

Information about becoming a successful legislative advocate

The following article will get you started on becoming a legislative advocate. For more information about how you can help the IPA's legislative effort contact:

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ADVOCATE: The Most Important Role in your Graduate and Professional Career

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Students assume many roles during their graduate careers, but most feel so overwhelmed by academic, research, and/or clinical responsibilities that they never take part in what may be the most critical priority for their professional and personal livelihood: the role of being an advocate. In March 2000, committee members of APAGS and the APAGS Advocacy Coordinating Team (ACT) attended the APA Practice Directorate's State Leadership Conference (SLC). Committee members participated in workshops with leaders of state and provincial psychological associations to develop advocacy skills and receive intensive training in the legislative issues effecting the profession of psychology. The conference culminated in Hill Visits in which attendees met with their congressional representatives at the US Capitol to lobby for inclusion of legal accountability for mental health benefits in the Patients' Bill of Rights.

These Hill Visits were noted by students to be extremely rewarding and beyond expectations. Students returned from this event inspired and motivated to increase student participation in advocacy. Catriona Buist, a veteran of student advocacy and graduate student at the Department of Psychology at Our Lady of the Lake University, explained, "The Hill visits I have been on have been exhilarating! They have taught me how each individual can affect policy making and legislation. They have also inspired me to get more involved in advocacy at both the state and national level. "

However, the ACT committee is acutely aware that many students are poorly informed of the importance of advocacy in their professional development and that many are unaware of their power to affect policy decisions that impact the education and profession of psychology. In addition, students have many misperceptions about the political process that serve as barriers in ACT's mission of increasing student advocacy. These barriers include: feeling powerless and ineffectual about having an impact on legislation and policy decision making; fear and nervousness about visiting congressional leaders due to lack of knowledge of issues and the process of influencing policy; concern about how to present oneself; perception that students are insignificant constituents and that representatives will be unreceptive; and finally, feeling apprehensive and apathy towards writing, calling, or visiting elected officials.

Students who have participated in advocacy via Hill visits remark that they felt appreciated by the congressional staff and empowered by their involvement in the legislative process. Many students commented that they were impressed by the openness and availability of congressional offices to listen to student concerns and to discuss the political process with respect to policy critical to students. As Tamara Duckworth, a graduate student in the Department of Clinical and Health Psychology at the University of Florida, remarked, "Making visits to the Hill was much easier than I expected. The congressional staff seemed interested to hear from constituents. The fact that I was a student didn't matter -- my vote is worth the same as anyone else's!" More importantly, many congressional offices are not familiar with the many roles of psychology or the intricacies of graduate education in psychology, including financial debt, clinical caseloads, and academic/research responsibilities. Most appreciate the opportunity to be educated by student constituents on the role of psychology in health care.

Political consultants and congressional representatives repeatedly remark that input and feedback from constituents is critical to policy decisions. In addition to providing education about

psychological issues, it is important to maintain ongoing relationships with local representatives. This is less time consuming than many might assume and does not require large financial donations. Recently, I attended a dinner for my congressional representative, Karen Thurman. The local chapter of my state psychological association organized the dinner, and attendance was free for students. Representative Thurman sat with several students during the dinner and discussed a variety of topics that ran from legislative policy to common everyday events, including Elian Gonzalez and our latest diets.

Again and again, students who meet with their representatives comment that the encounter is much more pleasant and relaxed than they imagined it would be. If you have been through orals for comprehensive or qualifying exams, you are overly-prepared to do this! In addition to visiting representatives and their staff, students can voice their concerns via letters, phone calls, and emails. Communicating periodically via these methods are additional ways of maintaining ongoing relationships with your local and federal representatives. And of course, it is always critical to vote! Past newsletters have included tips on how to arrange and conduct visits to your state legislators, and how to correspond with congressional offices via letters and phone calls. Visit the APAGS website or contact your campus representative for more information and resource materials.

If you are interested in becoming an advocate for psychology, start by seeking opportunities to become involved with advocacy and to be educated about policy decisions, regardless of how small the opportunity. This can include attending local forums and policy hearings, becoming an APAGS campus representative, and participation in letter writing and phone calling campaigns.

This summer, we are planning several events in conjunction with the APA convention in DC to train and motivate students to become effective advocates. Students are encouraged to attend the [National Psychology Graduate Student Rally on August 4th from 11am to 2pm on the west steps of the US Capitol](#) to recognize the contributions of graduate students to our communities and to advocate for increased funding for psychology training. Following the rally, students will conduct Hill visits to meet with their congressional representatives to educate them about issues related to the training and practice of psychology. In addition, the Public Policy Office is sponsoring an advocacy workshop to be held before the rally on August 3rd. If you are interested in any part or all of these events, please click on the rally website at <http://www.wrightinst.edu/pgsrally/> for more information and to sign up for these events. There is also information about reduced cost housing options during the convention.

This article first appeared in the Summer 2000 Edition of the APAGS Newsletter, Vol. 12(2)

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(This article was first published in the Winter 2002 issue of the APAGS Newsletter.)

<http://www.apa.org/apags/getinv/onadvocacy.html>

Advocacy as Insurance

Would you own an uninsured house? Of course not.

Or would you?

You're presently paying a huge price in time, money (including income foregone), and effort for your graduate training and education. After all your sacrifice, feeling a sense of entitlement—to a rewarding career and a good income—would be perfectly understandable. However, in life there's often a big difference between what you deserve and what you get. When you have obtained your doctorate, you will have, so to speak, bought your house. Insuring it, that is, maintaining a vital, viable profession as the foundation for a lifetime career is a different matter.

Here's a little secret. Most psychologists now practicing and teaching got into the profession during a sort of Golden Age—the 60s, 70s, and early 80s—when demand was high, supply relatively low, and third party reimbursement (Now how did psychologists get that?) had become common. Managed care was just a dot on the horizon. We assumed that things would always be okay. Of course, all that's changed, and you've seen one facet of this, with practicum and internship slots becoming much harder to find. Clinicians are battling managed care and university jobs have become tremendously competitive, with some schools abolishing tenure. You know all this. Now here's the secret: My generation still has jobs and most of them don't care a fig about you.

I mean, we're not totally heartless. If you ended up driving a taxi or selling insurance instead of practicing as a psychologist, most of us would say, "Gee, that's tough, but better than me." Now, I'm not referring to the psychologists you read about in the *APA Monitor* or see at conventions, the highly visible minority who continue to serve, year after year, as advocates on behalf of the public well-being and the science and practice of psychology. No, there are a few senior types, maybe five percent, who are truly concerned about the future of the profession.

Here's another secret: Many of these admirable men and women are beginning to show a bit of gray in their hair. They need some young whippersnappers to step forward and assist them in their efforts, taking up present challenges and preparing for those to come. However, most of them, astute as they are, discount the potential of graduate students as advocates. You're among the most intelligent, highly educated men and women in the country, and I know you are capable of being effective forces on behalf of mental health issues and organized psychology. I have been extremely impressed with the APAGS representatives I have gotten to know over the years, people like Carol Williams, Rob Fazio, Chris Loftis, and Diana Salvador. They are excellent role models for you, but they cannot do the job themselves. In my generation, we always thought that "someone else" would fight the battles against managed care, on behalf of patients' rights, and so on. Back then, we got away with being lazy, but the health care market place is getting more competitive each year. More of your generation will need to be involved, to be the "somebody else," if organized psychology is to survive and perhaps thrive in the coming decades. Advocacy will be your insurance.

Advocacy 101

Repeat after me: "Guild' is not a dirty word." Yes, it's okay to advocate on behalf of scope of practice and other issues that directly benefit organized psychology. *All health care professions are involved in guild activities because they must be.* The history of Western medicine reflects the gradual triumph of science over dogma and superstition (Porter, 1997), but also a rapid accommodation to market forces in the latter half of the 20th century (Starr, 1982). The more recent ascension of psychology as an organized profession since World War II—incorporating that Golden Age I referred to earlier—didn't just happen. It resulted from the focused, tenacious efforts of people like the so-called "Dirty Dozen," pioneering psychologists who helped transform clinical psychology from a cottage industry into a bona fide health care profession. A great book on the subject is *"The Practice of Psychology: The Battle for Professionalism"* (2001).

There are plenty of ways to become an advocate, and it doesn't have to cost a lot of money or time. You can get involved in state/provincial psychological associations' efforts, which might mean making phone calls or writing letters on behalf of a particular issue. You can work for political candidates who support mental health care. Join organizations like NAMI, the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill. Show the public that psychologists are genuinely concerned about the public's well-being. Pick an issue: the criminalization of mental illness, patients' rights, violence, racism, prescription privileges. Psychologists are involved in all of these. Educate yourself and then your colleagues about these concerns. APAGS represents an excellent vehicle for involvement in the important issues our profession confronts.

Advocate for psychology's cohesiveness. Here's something else that your elders have not been very good at doing. We tend to factionalize, to fall out and become our own worst enemies. This is particularly true in terms of a practice-academia schism, reflected most tellingly in the decision of many scientist-psychologists to decamp from APA and form the American Psychological Society 20 years ago. Why is it that we seem to feel we can exist independently of each other? Practice needs science and vice versa. If applied psychology is to survive, it must ultimately be a profession thoroughly grounded in science. There are plenty of social workers and licensed professional counselors with good people skills, a license to practice talk therapy, and a willingness to work for about two-thirds of what you will want to charge.

At the same time, scientist-psychologists cannot allow the development of a public perception that psychology is a purely academic discipline, divorced from and indifferent to practice. Should this happen, grants will dry up, as funding sources cease to see psychology's relevance to real-world problems, and university psychology departments will shrink to the size of their sociology counterparts. Make the commitment now that you and your colleagues will continue talking with each other as your careers mature, looking for commonalities rather than differences, and incorporating both science and practice into your professional identities, regardless of whether you become primarily academicians or clinicians.

Finally, I'd like to suggest you join Division 18. We care about students. Why? Because we know you're the future of the profession, and because we're public service psychologists, professional good guys and good gals.

We were the first to have a voting student representative on the executive committee and we've given a student award annually since 1995. Perhaps most importantly, the sites in which our members practice are those which provide a great number of practicum, internship, and postdoctoral training positions. Many of us have made a career of working with students. We need each other. (For information on Division 18 membership and the Student Award, send [me](#) an e-mail. We'll help you get started in your advocacy efforts. Perhaps you could be our next student representative.

Fewer Free Riders

There's a term for people who work in unionized businesses, but aren't union members, enjoying the benefits the unions have fought for without sharing in the costs. They're known as "free riders." I've been a member of three unions during my checkered career, and I think of organized psychology as a union in some ways. We had, and continue to have, plenty of free riders among my generation of psychologists. Yours cannot afford as many if you want to keep that "house" for which you have worked so hard properly insured.

References:

Porter, R. (1997). *The greatest benefit to mankind: A medical history of humanity*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.

Starr, P. (1982). *The social transformation of American medicine: The rise of a sovereign profession and the making of a vast industry*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

R.H. Wright & N.A. Cummings (Editors). (2001). *The practice of psychology: The battle for professionalism*. Phoenix, AZ: Zeig, Tucker & Theisen.

<http://www.apa.org/apags/advocacy/fedadvtipswrite.html>

Tips on Writing to Your Elected Officials

Letters and faxes are an extremely effective way of communicating with your elected officials. Many legislators believe that a letter represents not only the position of the writer but also many other constituents who did not take the time to write. These tips will help increase the effectiveness of your letter:

Keep it brief: Letters should never be longer than one page, and should be limited to one issue. Legislative aides read many letters on many issues in a day, so your letter should be as concise as possible.

State Who You Are and What You Want Up Front: In the first paragraph, tell your legislators that you are a constituent and a psychologist, and identify the issue about which you are writing. If your letters pertains to a specific piece of legislation, it helps to identify it by its bill number (e.g. H.R. __ or S. __).

Hit your three most important points: Choose the three strongest points that will be most effective in persuading legislators to support your position and flesh them out. The Government Relations office can help.

Personalize your letter: Tell your elected official why this legislation matters in her community or state. If you have one, include a personal story that shows how this issue affects you or your clients. A constituent's personal stories can be very persuasive as your legislator shapes her position.

Personalize your relationship: Have you ever voted for this elected official? Have you ever contributed time or money to his or her campaign? Are you familiar with her through any business or personal relationship? If so, tell your elected official or his staff person. The closer your legislator feels to you, the more powerful your argument is likely to be.

You are the Expert: You do not need to understand the nuances of the political process to speak forcefully on mental health issues. Your training, your experience with clients, and your knowledge of mental health issues in your community made you an invaluable voice in mental health advocacy.

<http://www.apa.org/apags/advocacy/fedadvlobby.html>

Tips on Meeting with Your Elected Officials

From your local city council to your Senators in Washington, meeting with your elected officials about issues affecting psychology is a lot easier than most people think. Remember, your legislators work for you!

What is a lobby visit? A lobby visit is merely a meeting for you to tell your elected representative what you think about a certain issue or bill, and to try to get him or her to take action on that issue.

Where can you meet? It's not necessary to travel to Washington, DC - every Member of Congress also has one or more offices in their congressional district. Even though the Member is not in the local office(s) very much, there is a permanent staff member at each office with whom you can meet.

Requesting Your Meeting

- Make your request in writing and follow up with a call to the Appointment Secretary/Scheduler.
- Suggest specific times and dates for your meeting.
- Let them know what issue and legislation (by bill number, if it has one) you wish to discuss.
- Make sure they know that you are a constituent.

Prepare for Your Meeting

- **Call the APA Practice Organization for materials.** We should have information to help you decide on your talking points, as well as materials that you can leave with your elected official.
- **Decide who will attend the meeting.** Bringing more than four or five people can be hard to manage. Keep it small, but bring people who have information or personal stories that will drive your point home.
- **Agree on talking points.** It's tough to make a strong case for your position when you are disagreeing in the meeting! If a point is causing tension in the group, leave it out.
- **Plan out your meeting.** People can get nervous in a meeting, and time is limited. Be sure that you lay out the meeting beforehand, including who will start the conversation.
- **Decide what you want achieve.** What is it you want your elected official to do - vote for or against the bill? Make a commitment to introduce or co-sponsor legislation? Asking your legislator or his or her staff member to do something specific will help you know how successful your visit has been!

During the Meeting

- **Be prompt and patient.** Elected officials run on very tight schedules. Be sure to show up on time for your appointment, and be patient - it is not uncommon for legislators to be late or to have your meeting interrupted by other business.

- **Keep it short and focused!** You will have twenty minutes or less with a staff person, and as little as ten minutes if you meet with your elected official. Make the most of that brief time by sticking to your topic.
- **Bring up any personal, professional or political connections to the elected official that you may have.** Start the meeting by introducing yourselves and thanking the legislator for any votes he or she has made in support of your issues, and for taking the time to meet with you.
- **Stick to your talking points!** Stay on topic, and back them up with no more than five pages of materials that you can leave with your elected official.
- **Provide personal and local examples of the impact of the legislation.** This is the most important thing you can do in a lobby visit.
- **Saying "I don't know" can be a smart political move.** You need not be an expert on the topic you are discussing. If you don't know the answer to a question, it is fine to tell your legislator that you will get that information for him or her. This gives you the chance to put your strongest arguments into their files, and allows you to contact them again about the issue. Never make up an answer to a question - giving wrong or inaccurate information can seriously damage your credibility!
- **Set deadlines for a response.** Often, if an elected official hasn't taken a position on legislation, they will not commit to one in the middle of a meeting. If he or she has to think about it, or if you are meeting with a staff member, ask when you should check back in to find out what your legislator intends to do about your request. If you need to get information to your legislator, set a clear timeline for when this will happen. That way, you aren't left hanging indefinitely.

After the Meeting

- Right after the meeting, compare notes with everyone in your group to compare what the elected official committed to do and what follow up information you committed to send.
- Each person who took part in the meeting should promptly send a personal thank you letter to the Congress member.
- Follow up in a timely fashion with any requested materials and information.
- If the elected official or staff member doesn't meet the deadline for action you agreed to during the meeting, ask him or her to set another deadline. Be persistent and flexible!
- If you are meeting with a member of Congress, let the Government Relations Field team know what you learned during your meeting. Knowing what arguments your Congress member used, what issues are important to him or her, and what positions he or she took will help us make our national lobbying strategy more effective!

Remember that a personal meeting with your member of Congress is one of the best opportunities to demonstrate that there is a constituency for civil liberties in your district.

Good luck and have fun!

Glossary of Legislative and Political Terms

Act: A bill or measure passed into law. Also used to describe a comprehensive piece of proposed legislation with multiple components.

Adjourn: To end a legislative day.

Adjourn Sine Die: To end the congressional session.

Administrative Assistant (AA): The Congressperson's chief of staff.

Amendment: A proposal to change, or an actual change to, a given piece of legislation.

Appropriation: Legislation to provide specific funding for an authorized program.

Authorization: Authorizes a program, specifying its general purpose and, broadly, how that purpose is to be achieved, and sets a funding ceiling for the program

Bill: A proposed law.

Budget: An annual proposal that outlines anticipated Federal revenue and designates program expenditures for the upcoming fiscal year.

Calendar: The list of bills or resolutions to be considered by committees, or by either chamber.

Chairperson: Member of the majority party who presides over the work of a committee or subcommittee.

Committee Report: A committee's written statement about a given piece of legislation. Committee reports are especially important because they often contain implementing and enforcing language for the legislation.

Congress: Refers to the 2-year cycle of activities of the legislative branch. For example, the '101st Congress' began January 3, 1989 and included a 1989 and a 1990 'session.' Proposed legislation introduced during a 2-year Congress may be taken up at any time during that period, but once the Congress has ended, pending measures are no longer viable and must be introduced anew in the next Congress in order to be considered.

Congressional Research Service: Congressional support agency that provides political analysis and information at the request of individual members of Congress.

Continuing Resolution: A joint resolution of Congress to provide continued funding for government agencies, generally at the same rate as the previous year's appropriation, that have not yet been funded through the enactment of regular appropriations bills.

Fiscal Year: The financial operating year of the federal government, beginning October 1st and ending September 30th of the next calendar year.

General Accounting Office: Congressional support agency that reviews and evaluates the management of Federal programs and activities, primarily at the request of individual members of Congress.

Institute of Medicine (IOM): Chartered by the National Academy of Sciences to enlist distinguished members of the appropriate professions in the examination of policy matters pertaining to public health.

Joint Committee: A committee consisting of Members of both the House and Senate.

Joint Resolution: Joint resolutions, which are essentially the same as bills, usually focus on a single item or issue. They are designated as either 'HJ Res' (when originating in the House) or 'SJ Res' (when originating in the Senate).

Legislative Assistant (LA): The professional staff member in charge of a particular issue or issue area.

Majority Leader: Leader of the majority party in either the House or the Senate.

Mark-up: The review and possible revision of a piece of legislation by committee members.

Minority Leader: Member of the minority party in either the House or the Senate.

National Academy of Sciences (NAS): Chartered by Congress, convenes committees of experts, often at the initiative of Congress, to advise the government on scientific and technical matters.

National Research Council (NRC): Organized by the National Academy of Sciences to advise the federal government, the public, and the scientific and engineering communities.

Pocket Veto: When the President withholds approval of a bill after Congress has adjourned, thereby killing the bill without a formal veto.

President of the Senate: The Vice President of the United States officially presides over the Senate. Except during times of very important debate, a President pro tempore is elected.

Quorum: The number of Senators or Representatives who must be present in their respective chambers before business can be conducted.

Ranking Member: Member of the majority party on a committee who ranks first in seniority after the chairperson.

Ranking Minority Member: The minority party member with the most seniority on a committee.

Reauthorization: Sanctions anew, usually with changes, a previously approved program.

Recess: Marks a temporary end to the business of the Congress, and sets a time for the next meeting.

Resolution: A formal statement of a decision or opinion by the House, Senate, or both.

Rider: A provision added to a bill so that it may 'ride' to approval on the strength of that bill. Riders are generally attached to Senate appropriations bills.

Speaker of the House: The presiding officer in the House of Representatives. The Speaker is elected by the majority party in the House.

Table a Bill: A motion to remove a bill from consideration.

Unanimous Consent: A procedure for adopting noncontroversial measures without a vote.

Veto: Disapproval of a bill or resolution by the President.

Whip: A legislator who is chosen to be assistant to the leader of the party in the House or the Senate and whose job is to marshal support for party strategy.

<http://www.apa.org/apags/advocacy/fedadvgrassroots.htm>

Maintaining a Grassroots Network

The *Federal Advocacy Network* was created to facilitate the involvement of psychologists around the country in legislative advocacy for the profession. Since its inception, the network has been instrumental in the fight to reshape prevailing political attitudes towards the profession of psychology.

Periodically, the Government Relations department will send you fax and e-mail "Action Alerts," which you inform you of impending action on legislation and what actions psychologists should take to convince their legislators to take a pro-psychology position. Action Alerts contain all the information you and members of your grassroots network will need in contacting the legislators: the issue, the impending legislative action, how psychologists need to respond, and a generic message about the issue which you can use in communicating with your legislators.

As Coordinator, you are in the position to disseminate this information to the psychologists and graduate students in your network. *The mechanisms and strategies by which you communicate such information will ultimately determine how effectively you can mobilize members of your network.*

Please keep the following points in mind when organizing your state or division network:

Develop a key contacts list. Key contacts are people who have some connection with a Member of Congress that most constituents do not have. A key contact might be a friend of the elected official, or have been active in their campaigns, or hold a position as a community leader. Developing a key contact list will assist you in getting the APA message to targeted Members of Congress, and will help gather information on that member's position on a key bill. Talk with your field staff about ways to build your key contact list.

Ten letters move mountains! Despite the volume of total letters that go into Congressional offices, relatively few constituent communications are received on most legislative issues. As few as ten letters or calls from psychologists on a specific issue can grab the attention of a Congressional staff and make the voices of psychologists heard in the debate.

Know the 50% rule. When people volunteer for a project, a good organizer will recognize that at least 50% of those people will not show. This has definitely been true of the Federal Advocacy Network, where calls for action will usually generate activity from far fewer than 50% of the people on your lists. Keep this in mind when you have a goal of producing 10 calls or letters to a targeted elected official.

Email lists are your friend: Whether it is your own email list of psychologists or your state association listserv, email is a great way to disseminate information quickly and easily. When using email to organize, keep the following points in mind:

Stay on message - The Government Relations department will supply you with an update and message that you can cut and paste into your own email. However, if you are using language from an APA action alert, be sure to check with the field team to see if some information on strategy is for FAC's only.

Avoid overuse - Constant calls for action will reap diminished returns. Reserve calls for action to key moments in the legislative process.

Short and simple - Keep your messages simple and to the point. Avoid burying your call for action at the bottom of your message.

Personalize your message - Mention that this is a state or member-specific message right in your title and in your message. People are more likely to take action if they feel that

Attachments and links - One of the best things about using email is the ability to attach information and to link to documents on the web. That way, people who want more information can look up a more detailed analysis, the specific language of a targeted bill, or a relevant news article with the click of a mouse. It also helps keep your messages brief and to the point.

Identify gaps in your network. A member of your state Congressional delegation may be on a key committee or appear on a target list for an important vote. What if there are only five people on your list for that district? What if you have no key contacts in that district?

Be sure to take a look at your list of members by district and your list of key contacts long before a pivotal vote and work to identify and minimize these holes. Remember, the call for grassroots action often comes with little warning, so plan ahead!

Tie in advocacy to other association activities. Conferences and workshops are golden opportunities to make face-to-face contact with members of your network, inform them of Federal legislative issues and ask them to take action. It is also a great time to identify prospective key contacts.

<http://www.apa.org/apags/advocacy/fivesteps.html>

Five Easy Steps to Making A Hill Appointment

Sheila Forsyth
APA's Public Policy Office

It's easy to make a hill appointment. Remember - you're a constituent (voter) and every Senator and Representative appreciates knowing what's important to their constituency.

1. First, find the name and telephone number of your Representative and Senators on-line through the following websites: APA-PPO website www.apa.org ; the Senate website www.senate.gov ; and/or the House website www.house.gov
2. Call the Senator/Representative's Office and ask to speak with the Scheduler.
3. Identify yourself as a constituent and psychology graduate student [include the name of your university/institution].
4. State that you will be in Washington on Friday, August 4th for the APA Convention and Student Rally and would like to meet with the Senator/Representative (or appropriate staffer) to discuss federal support for psychology education and training - specifically, the Federal Work Study Program.
5. Confirm the time and location of the meeting (and staffer's name). Thank the Scheduler for his/her assistance. [Note: if you're making more than one appointment; allow 30 minutes between

<http://www.apa.org/apags/advocacy/hillvisit.html>

Making a Successful Hill Visit

Sheila Forsyth
APA's Public Policy Office

Here are some tips for making your hill visit successful. Remember that most hill visits are brief (15-20 minutes) and often with staffers, who are responsible for the issue.

- **Be Prepared** - Review and rehearse the key points you want to make [Visit PPO-ED website for Talking Point on the Federal Work Study Program].
- **Be on Time** - But don't be surprised if they're not. Congressional schedules are hectic. You need to be flexible and patient.
- **Be Political** - Introduce yourself, noting where you live and/or go to school (i.e., confirming that you are a constituent) and establishing a connection to the issue you'd like to discuss (e.g., graduate student services to community through FWSP).
- **Be Concise** - Hill visits are very brief (15-20 minutes). Plan on making no more than 3 key points, using personal and local examples to emphasize the need for the Senator/Representative's support:
 1. What's the issue (purpose of visit)?
 2. What's the impact/importance (local/state/nation)?
 3. What you'd like the Senator/Representative to do?
- **Be Curious** - Don't be afraid to ask how the Senator/Representative stands on the issue; and be tolerant of differing views, keeping dialogue open.
- **Be Responsive** - Try to answer any questions asked, but if you can't, let them know you'll get back to them with the information.
- **Be Appreciative** - Thank the Senator/Representative (Staffer) for his/her time.
- **Be Smart**- Always send a follow-up "thank you" letter, reiterating the points made during the meeting [See Sample FWSP Thank You Letter on PPO-ED website].

(This article is reprinted from the Spring 2000 edition of the APAGS Newsletter.)

<http://www.apa.org/apags/advocacy/joinppan.html>

Join the Public Policy Advocacy Network!

Dear APAGS Member,

The APA Public Policy Office wants to make your voice heard on Capitol Hill. We know that you are both a student of psychology and a concerned citizen who can strengthen the voice of psychology with Congress and federal agencies. Through the PUBLIC POLICY ADVOCACY NETWORK (PPAN), a member service of APA's Public Policy Office (on behalf of the Education, Public Interest, and Science Directorates), you can help shape federal law and regulations by playing a key role in promoting advocacy initiatives of interest or concern to psychology graduate students and the field as a whole.

We take the guesswork out of federal advocacy by providing you (about once a month) with information updates and action alerts that contain sample scripts so that you can contact the office of your Senators and/or Representative on critical federal policy matters. Since members of Congress seldom take action without hearing directly from their constituents, your opinion expressed via letters, phone calls, or office visits is critical to the success of psychology's advocacy initiatives.

For example, an advocacy initiative that you would hear about in the 108th Congress involves gaining support for the newly created Graduate Psychology Education (GPE) Program in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. All psychology graduate programs and internship sites are eligible to receive funding through this program for psychology education and training in areas of national need. Another initiative is to advance psychology's contribution in responding to terrorism and homeland security, as well as in addressing the unmet mental health needs of underserved populations, among other initiatives.

TO SUBSCRIBE TO PPAN, YOU JUST NEED TO COMPLETE THE USER FRIENDLY SIGN-ON FORM BY CLICKING HERE: <http://www.apa.org/ppo/forms/joinppan.html>. Please be sure to include your 9-digit zip code, so that we can identify the congressional district in which you live. [You can find your 9-digit zip code by entering your address at this Web site.](#)

If for whatever reason you decide not to remain a PPAN member, please be assured that each PPAN notice includes instructions on how to discontinue your participation in the network. Also, please feel free to forward this note to other psychology graduate students (or faculty members) that might like to subscribe to PPAN.

For further information, please contact [Gabriela Schneider, Advocacy Network Officer](#) or visit the [Public Policy Office Web site](#).

Sincerely,

Carol Williams-Nickelson
Associate Executive Director, APAGS

<http://www.apa.org/apags/advocacy/fedadvpublish.html>

Get Published...

Writing a Letter to the Editor is Easier Than You Think!

Letters to the editor are great advocacy tools. After you write letters to your members of Congress, sending letters to the editor can achieve other advocacy goals because they:

- Reach a large audience.
- Are often monitored by elected officials.
- Can bring up information not addressed in a news article.
- Create an impression of widespread support or opposition to an issue.

Tips on Writing Letters to the Editor

Keep it short and on one subject. Many newspapers have strict limits on the length of letters and have limited space to publish them. Keeping your letter brief will help assure that your important points are not cut out by the newspaper. Use the ["Tips on Writing to Your Elected Officials"](#) as a guide.

Make it legible. Your letter doesn't have to be fancy, but you should use a typewriter or computer word processor if your handwriting is difficult to read.

Send letters to weekly community newspapers too. The smaller the newspaper's circulation, the easier it is to get your letter printed.

Be sure to include your contact information. Many newspapers will only print a letter to the editor after calling the author to verify his or her identity and address. Newspapers will not give out that information, and will usually only print your name and city should your letter be published.

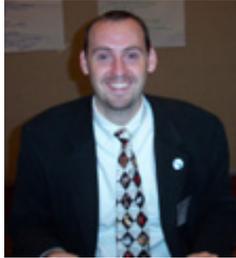
Make references to the newspaper. While some papers print general commentary, many will only print letters that refer to a specific article. Here are some examples of easy ways to refer to articles in your opening sentence:

- I was disappointed to see that The Post's May 18 editorial "Patients Rights Bill Costs Jobs" omitted some of the key facts in the debate.
- I strongly agree with (author's name) views on mental health parity. ("Name of Op-Ed," date) As a psychologist....

I am deeply saddened to read that Congressman Doe opposes legislation that would require health plans to have real legal accountability to their subscribers. ("Title of Article," date)

<http://www.apa.org/apags/advocacy/powerfulpartners.html>

Powerful Partners, Belong to Both



Chris Loftis, MA
Chair-Elect, APAGS



Michael Sullivan, PhD
*Assistant Executive Director
State Advocacy, APA Practice Directorate*

(This article was first published in the Winter 2002 issue of the APAGS Newsletter.)

Recently, a new "ad" has begun appearing in the pages of the *APA Monitor on Psychology*. A variation of this ad has also appeared in state and provincial psychological association (SPPA) newsletters. It features a logo with the acronyms of APA and SPPA, and it reads, "**Powerful Partners, Belong to Both.**"

The ad signifies the importance of belonging to both the American Psychological Association and your SPPA. These associations advocate for psychologists in the legislature, in the public sector, in private practice, and for students in training. Your APA and SPPA membership dues are critical to ensuring the vitality and strength of our profession.

As long as there are societal needs going unmet, and as long as there are fellow citizens lacking quality health care, psychologists can be doing more. More than half of APA members do not belong to their SPPA, and one-quarter of SPPA members do not belong to APA. If they did, psychology would unquestionably be in a position to increase and expand its contributions to the psychological health of our country.

Joint membership in APA and your SPPA also affords complementary opportunities for professional development, networking, and education about career paths and business models of psychology that are not typically obtained through graduate school training. Belonging to both APA and your SPPA strengthens psychology nationally and locally as well as enhancing graduate education and career opportunities.

Investing In Your Passions

Joint membership—in your state and national professional associations—takes a small bite out of disposable income but makes paradoxical financial sense. "Investing in professional organizations is investing not only in your future, but also the future of your profession," observes Lorryn Wahler, an executive director of a state psychological association (New Jersey) and member of APA's Committee for the Advancement of Professional Practice (CAPP).

"Please remember that being a psychologist is about more than maintaining a license, providing psychotherapy and conducting research, it is also about making an investment in your livelihood

and your passions," notes Daniel Abrahamson, PhD, director of professional affairs for the Connecticut Psychological Association and former chair of APA's Board of Professional Affairs.

Abrahamson and Wahler are both members of a working group convened by CAPP to promote joint membership in APA and SPPAs. As Abrahamson points out, "belonging to both" amounts to the cost of a medium-size cup of coffee a day from Dunkin' Donuts.

Compared to other doctors, psychology's dues are low. No one minimizes the hardship that several hundred dollars a year in dues represents in the managed care era. As an out-of-pocket expense it is steep. But looked at as a business investment, it is a bargain. Psychologists can belong to both their national and state associations for less than what other doctors pay to belong to their national association alone.

Expanding Our Civil Rights

Both APA and SPPAs advocate on behalf of the profession, and both provide opportunities for students to be involved in legislation and public policy issues pertinent to psychology.

A long list of effective partnerships between APA and state psychological associations can be cited as examples of what you get in return, such as the satisfaction of knowing that your profession is suing against managed care abuses, and that you have new opportunities for community entree and visibility through the youth antiviolenace campaign and the Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award initiative. But perhaps the best illustration of the synergy created by state and national partnerships is mental health parity, for which APA and the SPAs have been leaders of mental health coalitions.

Seen as the civil rights laws of the mental health field, parity laws have been passed in 37 states and at the federal level. The story of the gradual and steadily growing elimination of insurance discrimination against mental disorders serves as a classic example of how state and federal issues are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

Five states served as precedent-setting pioneers in passing parity laws before the Congress enacted the Mental Health Parity Act of 1996. The federal parity law was a limited but symbolically important breakthrough in the nation's health policy, and helped propel 32 additional states to pass parity laws going into the 2001 sunset of the 1996 federal law. In turn, the fact that so many states have enacted parity of varying degrees has greatly increased the likelihood that Congress will pass true across-the-board parity this year. Because of the widespread implementation of state parity, and parity in the Federal Employees Health Benefit Plan (FEHBP), the cost increase of implementing true national parity is projected at only 1 percent, according to actuarial estimates of Ron Bachman of PriceWaterhouseCoopers.

This type of breakthrough in enlightened health policy, ending decades of insurance discrimination against mental conditions, will create more incentives for people to access psychological services when discriminatory co-pays and deductibles are finally eliminated. Similar breakthroughs would be possible if MORE psychologists supported BOTH their state and national associations.

Professional Development Opportunities

In addition to advocating for the rights of our patients and advancing the welfare of our profession and society, joint membership in APA and SPPAs provides students with opportunities for professional development beyond the scope of traditional doctoral training.

APA and SPPAs offer legislative fellowship programs that allow students to work in advocacy and become more directly involved in public policy issues pertinent to our profession. Students participate in drafting legislation and white papers, tracking bills, attending Committee hearings and Coalition meetings, conducting research to support psychology position papers, and lobbying with top APA and SPPA political leaders.

Through active membership on association committees and executive boards, students can obtain leadership positions that allow more individualized and focused professional development opportunities. Networking at local and national psychological association meetings offer more intimate and informal opportunities for learning about career and expanded practice opportunities and for discussing current issues and research of importance to psychology.

Students also have the opportunity to contribute to association newsletters (e.g. submitting articles, volunteering to serve in editorial roles, etc.) and chair or serve on conference planning committees.

Membership also results in reduced registration fees at conferences and continuing education seminars, access to numerous special topic and state wide listservers, and discounts on many business and journal products.

Doing Your Part

So if you are not already doing so, please do your part. "Belong to both", and take satisfaction from knowing that you are advancing the cause of the profession most needed in the 21st century information age.

"This partnership has made greater contributions to the profession and to the public than any one organization could working on its own," notes Sandra Harris, PhD, who has been a president of both a state association (California) and an APA division (Division 31/State Psychological Association Affairs).

The idea for the joint membership ad originated with the CAPP working group to promote joint membership. The group includes representatives of the APA Graduate Students (Chris Loftis, MS), the Committee of State Leaders (Abrahamson), the Council of Executives of State and Provincial Psychological Associations (Wahler), the Caucus of State and Provincial Representatives to APA Council (Stephen Ragusea, PsyD), the Division of State Psychological Association Affairs (Jeffrey Barnett, PsyD), CAPP (Wahler), and the APA Practice Directorate (Michael Sullivan, PhD, Judith DeVito, Anna Gustina, and Gil Hill).

Additional Advocacy Links:

Find your elected officials; learn about important issues, recent votes, and current legislation.

<http://capwiz.com/apapractice/home/>

For quick access to Capitol Hill and contacting Members of Congress

<http://www.congress.org/congressorg/home/>

The Library of Congress Web site provides an excellent overview of *The Legislative Process*: Enactment of a Law

<http://thomas.loc.gov/home/enactment/enactlaw.pdf>

Advancing Psychology Education and Training:
A Psychologist's Guide to Federal Advocacy

<http://www.apa.org/ppo/ppan/guides.html>