GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

The purpose of this Guide is to help you arrange a tour of your facility for any elected official or candidate for office such as:

• U.S. Senators
• U.S. Representatives
• Governors
• State Senators
• State Representatives
• Mayors or other Elected Officials

Grassroots involvement is essential to successful advocacy or successful results. Legislators want and expect to hear about their constituents needs. It is essential that you take the time to contact them either by phone, mail, local contacts and inviting them in for a visit/tour, or by doing all of these things.

If we are not actively seeking out and supporting individuals who will advocate for our residents in long term care settings, who will? Elected Officials understand that supporting long-term care and the people we care for is vital. If a sitting elected official or a candidate for office calls asking to take a tour, please say "yes" and provide the tour! In fact, we have encouraged them to get in touch with you. It is essential that current elected officials and candidates who are running for office understand and view firsthand the work that you do in your local community.

We also ask you to reach out to your elected officials and ask them to come for a tour. When they are there, tell your own story about your business, the people you care for, and the needs that you have.

Facility tours play a critical role in our own educational and legislative efforts to create awareness. As a result, facility tours have proven to be one of the long term care industry’s best grassroots lobbying tools. It is a given that when people see what you do up close, they remember you, the staff, and the people you serve when they vote on decisions that impact long-term care. Care Providers of Minnesota staff are excited to help you contact your elected officials, prepare for meetings and tours or write letters to your local paper. If you need any help or have any questions about setting up a tour, please contact Erin Buie at Care Providers of Minnesota at ebuie@careproviders.org or 952-851-2482.
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Conducting a Legislative Tour

In many ways, you are the teacher and your elected representatives are the students. As part of the education process, bring your legislator to your setting so that they can see your daily operation up close, meet caregivers and residents, ask questions and get answers.

Start by getting to know your legislators—building personal relationships with legislators is key when trying to influence legislation. And, candidates turn into elected officials. Meetings with legislators and candidates are mutually beneficial because:

- You are the expert on long term care issues. Due to their heavy workloads, legislators have to be generalists on a host of issues.
- As a constituent, you have the ultimate influence over a legislator—you vote!
- Legislators seriously weigh how every issue "plays back at home." You provide them with a feel for that, as both a constituent and long term care provider.

When developing this relationship, it is important to meet as soon as possible. Campaigns are a great time to get to know your legislators - legislators never forget the people that helped them in their campaigns. Additionally, regardless of whether the legislator is in session or not, stay in contact after the initial meeting so when issues arise, the legislator will look to as a resource on long term care issues.

The following are steps for setting up and conducting a tour:

1. **Contact Your Legislator(s):** Try to invite the legislator or candidate during a personal meeting, by e-mail or a formal letter. Schedule the facility tour when the member is in the home district and offer several dates, possibly during a special event at your facility. Be prepared to work with their schedules – and confirm their attendance a week ahead of time.

   Set aside two hours for the day's event. If you’re not sure who represents you, click here [http://www.gis.leg.mn/OpenLayers/districts/](http://www.gis.leg.mn/OpenLayers/districts/)

   Always ask them to take a specific action. After the tour/meeting follow-up with a thank you note. Be sure to summarize the meeting in your note.

2. **Prepare for the Meeting:**
   - Develop an agenda that you can share ahead of time.
   - Sample agenda includes:
     - Overview of the establishment and challenges facing the community (15 minutes)
     - Tour (30 minutes to 1 hour)
     - Q&A with caregivers and residents (45 minutes)
   - Plan to show things you are proud of; explain how your location could be forced to adapt to changes in the next several years if there is not sufficient support. Talk about the challenges you and your staff face, etc.
Tell caregivers, residents and their families about the tour and provide them with background information on the legislator.

Prepare a profile of your location for each legislator, including number of full-time employees, payroll amount, taxes paid, purchasing in local community, etc.

3. **Contact the Media:** After securing a date for your local tour(s), contact the news director at your local radio and television station as well as the editor of your local newspaper. Let them know your Senator or Representative will be taking a tour. Invite them to attend the tours as well. Encourage them to do a larger story on the need for support of long-term care in Minnesota.

4. **Host the Tour:** Take this opportunity to hone in on the challenges you face and what the impact will be on the community if you were forced to reduce your staff or even close. Point out areas where you have had to change to conform to regulations and inadequate support. Describe what further changes could result with regard to the state deficit, and discuss what that means for the community. Following the tour, host a Q&A period for caregivers and residents to ask questions of their legislator.

5. **Be natural:** By allowing them to see the daily operations of your facility, they will never look at long-term care issues the same again.

**Additional Tips:**

- Always manage the actual tour yourself.
- Before or after the meeting, show the candidate some of the realities of resident care and compliance with changing standards. Emphasize quality resident care during the tour and throughout the visit.
- Show the legislator any area of the facility that has been subject to changing compliance standards or interpretations. Discuss the costs of achieving compliance.
- Point out the amount of paperwork that is required for compliance and the time and personnel that are needed to complete the paperwork.
- If there is a regulation that poses particular difficulties in application to your facility—for example, storage of linen carts or cross contamination—point out to the legislator some of the "real life roadblocks" to compliance.
- Point out as many types of patients as possible and discuss the range of care provided and varied cost of care. This will help to give a realistic and well-rounded picture to the lawmaker.

6. **Write a Thank You Letter:** Show your appreciation for taking time out of their busy schedules. Write a note thanking them for their visit.
For More Information

Care Providers of Minnesota’s Advocacy Team works to provide support and strategies to ensure our success.

If you have further questions, comments or need additional information or talking points, please contact:

Care Providers of Minnesota direct line: 952-854-2844/MN Toll-Free: 800-462-0024
www.careproviders.org

Patti Cullen, CEO/President, 952-851-2487  pcullen@careproviders.org

Toby Pearson, VP of Advocacy: 952-851-2480 tpearson@careproviders.org

Todd Bergstrom, Director of Research and Payment (952) 851-2486
tbergstrom@careproviders.org

Erin Buie, Director of Government Affairs, 952-851-2482 ebuie@careproviders.org

Kaila Pollock, Advocacy Assistant, 952-851-2495, kpollock@careproviders.org

Lisa Foss Olson, Communications/PR Director, 952-851-2483 lolson@careproviders.org
Sample Invitation Letter

Sample Invitation – On Facility Letterhead

Date

Dear John/Jane Doe:

Long term care is one of the most critical issues facing Americans today. As our nation’s seniors and those who care for them begin to make important choices about their health care and especially, their long term care needs, we look to our leaders to assure that long term care services will be available when we need them-- and properly funded so that the quality our seniors deserve can be maintained.

On behalf of XYZ residence, I would like to extend to you an invitation to visit the Name of facility in Anytown—at a date and time of your convenience – to tour our facility/setting and to speak to residents, family members, and caregivers and learn more about the issues facing this important health care sector.

Along with my colleagues at the Care Providers of Minnesota, we realize the enormity of the responsibility on our shoulders—to maintain and improve quality care for the millions of residents under our care, and for the thousands more who we will serve in the coming years. And I am proud to say we are doing that. Quality care has improved significantly over the past several years. Studies conclude that the care provided by long term care providers is getting better. Because of the great challenges we face in the coming years, your ongoing support and the support of your colleagues is crucial.

Several key issues confront our ability to meet the needs of our growing long term care population, including providing sufficient funding to meet the needs of the seniors we serve. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,
Dear Representative Jones,

On behalf of the individuals and staff of the XYZ home, I want to thank you for making time in your very busy schedule to visit with us on (date xxxxxx). Everyone here greatly enjoyed meeting you and each of us was gratified by your obvious commitment to issues affecting the quality and future of long term care in our community, state, and nation. Your support of the financial needs of our caregivers to continue to support our seniors made a particularly lasting impression on me, and I’m sure, on our staff. It is reassuring for those of us committed to helping to meet the daily long term care needs of the elderly and disabled citizens of our community that elected officials such as you share our commitment.

I know that your most valuable commodity is time, and we all appreciate that you have shared some of it with us. I look forward to speaking with you again soon. If I can be of any assistance, in particular when technically complex issues involving long term care are before you, please call on me any time.
Sincerely yours,

P.S.: Enclosed are some of the best photos we took during your tour at XXXXfacility, as well as some press clippings about the event. I hope these will be of use to your staff for publicity purposes in the future.
SAMPLE: PRESS ADVISORY

For Immediate Release

Contact: John Doe, Senior Administrator, Quality Long Term Care Facility, (123) 555-4850

What: Quality Facility will host a facility tour for Senator Bill Jones to demonstrate the commitment to quality care for the elderly and disabled in our community, and how this reflects on national news affecting long term care and the resources needed to meet this commitment.

Where: Name of Facility
Address

When: Date of Event
Time

Who: Name of the legislator and any other VIPs who will accompany him or her, as well as senior administrators in the facility who will participate.

Agenda: Briefly describe the tour schedule (e.g.: viewing daily operations, meeting residents, lunch, brief remarks to assembled employees