

Advocacy Communication Tips & Tools

How a message is delivered is at least as important as the message itself. Effectively communicating your knowledge and experience using a variety of formats will enhance your ability to advocate for change.

For all communication types, the most important general rules include:

- Be clear, succinct, and address a single issue.
- Sign your name with RN or LPN and include other relevant credentials.
- Tell your story and frame the message in a way that is meaningful to the decision maker.
- Research your audience to understand their current public position. Visit their website for issues they have championed or opposed, their voting record on similar issues, and the committees they belong to.

Elevator Pitch

An elevator pitch is a brief - 30-60 seconds - engaging summary that introduces you and your issue during a short encounter or meeting. It is meant to create awareness and interest in the audience, opening the door for further information

Recommendations:

- Open with your name and identify yourself as a nurse.
- Directly state which issue you are referring to
- Present data supporting what it is and why it matters
- Offer to follow-up as appropriate (phone, email, etc.)

Example

“Hi, Senator. I’m a registered nurse and your constituent. I’m here to advocate for safe staffing standards because when nurses are stretched too thin, patient safety suffers. I am requesting you support HB123. Please establish enforceable staffing standards that give nurses the resources to provide the safe, quality care our communities deserve.”

Email Communication

While not as engaging as an in-person conversation, email communication is often the quickest and least intimidating way to advocate for a particular issue. The two biggest risks with email communication are being too informal or being too generic.

Recommendations:

- Tell a story that illustrates the importance of your position
- Use your elevator pitch as a framework and elaborate a bit more
- Close by offering clarification on any of your points

An advocacy email template can be found in the Appendix.

Phone Communication

A phone conversation is most effective when used as a prelude to an in-person meeting or as a follow-up. If that sounds intimidating, use a script or notes to guide the interaction.

Recommendations:

- For legislators, most phone communications will be with legislative aides or assistants (LAs), but these roles are tremendously influential and should be treated with the same level of respect and consideration.
- Introduce yourself as a nurse and constituent (or not) and state your request
- Rehearse with a friend to feel more confident but avoid sounding too rehearsed.

A sample script for a phone call with a legislator can be found in the Appendix.

In-Person Meeting

Though you may find in-person meetings with leaders and stakeholders to be stressful, these encounters have the most potential for lasting impact. Advocacy is about influencing others towards action and establishing a relationship is a critical part of this.

Recommendations:

- Make an appointment
- Be professional (communication and appearance)
- Prepare and research
- Be clear about your ask
- Offer support or assistance for future work on the issue.
- Schedule a follow-up before leaving.

A sample script for an in-person conversation can be found in the Appendix.