



Contacting Your Members of Congress to Schedule a Meeting

Your members of Congress (United States Senators and Representatives) make time for meetings with constituents as part of their duties as elected officials. Face-to-face meetings are one of the most powerful ways to advocate for MPS-related policies, as a meeting makes you and your issue more memorable to legislators. It is important to know that the staff who work for members of Congress are very important, too! Whether you meet directly with your Senator or Representative or with their staff person, you are taking an important step by building a relationship with them. This makes them much more likely to pay attention when we call or email about a specific issue in the future.

You can set up a meeting by following the steps below.

1. FIND THE LOCAL OFFICE THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO VISIT

U.S. Senators and Representatives maintain offices in their home states that allow their constituents to meet with them or their staff. You can find information about the local offices of your Senators and Representative on their websites. If you know your U.S. Senators and your U.S. Representative, you can find their individual websites here:

- **For U.S. Senators:** http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm
Click on your senator's NAME to be brought directly to his or her website.
- **For U.S. Representatives (also referred to as Congressmen/women):**
<http://www.house.gov/representatives/>
Click on your representative's NAME to be brought to his/her website.

If you do not know your members of Congress, see the toolkit section ***How to Find Your Members of Congress***.

2. CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATOR'S OFFICE TO SET UP A MEETING

Once you have chosen your local office, use the guide below to contact your legislator's office to schedule a meeting.

- **Find out when the legislator will be back in the district.** While the legislature is in session, your senators and representative will be in Washington, DC. While the legislature is in recess, they will likely be back in their local offices. You can check your senators' and representative's websites to find out when they are on recess. While not essential, the best time to request a meeting with a lawmaker is when they are back home in the district.

- **Request a meeting.** Most legislators’ websites include a “Request for Meeting” form that you can fill out online OR offer an email address for the person in charge of scheduling their appointments. Before calling your lawmaker’s office, fill out the form or send an email request for a meeting. If you are sending an email, it should contain the following:
 - ✓ Your name and address (to show that you are a constituent)
 - ✓ The issues you wish to discuss
 - ✓ The local office you wish to visit
 - ✓ The dates that you can meet (include several dates or a wide time frame so that there is flexibility in scheduling the meeting)

SAMPLE EMAIL TO SCHEDULE MEETING

Dear [SENATOR or CONGRESSMAN/WOMAN] [LAST NAME]:

As a member of the National MPS Society, I am writing to request a meeting with you and your aides to discuss several issues that affect children with mucopolysaccharidoses, or MPS diseases, [or provide your specific disease] and their families.

I will be available to meet with you at your [LOCATION] office on [DATES YOU ARE AVAILABLE] and would welcome the opportunity to speak with you about these issues. I can be reached at the phone numbers listed below and will look forward to hearing from you regarding a time we can meet. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,
 [YOUR NAME]
 [YOUR ADDRESS]
 M: [YOUR MOBILE PHONE]
 O: [YOUR OFFICE PHONE]
 H: [YOUR HOME PHONE]

- **Follow up your request with a phone call.** A day or two after you anticipate your communication has arrived, follow up with a phone call to your legislator’s local office. Ask for the person in charge of scheduling your lawmaker’s appointments. The following script can help guide your conversation.

YOU: Hello, my name is [YOUR NAME] and I am live in [CITY/TOWN]. I wanted to follow up on my request to meet with Congressman/Senator [NAME] regarding issues of importance to individuals with MPS and their families. Is Congressman/Senator [NAME] available to meet with me on [DATE]?

OFFICE: I’m sorry -- the Congressman/Senator isn’t available on those dates.

YOU: Could you let me know some dates that he/she or a staff person might be available to meet with me?

Write down the date, time and person you spoke with. If you have not heard back in a few days, call again to follow up. Be polite but persistent!

- **Recognize that you might meet with a member of your legislator's staff.** Sometimes legislators may not be available and you will be scheduled to meet with a member of their staff. This is still a wonderful opportunity! Legislators rely heavily on their aides to make decisions as aides are policy experts. Your meeting with a staff member can inform his/her recommendations to your legislator and also build an important relationship with your lawmakers' office.

3. CONFIRM YOUR APPOINTMENT

The day before your meeting, call your legislator's local office to confirm your appointment. Your legislator's office may request a list of those who will be attending the meeting, if there are attendees other than yourself.

4. FOLLOW UP YOUR MEETING WITH A THANK-YOU

After your meeting, be sure to send a thank-you letter to your lawmaker and/or your lawmaker's staff. Thank them for taking the time to meet with you and re-iterate the asks that you made in your meeting. Your legislator and his/her staff will appreciate it – and it is a great way to remind them about your requests!