer on how to advocate  
to your Members of Congress in your hometown!**

The toolkit below was created with simplified language to help readers with and without disabilities learn more meeting with elected officials in their district. If you have any questions about the information on this page, please email [policy@ndss.org](mailto:policy@ndss.org).

How to  
schedule a  
meeting

Meeting  
tips

Resources

## How to schedule a meeting

1

**Choose The Right Dates:** Try to meet when Congress is on break or “in recess” and elected officials are back home. During these breaks, they often work from their local offices. You can check the Congressional calendar online to see when these breaks happen. You might get to meet your Members of Congress, but meeting with a staff member is just as good. Staff understand the issues and will make sure the lawmaker hears what you say.

2

**Get in Touch:** Find your elected officials contact information on their website and reach out by phone or email to set up a meeting. Let them know you are a constituent and that you want to talk about issues important to the Down syndrome community. A constituent is someone who lives in the lawmaker’s district. Members of Congress are elected to be a voice for their constituents.

3

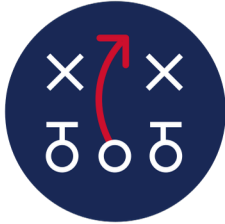
**Follow Up:** If you don’t hear back after a few days, reach back out. Members of Congress represent many people, so your first email or phone call might have been missed!

4

**Confirm the Meeting:** Once you and the office find a time that works, mark it in your calendar. Make sure you pay attention to any extra information from their office, like a note to arrive early.

## Meeting Tips

**During your meeting, use these tips to help you be successful:**



**Plan Ahead:** If other advocates are joining your meeting, decide who is going to talk about what.



**Professional Appearance:** Dress in a professional outfit. Check out our [dress code guide here!](#)



**Bring Extra Materials:** Bring fact sheets or extra information about what you're discussing. NDSS has some of these available on our website.



**Respect Their Time:** Arrive on time or early!



**Talk with Staff:** If meeting with legislators isn't possible, talk with staff members who can share your story with their boss.



**Make a Connection:** Share stories about your life to make the issues personal.

## Meeting Tips

**During your meeting, use these tips to help you be successful:**



**Focus on a Few Topics:** Pick a couple of issues that matter the most to you and focus on those.



**Show Your Support:** Mention other organizations and important individuals who share your concerns.



**Request Action:** Politely make clear requests, like asking them to cosponsor a piece of legislation.



**Offer Your Help:** Let them know they can come to you with any questions about Down syndrome.



**Invite Them to Events:** Invite legislators to important events in your community where they can talk with constituents and learn more about Down syndrome.



**Thank Them:** Follow up to thank them for taking time to meet with you.

If you need any support, please email [policy@ndss.org](mailto:policy@ndss.org)

## Resources and Templates

Use the QR codes below to find when Members of Congress are in recess and who your Members of Congress are. The next two pages have examples of emails you can send to schedule meetings in your district.



### **Congressional Calendars**

<https://www.congress.gov/days-in-session>



### **Find My Legislators**

<https://www.congress.gov/members/find-your-member>

## Resources and Templates

### Meeting Request Template:

To: Staffer@email.gov  
Subject: Meeting Request

Dear [STAFFER],

I'm a constituent and [(an individual with Down syndrome)/  
(loved one of an individual with Down syndrome)] from [CITY/  
STATE]. I would like to schedule a meeting with you to discuss  
[H.R. 1234 (the NDSS team can help you determine this  
information)], which would [brief description of the policy].  
Would [Representative/Senator (Last Name of Legislator)] be  
available for a meeting on [DATE]?

I would love to briefly share my story with [Representative/  
Senator (Last Name of Legislator)] and discuss legislative issues  
that impact the Down syndrome community.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]  
[EMAIL ADDRESS]  
[PHONE]

## Resources and Templates

### Thank You Email Template:

To: Staffer@email.gov

Subject: Meeting Request

Dear [STAFFER],

Thank you for helping us connect with [Representative/  
Senator (Legislator Last Name)] and sharing your time with us.

Please let me know if you need additional information or have any questions about [H.R. 1234 (NDSS-APP team can help you determine this information)], which would [brief description of the policy].

I am happy to ask the National Down Syndrome Society staff in DC to follow-up with the information or answers.

Thank you for your support!

[YOUR NAME]

[EMAIL ADDRESS]

[PHONE]

## Resources and Templates

### Thank You Email Tips:



**Send it quickly:** Try to send the email within 24 hours of the meeting.



**Personalize it:** Include details of anything important that came up during your meeting.



**Say Thank You:** Make sure to thank them for taking the time to meet with you.



**Request Action:** Ask them to support any bills that you discussed in your meeting.



**Proofread:** Make sure there are no typos or mistakes in your email before hitting send.