

Planning and Executing a Grassroots Federal Policy “Speak Out.”

1. Hold a Planning Meeting:

- Clarity the purpose of the Speak-Out—no more than one or two issues should be raised.
- Assess if other groups in your district could co-sponsor the meeting with you.
- Propose several dates that the group could hold the Speak-out.
- Contact your Congressional Member to ask which of these dates he/she will be able to meet with your group.
- Confirm meeting dates with the Congressional Member in writing.
- Choose a location and room set up.
- Secure necessary supplies such as: AV equipment, flip charts and markers, microphone etc.
- Arrange for refreshments.

2. Develop an Agenda:

- Set the meeting for one hour and segment it into specific areas, e.g. welcome and introductions; purpose of the meeting; review of the issue; legislator comments; questions and answers; and next steps.
- Make sure that there is ample time for constituents to talk.
- You want the Congressional Member to know that your group represents “power” votes. Make staff, tenants and community leaders visible at the meeting.
- Select the site that is the most centrally located for the group.

3. Develop a Recruitment and Publicity Plan for the Meeting:

- Develop a recruitment letter and a flyer.
- Invite double the number of people that you expect to attend.
- Send a press release to local papers, radio and T.V. stations.
- Ask key leaders to make lists of their key community contacts, including their telephone numbers. These lists can then be used as calling sheets to make sure the people identified can attend.

4. Assign Roles and Practice Them

- Moderator: Introduces issues, lays out the agenda for the meeting, introduces legislators, keeps the meeting focused on the issues, and allows for and directs audience participation;
- Designated Persons to Ask Questions: Have leaders prepare statements and questions about supportive housing policy and then take turns asking questions. If the congressional member has sponsored a bill that you support, praise him/her for it.
 1. Does he/she support the Bill? (If there is a Bill)
 2. What is his/her position on the issue?
 3. Will he/she lend their name to literature in support of the Bill?
 4. Will he/she Co-Sponsor a Bill?
 5. Will he/she go to the leaders of the House or Senate and plead your case?

- **Success Stories:** Designate tenants and providers to tell their success stories. Politicians love to hear “real life” stories.

5. Follow-Up

- Write the congressional member and thank him/her for coming out to the community.
- Remind the member of what he/she agreed to do.
- Have folks sign up to call the Member, schedule another visit, write letters, or follow-up on other tactics your group has decided to do. Making sure your member does what he/she promised to do is very important!
- Ensure that everyone at the meeting is included on a group mailing list and kept informed of current developments on the issue.