

Helpful Tips and Tricks for Talking With Legislators

TIP 1

Be yourself! Legislators are Rhode Islanders first and foremost, and likely have a genuine interest in talking with you.

TIP 2

Start by introducing yourself, the state where you're from, and identify if you live in their district or if you're associated with an agency in their district. Identify why you are contacting them.

TIP 3

If you have never done this before, it's EASY and quick (keep it to no more than 10 minutes).

You don't have to be an expert and you just want them to know why this issue is important to you. Relate the issue to what you know. We are working collectively so some individuals will work for different populations, that is ok, we just need to tell our story of the WHY it is important to invest in rebuilding this workforce.

For example:

- **You work for an agency as a manager/support staff of a program:**
 - Explain how you have personally experienced how hard it is to provide services for your clients, whether they be children in DCYF care, individuals with disabilities or behavioral health conditions, or elders living in the community-operating with the current workforce shortage. -- *Are you tired, working overtime, doing multiple jobs, feel like you aren't doing as good of a job because you are so stretched?*
 - Explain the impact to those you support when you can't provide the level of support or services they need. -- *Did the number of people you could support change, did the amount of service you could provide change, did you turn away people because there was no staff, do you feel like the quality of service has changed because of the workforce shortage?*
- **You have a family member you support that is impacted by the workforce shortage:**
 - Describe what you or your family member need to live safely and healthy in the community.
 - Describe the benefit of service for your loved one. Tell them how important it is to you and your loved one to have a workforce and services to meet their needs. They need to hear and understand the human stories that are served by the health and human service industry.
- **If you are uncomfortable with sharing a story, you can use the script above.**

TIP 4

Be clear and concise - Try to keep the conversation to no longer than 10 minutes. The simpler you can put your point, the more easily they'll remember it.

TIP 5

End with the hard ASK in the Action Alert. We need to pay living and professional wages and ensure we have the workers to support families and individuals in our community (*tailor to the population you represent*).

TIP 6

Always be polite - Legislators may disagree with you and are under a lot of stress during this time as well, but it's never helpful for your issue's chances of passage to let them know you're angry. **Thank them for their time and support.**