Procedures and tips for meetings on Capitol Hill:

- **Stick to the Agenda.** It is critical that you remember you are representing the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago and the Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago in your meetings today. You should only cover the issues included in the attached talking points. Feel free to follow up on your own time, outside this mission on other issues – but it is very important that you stick to our agenda today.

- **Plan ahead.** Familiarize yourself with the issue you’ll be discussing as much as possible. Go in with a mental list of points to be covered, questions to be asked, and answers to be obtained. Your group will decide ahead of meetings who will be the first to speak, who will introduce the group and who will begin the discussion on each topic you want to bring up.

- **Limit your agenda.** Focus on just a few issues during the visit. Don’t try to cover a long list.

- **Introducing the group.** Designate one person to introduce the group; then yourself by name and the agency you represent. Include pertinent information about your connection to or prior contacts with the legislator such as: previous meetings and mutual friends.

- **Set the right atmosphere.** Be punctual, courteous, non-threatening, reasonable and friendly.

- **Begin with a question.** Ask the legislator to summarize briefly his/her current position on the bill. That will give you an indication of what points would be the most relevant for you to talk about.

- **Be clear and concise.** Legislators are subject to a tremendous amount of constituent opinion – usually on both sides of an issue. Therefore, it is important for you to be as effective as possible when you meet.

- **Make it a local issue.** Let your legislator know how the issue relates to his/her constituents.

- **Listen.** Listen carefully to the response. Did he/she say “I sympathize with your point of view” or “I will support your point of view”?

- **Focus on developing long-term relationships.** Advocacy is like baseball – no one bats 1000. Even if you are unhappy with the final position the legislator took, don’t feel that you were a failure. Invite him/her to speak to a meeting of your organization or group.

- **Be specific.** Ask the legislator to agree to do something specific: become a sponsor of the bill, support a specific amendment, talk to another legislator, attend on upcoming hearings, work for defeat/passage, etc. Given the legislator’s current position on the bill, ask for an action that brings him/her closer to your position.
• **Follow up.** After the meeting, review the major points of the conversation. The Federation DC Staff will be sure to send a brief letter of thanks, referring to the most significant points covered in the conversation and including any materials or information, which you had promised to send.

• **“Thank you” meetings.** It is also quite important to communicate with a legislator when s/he has done something that you agree with. This is critical in establishing a good relationship with your Legislator, on any level. If the legislator voted in a way you agree with or championed an issue you feel passionately about, it is important to let her/him know that. Whenever you set up a visit that will include multiple issues make sure you include at least one that shows your gratitude.

• **Don’t ignore the staff!** When the legislator is unavailable to speak with you, they will ask their staff to be their surrogate. Do not be upset, they will convey your messages to the Member of Congress. Use the opportunity to develop a relationship with the staff that allows you to call them in the future to discuss relevant issues.

• **Know your elected official.** A meeting can be changed from one that could be hostile to a pleasant, more productive environment just by knowing your legislator’s positions on the issues you are advocating for. Inevitably there will be those positions which you support and those which you have disagreements about. Knowing these positions before you go into the office will make the meeting more productive.

• **Getting more information.** We have included biographical information for our meetings in this packet. The internet also provides invaluable resources, especially for national legislators ([www.congress.gov](http://www.congress.gov)).