



HELPFUL TIPS FOR VISITING A CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE

Visiting your members of Congress, whether on Capitol Hill or in your district or state, can seem like a daunting experience. Following these tips can ease your anxiety and make the visit productive and worthwhile.

Introduce Yourself

When you first arrive at the office, introduce yourself to the front-office staffer and tell him or her that you have an appointment scheduled with [name of Representative/Senator/staff member]. When you are greeted, make sure everyone in your group introduces themselves by name and indicates where they live.

Meeting Location

In some offices, your meeting may take place in the reception area or even outside the office in a hallway. Do not be offended if this happens. This is normal. Offices, especially on the House side of Capitol Hill, have limited space and hold several meetings with constituents at the same time.

Relax and Show Enthusiasm

Senators and representatives (as well as the staffers that work for them) serve you. A primary component of their job is to meet with constituents. You are not imposing on their time, so relax. You should project enthusiasm and confidence when talking with your member of Congress and his or her staff. Also remember to be courteous during your visit, even in the rare situation when they may not be as courteous to you as they should be.

Talk about PKD

Do not assume that the elected official or staffer knows anything about PKD. You should open the meeting by asking, "How much do you know about PKD?" The likely response is, "not much," at which point you should spend a few minutes talking about the disease and its impact on you as a patient, family member, etc.



Tell your Personal Story

PKD has personally affected you, your family and your friends. Let your representative or senator know how PKD impacts your life. Do you worry about genetic discrimination directed at you or your children? Has the cost of dialysis or a transplant caused a financial burden on your family? Are you concerned about the ability to find a doctor who knows about PKD and can treat you?

Plan Ahead and be Mindful of the Time

You should relate your personal or family story in under five minutes, if possible. In addition, if you have pictures of loved ones or friends affected by PKD, bring them along to show. Just remember that time is limited, and you want to leave enough time for questions.

Please note that if you are in a group of more than three or four people, you will want to designate one or two in your group to speak on everyone's behalf. This will make the best use of your time.

Don't Forget to State Your "Ask"

The "ask" is the most important part of your visit. You will be asking for your representative or senator to support legislative issues that are important to the PKD community. Be sure to leave a packet of written materials outlining the information you've discussed in your meeting..

Thank you and Follow-up

Be sure to get a business card of all those with whom you meet. To ensure that your requests are given serious consideration, follow up either by phone or e-mail. Thank them for their time and re-state your "ask."

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