

NYAHSА & **The CENTER**
for senior living & community services



**Developing a Grassroots
Advocacy Plan in a
Senior Residential Community**

A NYAHSА Technical Assistance Guide

SEPTEMBER 2006

Acknowledgements

Founded in 1961, the New York Association of Homes & Services for the Aging (NYAHSA) represents nearly 650 not-for-profit, public and mission driven providers, including nursing homes, senior housing, adult care/assisted living facilities, continuing care retirement communities and managed long term care programs.

In March 2006, NYAHSA created the Center for Senior Living and Community Services (“The Center”) that provides a forum for housing, home and community-based services, and adult care/assisted living facility member providers to explore and develop policies and programs designed to meet the needs of aging and special needs New Yorkers.

The Center serves as a resource base for seeking information on best practices, marketplace trends, and education for professionals and property development issues in the long term care continuum.

This publication, entitled *Developing a Grassroots Advocacy Plan in a Senior Residential Community*, is designed as a guide to assist Center members in developing a grassroots advocacy program in their senior residential community. By engaging the senior community staff, residents, board / trustees, family members and the larger community, Center members will be able to develop strength in numbers for a larger advocacy team to provide support for senior housing, services, funding and issues.

This paper was developed by NYAHSA staff, principally Elizabeth Briand (Senior Government Relations Analyst) and Ken Harris (Director, The Center for Senior Living and Community Services).

The Center would like to acknowledge and thank **The American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging (AAHSA)** for their assistance in reviewing this paper, including staff members Barbara Gay (Director of Information and Advocacy), Louise Maus (Manager of Member Advocacy), Nancy Libson (Director of Housing Policy) and Alayna Waldrum (Housing Legislative Representative).

The Center would also like to acknowledge and thank Larry McNickle, former Director of Housing Policy at AAHSA, and currently providing assistance to the American Association of Service Coordinators (AASC) and to NYAHSA member the Elderly Housing Development and Operations Corporation (EHDOC), for his assistance in reviewing this paper.

**The New York Association of Homes and Services for the Aging
The Center for Senior Living and Community Services**

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Grassroots Advocacy and Lobbying Activities	5
Step One: Understanding the Issues.....	6
Step Two: Knowing Key Players – Elected Officials & Staff.....	9
Step Three: Developing an Advocacy Team.....	10
Step Four: Understanding the Legislative Process.....	11
Step Five: Meeting with Elected Officials.....	12
Step Six: Communicating with Elected Officials.....	18
Step Seven: Media and the Message.....	21
Step Eight: Developing Relationships.....	24
Step Nine: Developing a Written Grassroots Advocacy Plan.....	26
Step Ten: Keep It Current.....	28
Conclusion	28
Appendix A: Resources.....	29
Appendix B: Sample Letter from NYAHSA’s United Voices.....	30

Introduction

Legislators on both the state and federal level consider thousands of bills in each legislative session. In New York, more than ten thousand separate bills are introduced each year to enact or change a law and/or to provide funding for a cause. Obviously, no legislator can be an expert on every issue. Elected officials and their staffs have traditionally counted on organizations like NYAHSa, NYAHSa's national affiliate, the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging (AAHSA) and the American Association of Service Coordinators (AASC), to let them know how the people they represent are being affected by senior issues.

While these associations work hard to represent their members on senior issues, they are competing with thousands of other special interest groups for legislators' attention and funding. This paper is about empowering seniors, the people that work for them and their families and supporters to advocate for funding and legislation that will improve senior housing and services.

Advocacy doesn't happen on its own. It takes a coordinated effort from a group of individuals who understand the issues and the legislative process. As a provider that works with seniors, you're in a great position to develop a grassroots advocacy program to influence elected officials and policies that impact senior housing and service programs. You can communicate with the legislators who represent not only you, but also those legislators who represent your residents, their families, your coworkers and your board members or trustees. Legislators listen to the people in their district – their constituents – because they are the ones that elect them.

While people tend to mobilize more fiercely around the fear of loss than the hope of gain, as a senior advocate you must look at a proactive vision for senior housing and services and be willing to dedicate time, energy and resources to that vision.¹

Contained within this paper are the tools a grassroots advocacy coordinator and their team will need to develop a grassroots advocacy plan to effectively advocate for your organization and residents, including:

- Understanding the Issues;
- Knowing Key Players – Elected Officials & Staff;
- Developing an Advocacy Team;
- Understanding the Legislative Process;
- Meeting with Elected Officials;
- Communicating with Elected Officials;
- Media and the Message;

¹ Hudson, R. 2004. "Advocacy and Policy Success in Aging." *Generations Journal of the American Society on Aging*. Spring 2004, p.22.

- Developing Relationships;
- Developing a Written Grassroots Advocacy Plan; and
- Keep Everything Current.

These ten steps will guide you through the tools you will need to create an effective plan, developing a grassroots advocacy team and how to write that plan and keep it updated.

Grassroots Advocacy and Lobbying Activities

The competition for a legislator’s attention is great. Along with the thousands of bills introduced are thousands of association staff, lobbyists and special interest groups that are supporting or opposing a variety of proposals.

The term “lobbying” has a bad reputation with Americans due to corruption from a very small percentage of lobbyists and legislators who take advantage of the system for their own benefit. Yet, every organization that wants to effect change through legislation, new laws and regulation must “lobby” for their cause to legislators and regulators. Another term for “lobbying” is advocacy. Advocacy is about building relationships with elected officials and regulators. Advocacy encompasses many activities to develop support around an issue and involve residents, family members, staff and board members. Examples of advocacy can include letters to the editor, community networking and special educational events. Lobbying is traditionally thought of as activities that involve directly communicating with legislators to influence particular issues or support of a bill.

Traditionally, associations that bring their issues to legislators have coordinated advocacy on senior issues on the state and federal level. While a few members are involved in the advocacy process by contacting legislators, it is rare to have senior residents or their families involved. While an association, such as NYAHSA, can be successful with advocacy on legislation and increasing funding, there is that old saying that “the squeaky wheel gets the grease.” That is, the more people who are advocating for the same issue with elected officials the greater the possibility of getting their attention.

The goal of this paper is to provide resources for your residents, staff, board members/trustees and community supporters to build a relationship with elected officials to advocate for or against particular issues. Building this relationship involves getting to know your issues, getting to know your elected officials, and knowing how best to communicate your issues. It is also important to know what “tools” there are for effective advocacy. The tools include: inviting your elected official to your facility or regional meetings, setting up Albany/Washington meetings, sending letters or faxes, making telephone calls, and working with the media.

Developing a grassroots advocacy program in a senior residential community will take a leader in an organization to initially understand the issues, research the state and federal legislators in their district who have influence on the issues, and know how to effectively

Developing a Grassroots Advocacy Plan in a Senior Residential Community
A NYAHS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GUIDE

advocate. As that leader, the grassroots advocacy coordinator will be in charge of developing an advocacy team and advocacy program. The natural leader for developing a grassroots advocacy program is a senior housing staff person with access to resources, staff and residents.

Why develop a local, state and federal grassroots advocacy program for senior issues?
The reasons are varied:

- Legislators control funding for senior housing and services;
- Legislators listen to constituents;
- State and federal funding is being reduced;
- Long term care funding is being reallocated;
- Quick action is often needed to respond to a pending bill / funding;
- Numbers matter when requesting funding;
- Many legislators don't understand senior housing and service issues;
- Federal/state/local issues can be different; and
- YOU can make a difference.

Grassroots advocacy is most effective when there is diversity in the participants. By including a variety of individuals, especially the residents themselves, who request the same support from legislators, you stand a better chance for success in receiving the funding or legislative action.

Step One: Understanding the Issues

The first step in advocating for your residents is understanding the particular funding, legislation, regulations and laws affecting your residents and your facility.

Is your housing community funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for low-income seniors? If yes, most of the funding for the building, resident subsidy and service coordination is probably coming from the federal government and it is probably regulated by federal and state statutes.

Is your housing community a market-rate entrance fee senior retirement housing? If yes, there is probably no direct funding available; yet federal fair housing laws are required to be followed. The New York state Attorney General's Office regulates entrance fees. Property taxation is probably an issue and the recent state assisted living legislation may affect the community.

Is your community an Adult Care Facility (ACF)? If yes, the ACF is regulated by the New York state Department of Health (DOH) and falls under a variety of state and federal laws and regulations. Public sector funding (e.g., Supplemental Security Income) is determined by lawmakers.

Developing a Grassroots Advocacy Plan in a Senior Residential Community
A NYAHSA TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GUIDE

Is your housing community a continuing care retirement community (CCRC)? If yes, the CCRC is governed by state law and regulated by DOH and the state Department of Insurance.

Depending on the type of senior housing, legislators have influence on maintaining funding, allocating funding, adding laws or changing regulations. Federal funding (HUD, Administration on Aging, Medicare, Medicaid), state funding (New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal [DHCR], New York State Office for the Aging, legislative “member items”) and local funding (Community Development Block Grants, local initiatives) can be available for senior housing and influenced by elected officials. Grassroots advocacy involves not only developing relationships with legislators but also state and federal regulators who have a direct say in the operation of all senior housing and community services programs.

While a grassroots advocacy plan can affect change for senior issues in general, knowledge of the type of funding and regulations that govern a senior community is essential for maximum effect. The grassroots advocacy coordinator will need to find out which project funding, resident funding, service funding, and regulatory agreements are in place. Knowledge of your facility is critical in talking with legislators on the issues.

Most housing managers know what initial funding and regulations the facility is subject to. Initial HUD contracts and mortgage papers can provide details. If you are having trouble finding out information on your facility, you can contact NYAHSA, HUD and/or DHCR if your facility serves low-income seniors and the disabled. If your facility is market rate housing, contact NYAHSA.

Define the Message and Issues

The next step is finding out what legislative and regulatory issues are affecting your senior community. NYAHSA lists New York state issues on its *Legislative Action Center* and AAHSA lists the federal issues on its *Contact Congress* site. These, and other important advocacy links, can be found in Appendix A and their uses described in Step Six: Written Communication with Elected Officials

Message consistency is crucial to any successful advocacy campaign. Before any action is taken on an issue, you will want to be sure that you have a clear, concise message. What is the message? Message is the central idea around which all advocacy on a particular issue revolves. Your message is the test you want legislators to apply when considering the issue you are advocating for or against. Message is the rationale for your advocacy; it is the “why” when legislators are looking to make a decision on your issue. Finally, message implies why the legislator should *not* go with another view or idea.

Sometimes an advocacy campaign can include a slogan based on a message to help legislators remember an issue. For instance, NYAHSA used the slogan “Some cuts hurt

Developing a Grassroots Advocacy Plan in a Senior Residential Community
A NYAHSA TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GUIDE

more than others” in their advocacy campaign to preserve access to senior services funding.

When developing your message on a particular issue, remember that an effective message is well thought out and explanatory. A good message should include five components. It needs to be:

Clear – speak conversationally to the point, and don’t use acronyms;

Concise – should be able to be expressed in a short paragraph;

Compelling – should speak to the values and concerns of the legislator;

Contrasting – should lay out the difference between what you are advocating for and what others are advocating for (whether it is the status quo or new legislation); and

Credible – it must be believable and able to be accomplished.

NYAHSA, AAHSA and AASC can help you refine your message so that it is well organized, informative and to the point. The Web sites for these associations include issue briefs, talking points, sample letters and other helpful information. Appendix B has an example of a sample letter to state legislators. Using this information, you can be sure you are sending legislators a consistent message.

The “Ask”

Now that you have a concise message, you have to develop a clear “ask”. What is it that you want the legislator to do?

- Do you want them to vote for or against a piece of legislation?
- Do you want them to send a letter to the legislative leadership?
- Do you want them to introduce legislation?

You need to be able to tell your legislators what it is they can do for you. Simply having a meeting or sending them a letter outlining your message doesn’t let them know how they can make a situation better for you. Know what it is that you want your legislators to do for you before you talk to them. NYAHSA’s Web site can provide specific information, bill numbers and sample letters on several state issues.

In summary, know the regulatory authority of your facility, define your message to legislators (the “why”), and develop what you want the legislators to do (the “ask”).

Step Two: Knowing the Key Players – Elected Officials and Staff

The second step in developing a grassroots advocacy program is knowing your federal, state and local elected officials. In the federal government there are majority and minority Senate and House members in Congress. In New York state, there are majority and minority Senate and Assembly members. The majority is the party that has the most members elected to or aligning themselves with that party. The majority party determines how bills are considered and voted on. Since both houses need to pass a bill before it is signed into law or vetoed, having opposing parties in the majorities of each house can affect the outcome of legislation.

Local governments include city, town or municipal elected officials in a variety of capacities. As Tip O’Neil, the former Speaker of the House, was quoted as saying; “All politics is local.” O’Neil was referring to the fact that even the most powerful legislator is voted into office by constituents.

The grassroots advocacy coordinator should find the names, addresses, telephone and fax numbers, and Web pages of the following elected officials:

- Local representatives including mayor and council members, if applicable;
- State Assembly and Senate representatives; and
- Federal House and Senate representatives.

The names of federal and state representatives can be found on the NYAHSA and AAHSA Web sites. These web sites also provide biographical information, addresses, telephone numbers, staff and committee assignments. Most legislators also maintain their own Web sites providing similar information. The names of local representatives can be found by calling your local board of elections.

Legislators are assigned to serve on committees that review bills and funding proposals before they go to the full legislative body for a vote. When researching your legislators, note on which committees they serve. Some committees will be more influential for senior housing issues than others.

For example, in Washington D.C., affordable housing comes under the jurisdiction of the House Financial Services Committee and, in particular, its Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity. In the Senate, the same jurisdiction falls to the Housing and Transportation Subcommittee of the Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs. The legislators who serve on these committees will have a great influence on the federal senior housing agenda. Annual funding levels for senior housing programs come under the jurisdiction of the Transportation, Treasury, HUD Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committees in both the House and Senate

Legislative Web sites (Appendix A), especially individual legislator Web sites, provide a wealth of information including committee assignments, occupations, issues of interest, and voting records. The more information you know about your elected officials, including schools attended and their history before being elected, the more effective you can be in talking with your elected officials as well as in building your advocacy team.

In summary, finding out who the elected officials are in your district/area and researching information about them is the first step in building a relationship with your legislators.

Key Leadership - Who They Are and Why They are Important

While all legislators ultimately have the same ability to vote for or against a bill, some are more influential than others. This is especially true if they are in leadership positions or serve on committees that directly affect the issues you care about.

On the federal level and in most state legislatures, we basically have a two-party system – Democrats and Republicans – though an occasional third party gains prominence. Generally, legislators belong to one of the two parties and as a result serve in either the majority or the minority. The majority party gets to decide who serves in leadership positions. They also control the committee structure, and since on both the state and federal level all legislation must go through a committee before it can be acted on, committee assignments become very important. Knowing what committees handle legislation that you are interested in is critical. Become familiar with which legislators sit on those committees and be sure to include those elected officials in your plan.

The majority party also controls the rules under which legislation is considered: whether amendments will be allowed, which amendments can be offered, the time allowed for debate, and who gets to speak in a bill debate.

For these reasons, legislators in the majority party are generally considered to be more powerful than members of the minority. However, the minority party can sometimes thwart the intent or wishes of the majority.

In summary, understanding the legislative process is key to successful grassroots advocacy efforts.

Step Three: Developing a Grassroots Advocacy Team

The third step in developing a grassroots advocacy plan is to assemble a grassroots advocacy team. The grassroots advocacy coordinator will be in charge of developing an advocacy team.

As the grassroots advocacy coordinator, when you know the issues for your senior community and know your elected representatives, you can recruit the best advocacy

Developing a Grassroots Advocacy Plan in a Senior Residential Community A NYAHS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GUIDE

team. The team does not have to be large, in fact, a small number of dedicated individuals who know the issues and are prepared to effectively advocate with legislators can make the best team.

Try to get residents, staff (especially the manager/CEO/service coordinator), board/trustees and influential community members to be part of your advocacy team.

To recruit your team you can develop a flyer to briefly describe what you are doing, what the issues are and how you will be contacting elected officials. Consider holding an informational meeting to answer questions potential advocates may have. Your goal is to have involved team members who can be effective advocates for your program. Use the information you gathered about your elected officials to determine any possible personal connections that could be beneficial. For instance, if the legislator graduated from a local college, ask if any resident attended or taught classes there.

Spend some time to “market” your advocacy team. If you have residents and/or board members whom you believe would be effective advocates, personally invite them to be a part of the team. Don’t leave their participation to chance.

Hold advocacy team meetings on a regular basis. Team members will need to be educated on the issues, how to meet with elected officials and how to contact legislators if fast action is needed.

Another great resource in developing an advocacy team is including members of the community and state/national agencies who share your views on issues. Senior housing organizations such as the Elderly Housing Coalition and AASC provide strength in numbers when building a grassroots advocacy campaign.

In summary, make a flyer to recruit your advocacy team, market your team to show the importance of this initiative and hold regular team meetings.

Step Four: Understanding The Legislative Process

The fourth step in developing a grassroots advocacy plan is knowing what actions are necessary to achieve success in the Legislature.

The job of the New York State Legislature is to work with the governor to enact, amend or repeal statutes, which are the body of laws within which we live. This involves drafting, discussing and approving bills and resolutions. The following is an outline of how legislation (also know as bills) become a law in New York state.

An idea is the starting point in the process, and the first point at which you have a chance to have a say in the writing or rewriting of law. The idea for new legislation must be brought to a lawmaker. Once a legislator has settled on an idea for a new law, it must be

put into bill form. A bill can have many sponsors or just one. No matter how many sponsors a bill has, identical measures must pass both houses of the Legislature (i.e., the Assembly and Senate) in order to become a law.

Once a bill has been introduced, it is assigned to a committee (a smaller group of legislators), which will examine and analyze the bill. If the committee approves it, the bill may go to other committees and then it is put on a calendar to be voted on by the full membership of the Assembly or Senate. In both the Assembly and Senate, a bill needs more than half the members to vote “yes” for it to pass. If the bill passes both houses, it goes before the governor for consideration.

Once a bill is delivered to the governor, it generally must be acted upon within 10 days. The governor can veto or sign the bill into law. If the governor takes no action in the 10-day window, it becomes law without the governor’s signature. A vetoed bill can be overridden by a vote of two-thirds of the legislators in both the Assembly and the Senate.

While the process of passing legislation can be completed in as little as a week on politically “hot” topics, it more typically takes years from the time a bill is first introduced. In all cases there are critical stages where advocacy is necessary and advocates need to mobilize quickly to voice their position.

In Washington D.C. there is a similar process that can be found on the AAHSA *Contact Congress* Web site under *The Legislative Process*.

Step Five: Meeting with Elected Officials

There are a number of venues to meet with your legislator. The most effective can be in your facility so that the elected official has a first hand opportunity to see what you are doing, to understand the benefits of congregate senior housing and to have an opportunity to meet with residents.

No matter where you meet, review these tips that might aid you in preparing for a face-to-face meeting with your legislators:

- **Be Prepared** – Write out before the meeting the topics you want to discuss (the message), why it’s important for the elected official to support these issues, and what you need (the “ask”). Remember to stay on message. It is best to stick to asking the legislator to support issues he or she has influence over. For instance, state legislators have no influence over HUD funds, but may be interested in the lack of affordable housing or the lack of state DHCR housing funding. Associations such as NYAHS A, AAHSA and AASC have issue briefs on current issues posted on their Web sites to help in preparing information for the meeting.

Developing a Grassroots Advocacy Plan in a Senior Residential Community
A NYAHSa TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GUIDE

- **Make it “Real”** - Make sure the legislator knows you are, or you represent, one of his or her constituents, if applicable. Tell stories about your facility/agency and the people you serve. Use your own experience to illustrate the message and bring it home to the legislator. Real life stories can show by example why funding or legislation is needed, and what specifically will happen if the issue at hand isn't addressed. Don't use statistics unless they are specific to your organization.
- **Be Focused** - Make your case quickly and persuasively. Don't lose your point.
- **Do Your Homework**- Write down the committees the legislator chairs, if any, and what committees they sit on. Is the district urban or rural? Which other long term care facilities are in the district and how do they affect senior housing or community based care?
- **Run an Effective Meeting** - Before you go into a meeting, know who will speak first, who will make what points, and who will present any materials you've prepared. It's important to be organized and professional. Have a “team leader” start and finish the meeting.
- **If You Don't Know, Say So** - It's fine to say you'll get back to the legislator with an answer or with more information. That approach is always better than giving incorrect or misleading information.
- **Get a Response From the Legislator** - Find out exactly what the legislator will or will not do to support your issues. If an immediate commitment cannot be made, then get a specific timeframe for an answer and follow-up if you do not receive a response.
- **Take Pictures** – Elected officials like to have their picture taken with constituents, especially if it will be published. Consider using the visit to write an article for the local or community newspaper and include the picture. Consider sending pictures you have taken to NYAHSa for inclusion in the monthly *Outlook* publication.
- **Follow Up** – Send a thank you note/letter addressing the key points of the meeting. Include a picture if you have one.

Don't be discouraged if you meet with a legislator's staff person. Often staffers are the ones developing policy for legislators and your meeting with the staff is time well spent. Staffers will communicate your issues and concerns to the legislator.

Senior Community Visits

One of the best ways to educate lawmakers is to invite them to visit your senior community. Nothing compares to seeing things first hand. Yet a well-planned visit is essential for a successful impression of your community.

Developing a Grassroots Advocacy Plan in a Senior Residential Community
A NYAHSa TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GUIDE

Planning is needed in coordinating the legislative visit. There are stories about legislators being invited to senior housing communities only to be yelled at by residents about a vote or failure to provide funding for a program, forcing the legislator into a defensive mode. Or worse, legislators are only asked questions about something that the legislator has no control over!

Make a flyer or poster letting residents know about the legislative visit, and invite all the “friends” of your senior community, including board members and community supporters. Find out in advance how much time the legislator has for your facility and plan the visit accordingly.

It is suggested you break up the visit by an elected official into four components:

- Start the visit with your legislator and grassroots advocacy team in a private meeting to introduce the facility services and the issues to the legislator. Plan on approximately 20 minutes, if time allows.
- Hold a general assembly where all resident and family members are invited. Provide the legislator with the opportunity to address the residents. Be sure to have someone from your team facilitate the assembly. Tell the residents in the meeting notice, in the introduction and at the conclusion of the assembly that questions can be asked individually of the elected official after the assembly. If possible, serve simple refreshments to encourage a more casual atmosphere. Inform the elected official of these plans during your team meeting before the assembly, and change plans if she/he wants questions asked during the assembly.
- Allow residents the opportunity to talk individually with their legislator. A good time would be during an informal reception with refreshments after the general assembly. Have the manager, service coordinator and board members available to answer questions.
- Conduct a tour of your community, preferably including a visit to a couple of apartments highlighting services and components of the building that support your legislative agenda.

Additional information on acceptable legislative visit activity, including during election time, can be found on the IRS Web site in Appendix A.

Local Legislative Visits

As visits by elected officials need to be planned well in advance, and might not always be conducive to a discussion of legislative issues, it is also very effective to schedule meetings with legislators in their district offices. Legislators have a local district and capital office, and meetings can be scheduled in either location. You can do this either individually, or with other NYAHSa members or community leaders.

Legislators respond well when their constituents take the time from their busy schedules to discuss an issue of importance to them. When scheduling visits with elected officials, remember to tap into a very valuable resource – board members and trustees. Generally, these individuals are well known and respected in the community and may even know their legislators personally. Since they are volunteering their time to serve on your board, they are frequently viewed as a solid, objective resource.

Residents who are well versed in the issues and stay on the message can be extremely valuable at a legislative visit. Include residents on your advocacy team. Choose your resident representatives wisely – legislators will listen closely to what they say because they are the “consumers.”

State/Washington Visits

Legislators like to hear from people like you who work “in the field.” You are the experts. You deal hands-on with the issues confronting long term care and the individuals who receive services. NYAHSa, AAHSa and AASC members and their residents can be very effective at bringing an issue “home” for a legislator.

It is important for the grassroots advocacy team to understand how to effectively advocate. The style of how your message is delivered can be as important as the message itself. Advocacy groups in Albany have used radical tactics, such as chaining themselves to desks at the Capital building. While they received press for their message and actions, several department officials and state legislators were upset with their method. Always remember that the cornerstone of advocacy is building relationships.

Scheduling a Legislative Visit

Below are tips that might aid you in scheduling a legislative visit:

- **Make Your Appointment Well in Advance** - Legislators have very busy schedules, especially during the legislative session. The earlier you call to make your appointment, the better your chance of getting a meeting. Legislators have particular times when they are in their legislative office and local district. Most legislators and elected officials have a staff person dedicated to scheduling their appointments.
- **Identify Yourself** – Let the scheduler know who you are and whom you represent. Tell them how much time you are requesting and what the agenda will be.
- **State the Purpose of your Meeting** – If your meeting pertains to a specific issue or piece of legislation, identify it accordingly, including bill numbers if you have them.

- **Ask for the Staffer** – If the legislator is unavailable for a meeting or visit, ask to talk to and meet with the staff person in charge of housing, senior or long term care issues. Sometimes meeting with the right staff can be as effective as meeting with the legislator; they usually have more time to discuss the details of the issues and they will convey the issues and your views to their boss. Often times it is the staff opinion the legislator uses to make a decision on a bill.
- **Follow Up on the Meeting** - This follow-up can take the form of a letter, phone call, e-mail or even a visit. Thank the legislator for taking the time to meet with you. This is also a great opportunity to remind the legislator of the key points you made during the meeting, as well as to restate any commitment the legislator made. (If you met with an aide, thank the legislator for the opportunity to meet with his or her aide and restate the “ask” or restate any commitment offered by the aide.) This increases the likelihood they will follow up on your issue. If you took a picture during the visit, include it with a written correspondence or e-mail.
- Be sure to let NYAHS A/AAHS A know how the visit went.

Conducting an Effective Visit

There are general tips for a successful visit no matter the location. Below are some “rules” on how to keep on task and message during your lobby visit:

- Designate a leader prior to the meeting;
- Be polite but firm;
- Stay focused on the message and the ask;
- Don’t get frustrated.

An effective meeting allows advocates to describe their message, ask for support and discuss the issues. The following outline for a legislative visit is based on a 20-minute meeting:

- **Introduction – 5 minutes**
The team leader should ask how much time you have with the legislator or staff at the start of the meeting and tailor the following format to accommodate. Introduce yourself and have others at the meeting introduce themselves and describe their role (e.g., staff, resident, trustee, etc.). Be sure to note that you are a constituent.
- **The Problem – 10 minutes**
Be sure to stay on message and keep it personal. Cite specific situations or needs of your organization.
- **The Solution/The “Ask” – 5 minutes**

Don't get bogged down in the specifics of a particular proposal unless you are asked. Stay on message and keep it clear.

▪ **Conclusion**

The team leader should thank the legislator and/or staff for their time. Make the offer to be available in the future for any follow-up they might need. Leave brochures, pictures and written materials if you have them. Again, take a picture if you are meeting with a legislator!

Preparation for the Meeting - Questions You May be Asked

It is a good idea to think of questions that might be asked of you about the issue you are presenting. Remember, if you don't know the answer, say so and make sure you follow up with the answer at a later time. Your credibility is everything. If you give a legislator misinformation, it will be harder to serve as a resource in the future. If you can be counted on as a good resource, you will quickly develop a good relationship with your elected official.

Below are some typical questions you might be asked during the course of your communications with your legislators:

- What programs or services do you provide?
- Who is the not-for-profit sponsor and what is their mission?
- How many residents do you serve?
- How many are disabled?
- How long is your waiting list? (If it is a "closed" list, explain why and how often you open the list.)
- How many people do you employ?
- How many paid caregivers, like home health aides, come into your building or do you employ?
- Are there other similar facilities in the district?
- How are you funded?
- What percentage of your residents receive Medicaid?
- What are your monthly fees?
- How have budget cuts affected the programs you provide?
- What is the overall financial condition of your senior community?
- How are my constituents affected by the issue we're discussing?
- Do other groups support your position? Oppose it?
- What do you want me to do?
- Have you talked to my Assembly or Senate counterpart?

In summary, be prepared for a meeting with your legislator with an agenda for the meeting and questions that may be asked of you. Having legislators visit your facility will provide them with a direct visual experience on the quality housing and services you provide.

Step Six: Communicating with Elected Officials

Letters / Fax / E-Mail

Written communication is a powerful tool. It may seem basic, but it is one of the best ways to get your message across. Legislators usually keep a running tally of the communications they receive on an issue and review them before deciding to support or oppose a bill.

Legislators want to hear from their constituents. Constituents are potential voters who determine whether the legislator will keep his or her job. So when constituents take the time to contact their legislators, that effort is highly valued. Legislators generally assume that for each voter who contacts them on a policy issue, many more voters feel the same way. Remember, constituents determine through their votes whether a legislators stays in office.

Most legislators respond to constituent mail. They may send back a letter, call the writer, or even introduce legislation to address the issue.

However, not all letters are equal. Quality counts. Legislators and their staff can usually spot a form letter. While these are still effective, personalized letters are better. Forms of written communication you can use to contact your legislators include (in order of most effective to least effective):

- Personal letters, whether by mail, fax or e-mail;
- Form letters with detailed information;
- Post cards;
- Petitions; and
- Personalize letters you send as much as possible. Legislators want to know how an issue affects their constituents. Be sure to take advantage of this opportunity and include information about your organization. Also include anecdotes showing how an issue affects you, your workers, and those you serve.

Associations have Web sites that describe the issues through “Issue Briefs” and provide sample letters to make it easy to write a letter to legislators. Letters written through NYAHSa’s *Legislative Action Center* and AAHSA’s *Contact Congress* have the text, bill numbers, and “ask” for each issue; they also allow for individual examples to be included in the letter.

Note that letters to federal legislators in Washington are still being screened for anthrax and other substances, and it is taking a few weeks for letters to actually be delivered to their offices. If you need to contact your federal legislator quickly about an issue or a

Developing a Grassroots Advocacy Plan in a Senior Residential Community
A NYAHS A TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GUIDE

vote on a bill, you then should call, e-mail or fax your comments. Letters sent to their local office are not being screened in this way.

Although faxes and e-mails can be effective in communicating with legislators when you need to contact them immediately, you should be aware that many legislators utilize software that recognizes zip codes and rejects communications from outside the district. In instances when you want to contact legislators who are not “yours”, especially legislators who serve on important committees, consider phone calls or sending letters and faxes to their district offices

The following are tips on writing to your lawmakers:

- Message consistency is key to any successful grassroots advocacy campaign. Use the information on the NYAHS A/AAHSA Web sites as a guide when writing to legislators to ensure consistency;
- Individualized letters are more effective than straightforward form letters. Put it on your letterhead if possible;
- Use personal examples and anecdotes - the more personal you can make the letter, the more weight it will carry. Follow the form letter general format, but use your own words;
- Although your address will identify you as a constituent, do include information about the number of individuals you serve and how many people you employ. Let the legislator see how many people are impacted;
- Keep it brief. Try not to exceed one page if possible. State the issue and your request within the first few sentences of the letter;
- Be as specific as possible. Refer to a bill number or proposal if possible, and ask for their support or opposition. Ask for them to communicate their position to you;
- It is always appropriate to thank legislators for considering your concerns, to let them know you are available to answer any questions they may have or provide them with additional materials;
- Call, fax or e-mail your views on time-sensitive issues. Having your legislator hear from you after a vote is over doesn't do much good. Think about how long it takes for a letters to get to the legislators when deciding which form of communication you use. E-mail, fax or a phone call may be more effective in time sensitive communication;
- Follow-up. Call or write a second letter if you don't get a response, or if the response isn't satisfactory. If he/she takes the position you want, thank him/her;

Developing a Grassroots Advocacy Plan in a Senior Residential Community
A NYAHSA TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GUIDE

- Enlist others to help. Encourage your staff, residents, family members and directors/trustees to write letters on important issues. The more constituents a legislator hears from on a topic, the more weight will be given your concerns. Set up a booth in your facility or hold a letter-writing “party” to increase participation;
- Be sure to include all local, state and federal officials (and key staff) on your mailing list, including your facility newsletter; and
- Don’t forget to let NYAHSA/AAHSA know about all of your hard work!

NYAHSA’s *United Voices*

NYAHSA’s *United Voices* Web site offers Issue Briefs on state issues affecting NYAHSA members with detailed information on issues including background information and bill numbers. It also enables you to write individual letters to your legislators on issues important to your facility. By providing your facility information, your relationship to the facility (family member, resident, employee or other), and type of facility, each member of your advocacy team can register through NYAHSA’s *United Voices* to write individual letters. The complete nine-digit zip code (zip +4) is required to automatically direct the letter to the appropriate legislators in your district. If you do not know your zip +4, there is a link to help you. After writing the letter through the Web site, the letter can be printed on your letterhead to send by mail or faxed directly by the Web site to the legislator’s office.

NYAHSA’s *United Voices* Web center is continually being updated for issues pertaining to NYAHSA’s Center for Senior Living and Community Services members.

Your grassroots advocacy team can register for NYAHSA’s *United Voices* by going to: <http://www.nyahsa.org/unitedvoices/index.cfm> or you can simply click on the link at the top of the page, “Information & Sample Letters”, to go directly to the letters without having to register.

A sample letter thanking legislators for Naturally Occurring Retirement Community funding can be found in Appendix B.

AAHSA’s *Contact Congress*

AAHSA has a Web site where your grassroots advocacy team can write individual letters on federal issues important to NYAHSA members.

Individuals can go to the AAHSA Web site at www.aahsa.org, and in the “Quick Links” section in the right column, click on *Contact Congress*. Then choose a letter / topic that is important to you and enter your zip code to direct the letter to your legislators. The site brings users to a page where each letter can be edited, and personal and facility

information can be entered for inclusion with the communication. The letter will then be e-mailed via the Web forms contained on legislators' Web sites. Users also can choose to print the letter on to their own letterhead, and then mail the letter. Either way, the sender will receive an e-mail confirming that the communication was registered and sent.

AAHSA's *Contact Congress* Web site also has updated information on federal issues with Web pages on:

- Legislative Alerts and Updates;
- Current Legislation; and
- Key Votes (with AAHSA's stance on the bill).

Additionally, at www.aahsa.org/advocacy you can find more advocacy tools, as well as comprehensive coverage of the issues affecting aging services.

NYAHSa's *United Voices* and AAHSA's *Contact Congress* Web sites make it easy for your grassroots advocacy team to write letters, advocate to your legislators and keep up to date on the issues.

Telephone Calls

When things are moving rapidly in Albany or in Washington, there is no time to wait for letters. Faxes and e-mails may (or may not) be received by the legislator, yet legislators do pay attention to the calls they receive. They usually tally them like letters.

You can call a legislator's district office, their Albany/Washington office or hold a "virtual" lobby day when a number of people call to lobby on the same issue on the same day. All of these are effective ways to get your message across. Where you call will depend on both the issue and timing.

In summary, there are a variety of written communication techniques you can employ to convey your message. The best choice depends on how fast you need to convey your message.

Step Seven: Media and the Message

Elected officials are just that – elected. It is important that their constituents see them as being supportive and helpful to the community. Advocates for senior housing and services can use the media to positively portray their cause.

AAHSA has a resource on their *Contact Congress* site, under the *Media Guide* section, that allows advocates to search for local media contact information.

NYAHSA is a valuable resource in developing a media plan. Contact the Director of Public Relations for more information.

Television / Radio

Whenever there is an event that could portray positive press for senior housing and services or your retirement community, invite the press. This includes television, newspapers and radio. Investigate the contact people for each media venue and send a press release. Be sure to say if an elected official is coming or has been invited. In turn, tell the staff coordinating with legislators which press has been invited. If possible, take time to meet with the press using the same techniques listed for meeting with elected officials.

Letters to the Editor

One of the keys to legislative success is generating public support on the issue at hand. A great way to build that is through your local newspaper. Most legislators and their staffs read the paper daily, and they know that many of their constituents do too. Take the opportunity to write a brief letter to the editor when a relevant article appears in your local paper. You can do this whether the article portrayed an issue in a favorable or unfavorable light. For a more in-depth issue, consider writing an opinion editorial (Op-Ed).

Letters to the editor are effective ways to get your message across. They reach a broad audience, including elected officials, and can address issues or viewpoints not included in news articles.

The following are tips on writing letters to the editor:

- **Be timely.** Address current issues and, if possible, write in response to a particular news story, Op-Ed, or editorial. If you don't have a piece to respond to, send your letter anyway and then send it again later if the opportunity arises. If you're citing an article or Op-Ed, do so up-front, including the name and date of the article in the first line. For example:
 - ✓ I was disappointed that the April 2 editorial "Federal Budget Cuts" ignored the dramatic cuts in senior housing;
 - ✓ I strongly support increased state investments in New York's long term care system, as discussed in [author's name, name of Op-Ed, date];
 - ✓ I was outraged to read in the [Name of Newspaper] [name of article or Op-Ed, date] that Senator "X" is defending budget cuts to long term care.
- **Stay on message, keep it short and simple.** It's important to develop a central "theme" for your letter and to demonstrate it with specifics about your facility/agency.

- **Make it personal.** Newspapers prefer local references, statistics, and personal stories. You should also use names of legislators, where appropriate, and state your credentials as an expert in your area of long term care.
- **Don't ignore weekly publications.** Community newspapers are great vehicles for delivering your message.
- **Include contact information and follow-up.** Newspapers may want to contact you before they print your letter so be sure to include your name, address, telephone number or e-mail address. If your letter isn't printed, don't be discouraged—try again with a different “on-message” angle, or in direct response to an article; and
- **Let your local state officials and the governor know when your letter is published.** Send a copy with a short personal note to your Senator, Assembly member and the governor. And be sure to let NYAHSa know of your success.

Opinion Editorials (Op-Ed)

What's an Op-Ed? It literally means “opposite the editorial page” and it's an opinion or editorial article that combines the timeliness of a current event or news story with a personal opinion. When the issue that needs to be discussed is more in-depth or too lengthy to write a letter to the editor, an Op-Ed can provide the perfect outlet. Op-Eds are less immediate than a letter to the editor and more detailed.

Call the editor and find out the paper's requirements first. Find out if they accept Op-Eds and when, if they have a limit on lengths, how they want it delivered (e-mail, fax, or mail), and other specifications, like deadlines. Some tips on how to write an Op-Ed include:

- **Find a news hook.** The topic should relate to current events and appeal to the newspaper's broad readership.
- **Keep it simple. Keep it on message.** Your Op-Ed should be clear, concise, make only a few points, and stay on message. Use short, declarative sentences and a conversational voice. Don't alienate your readers by using industry lingo or words you'd avoid in everyday speech.
- **Be specific and make it human.** Demonstrate your point with specific examples and personal stories that illustrate the impact of the budget or cuts and then move on to the broader public policy issue.
- **State your point in the beginning and then sum it up again in the end.** Avoid redundancies everywhere else.

- **Provide solutions.** It's important to offer new ideas and solutions, rather than just criticize current situations. Mention associations that are helping your cause, such as NYAHSA, if appropriate.
- **Proofread and spell check.** Ask someone you trust to proof your piece and be sure to run a spelling and grammar check before submission. Your name and organization will be on this article.
- **Send your piece with a short cover letter** explaining who you are and outlining your credentials on the issue.
- **Follow-up with a phone call** to the editor. Make sure your piece was received, thank the editor for the paper's consideration, and ask if there are plans to print it.

NYAHSA's Center for Senior Living and Community Services publishes a monthly newsletter entitled *Outlook*. Consider submitting any Op-Ed letter being submitted to your newspaper for publication in *Outlook*. *Outlook* is sent to all New York state legislators, key federal legislators and regulatory agencies. It is recommended that the Grassroots Advocacy Team Leader subscribe to *Outlook*. There is no cost to receive an issue of *Outlook* and names can be added to the mailing list by contacting NYAHSA.

Remember the power of a picture is worth a thousand words when working with the media. Keep a collection of good pictures of your facility and residents, in both electronic and print format, for your media campaign and legislative visits.

In summary, the media can be an important avenue to assist in conveying your message to legislators, elected officials and the general public.

Step Eight: Developing Relationships

Getting started is the hard part. Once you've written a letter, made a phone call or gone on a legislative visit, what's next?

It's critical to build on the good start you've made. Advocacy is about building relationships. Building a relationship with your legislators can be mutually beneficial. To your legislator, you are their best source of information on issues affecting senior housing. Offer to be their resource when they have questions on these types of issues. Invite them to important events at your organization, such as a ground breaking, employee award ceremony, new service, or 100th birthday party of a resident. Take the legislator's photo and be sure to include it in your next newsletter and send a copy to the legislator. Meet with your legislator to discuss an issue of concern, or even just to say "hello." *All* contacts, no matter how minimal, can help you to build a relationship with

Developing a Grassroots Advocacy Plan in a Senior Residential Community
A NYAHS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GUIDE

your legislator. Building this type of relationship can take a long time, but it is well worth your effort when you need to lobby for or against critical legislation.

Another great way to support your legislators is to personally attend one of their fundraising events. It is a way to show your support and thank them for their hard work on issues that affect you. Yet, keep in mind that federal law strictly prohibits charitable organizations [501(c)(3) entities] from engaging in political activity, including making or soliciting campaign contributions on behalf of individual candidates. **That does not mean that individuals who work or volunteer for these organizations cannot make political contributions.**

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has issued guidance that clearly states “the prohibition on political campaign activity only applies to section 501(c)(3) organizations, not to the activities of individuals in their private capacity.” Details on accepted lobby practices can be found on a link to the IRS Web site in Appendix A. Please note that it is illegal to discuss legislation at fundraisers, so this is simply an opportunity to personally let the legislator know you appreciate their hard work without having to say it to them.

Once you’ve built your credibility, you may find that they actively seek your input when issues arise that could affect your organization. The following are just a few suggestions for improving your clout with your representatives:

- **Get others involved** - Involve your board of directors, your trustees, your employees, your residents, and their families. In politics, there is truly strength in numbers.
- **Acknowledge supporters** – Thank your legislator for taking a position in support of long term care providers. You can do this with a letter, an award, a letter to the editor in your local paper or with an article in your newsletter.
- **Attend local community meetings** – Many lawmakers schedule or attend community meetings and forums designed to get input from their voters. Take advantage of these opportunities to educate lawmakers on long term care issues.
- **Attend fundraisers** – Campaigns are expensive. If you find that your legislator is supportive of the issues you care about, consider attending one of their fundraisers. Most legislators hold fundraisers in their districts, which are significantly less expensive than those based in Albany or Washington D.C. While these local events may not raise as much money for a legislator, they provide them with an opportunity to meet their real supporters – the voters. Remember that IRS guidelines prohibit political contributions from 501(c)(3) organizations, but allow personal donations. Additional information can be found on the IRS Web site link in Appendix A.

- **Volunteer on political campaigns** – Campaigns depend on volunteers. An hour spent stuffing envelopes can be more valuable to a legislator than money in the bank. Legislators seldom forget people who donate time to help get them elected.
- **Attend or coordinate candidate forums** - Be sure to “interview” potential lawmakers by asking them their position on long term care issues. This is also a great time to educate them on long term care issues.
- As a **not-for-profit organization**, it is important to remember these tips:
 - ✓ Don’t engage in partisan activities – if you invite one, invite all;
 - ✓ Don’t endorse or oppose specific candidate(s);
 - ✓ Don’t distribute partisan literature; and
 - ✓ Don’t make financial contributions from your organization to specific candidates or campaign committees.

Support can be found in many areas. Let’s face it – everyone gets old and everyone knows someone who is a senior. Baby boomers are knocking on the door of retirement and access to senior housing and services. Americans who are working struggle to find appropriate and affordable services for their parents.

Senior advocates need new and a variety of champions to change perceptions and policy. Senior issues champions can come from the media, entertainment and sports professions. Ask them to become involved in your issues and use their name recognition to further your advocacy goals.²

In summary, developing relationships with your legislators allows you to help shape their understanding of the issues impacting long term care, and ultimately, their policymaking. In addition, numbers count in advocacy. The more people and community agencies you have advocating for your cause, the better chances you have to get the funding or support you need.

Step Nine: Developing a Written Grassroots Advocacy Plan

In order to stay on task and develop an effective advocacy plan, the grassroots advocacy team will need to develop a written plan. Writing out the specific steps needed to advocate for particular issues, and assigning someone each of those steps, is extremely important.

Some of the items that should be in the written plan include:

² Stone, R. 2004. “Where Have All the Advocates Gone?” Generations Journal of the American Society on Aging. Spring 2004, p.62.

**Developing a Grassroots Advocacy Plan in a Senior Residential Community
A NYAHS A TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GUIDE**

What are the issues?

- List out the issues and bill numbers (if relevant).
- What are the answers to questions that might be asked?

Who is the audience?

- List the names and contact information for elected officials and key staff for those issues and bills.

What is the strategy?

- In a brief paragraph or two, write out what the goals are on those issues and bills.

What is the message?

- Message is the central idea around which all advocacy on a particular issue revolves.
- The message will help drive how and what you “ask” legislators to do.

What are the tactics?

- Now that you know your issues, know the audience, have a message, and an “ask”, it is time to determine what you will do to reach your desired goal:
 - Developing a plan for meeting with elected officials;
 - Developing a written communications plan; and
 - Developing a media plan.

Advocacy Responsibilities.

- Once the tactics are determined, set deadlines and assign who will be responsible for what, for example:
 - Who will attend what legislator meetings?
 - Who will write the letters?
 - Who will plan the community events?
 - Who will follow up on visits and issues?
 - Who will keep NYAHS A/AAHS A updated on our efforts?

Calendar.

- Once everything is in writing and your tactics are determined, put them into calendar format so that everyone knows when things are happening and where you have room to add more advocacy activities if needed.

General.

- Who can we contact at NYAHS A and AAHS A to help if we have questions?
- What resources do we have?
- What partners will help us out?
- When is the grassroots advocacy team going to meet?
- Process for keeping the plan current?

Developing the written plan will allow the team to know what to expect and be able to evaluate and adjust to new issues and provide an effective advocacy campaign.

In summary, developing a written advocacy plan is an effective tool in assigning critical tasks and organizing the steps needed to produce a comprehensive advocacy campaign.

Step Ten: Keep It Current

All the hard work of developing a grassroots advocacy team and plan will be ineffective if you don't keep current on the issues and process of particular bills. Things move slowly, for the most part, in Albany and Washington, but sometimes they move fast. When meeting with legislators, it is critical to have the most recent information on a bill, including if a bill has been acted on or if the bill number has changed.

Therefore, before meeting or calling a legislator, call NYAHS A/AAHS A to get up-to-date information. You should regularly check the NYAHS A *Legislative Action Center* and AAHS A *Contact Congress* Web sites. During the legislative session, be sure to join participate in NYAHS A's monthly conference call updates on the latest happenings in Albany.

The importance of on-going communication with your legislators and their staff can't be overstated. Building a positive relationship is an ongoing process that involves communication other than asking for something.

Be sure to update your written grassroots advocacy plan on a regular basis, but no less than once a year.

Conclusion

Funding for senior housing and services programs are targeted for reduction or elimination by some legislators. New York state lawmakers are considering initiatives to move seniors from nursing homes and into senior housing and community based programs. Sweeping changes in the Medicaid and Medicare programs are affecting care for seniors. Will there be enough funding to provide quality care for seniors in the future? A coordinated advocacy effort will ensure that legislators understand issues affecting seniors and support adequate funding and programs for housing and community based care.

Organizing a grassroots advocacy team and developing a grassroots advocacy plan will help to ensure that your legislators understand the issues facing senior housing and services and increase the possibility that funding will be directed to necessary programs helping seniors.

Advocacy is as much about believing that change is possible as it is the mechanics of plans, letters and meetings. Thousands of New York's seniors, caregivers and providers would be willing to join advocacy efforts to secure proper funding and services. You can take steps to ensure future quality care for New York's seniors by assembling an advocacy team, developing a plan and advocating to your elected officials.

Appendix A – Resources

New York Association of Homes and Services for the Aging: <http://www.nyahsa.org/>

- NYAHSa's United Voices: <http://www.nyahsa.org/unitedvoices/index.cfm>
- American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging: www.aahsa.org
- AAHSA's Contact Congress: <http://capwiz.com/aahsa/home/>
- The American Association of Service Coordinators: www.servicecoordinator.org
- State Senate: www.senate.state.ny.us
- State Assembly: www.assembly.state.ny.us
- U.S. Senate: www.senate.gov
- U.S. House of Representatives: www.house.gov
- New York state Legislative Information:
<http://public.leginfo.state.ny.us/menuf.cgi>
- Federal Legislative Information: <http://thomas.loc.gov/>
- IRS Lobby Activity:
www.irs.gov/charities/charitable/article/0,,id=120703,00.html

NYAHSa Document ID# - 38009601

Appendix B – NYAHSA Sample Letter



[Letter Writing Campaign](#)

[Home](#) [Information & Sample Letters](#) [Mailing List](#) [Search](#) [Help](#)

Preview: Letter to Legislators: Budget Thank You for NORCs

July 24, 2006

*Representative
Address1
Address2
City, State, Zip Code*

Dear Representative,

As the [Title] at the [Name of Organization] in [Locality], I would like to thank you for your hard work during this year's budget process. The additional \$2 million for the Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORC) and the Neighborhood NORC programs in the state budget is critical to improve the quality of care for our most vulnerable citizens.

NORCs are a cost-effective way to provide a wide array of social and health care services to well and frail elderly residents. This funding will allow more seniors to remain in their own homes as long as possible and delay the need for more costly institutional care.

I am so pleased that the Legislature recognized how essential these programs are and the need to expand them. Please keep fighting for this funding during the veto period. Again, thank you for your support of [Name of Organization] and the people we serve.

Sincerely,

*Your Name
Address 1
Address 2
City, State, Zip Code*