

MoALPHA TOOLKIT FOR REGIONAL LEGISLATIVE MEETINGS

November 12, 2013

This toolkit is intended to help local public health administrators plan and carry out regional meetings with their representatives and senators.

Meeting Purpose:

This is a time to discuss the concepts of public health and familiarize the Legislators with the types of services you provide and issues you face. If you can discuss specific bills, that is great, but even if the meeting is held before bill filing, it's important to talk about the history and science behind what we do in public health. Relationship building is the most important outcome.

How to Get Started:

The first thing to do is to select who should attend, where it will be held, and the most convenient time.

Who Should be There:

This is a time for Legislators to get together with Local Public Health Administrators. Make a list of the representatives and senators in the area; see <http://www.house.mo.gov/billtracking/maps/senate.pdf> and <http://www.house.mo.gov/billtracking/maps/house.pdf> for district maps.

Invite all legislators in your area and all LPHAs whose jurisdictions are in their districts. Every LPHA Administrator should plan to attend. This will help the Legislators feel that the meeting is important enough for them to attend. Every Legislator (not just staff) needs to attend, if possible, to hear the discussion and to meet the LPHA Administrators.

When the Meeting Should Be Held:

There are several variables to consider when scheduling. The legislative session begins the first Wednesday after the first Monday in January and through mid-May each year (see <http://www.moga.mo.gov> for key dates). Pre-filing of legislation begins December 1.

Perhaps the best time is in the fall before the holidays (except in election years). Specific legislation will not be filed by then, but the weather is usually OK and the distractions of the session haven't kicked in. The time to make friends is when you don't need them. If you wait until the session to explain issues, it is more difficult to get them heard.

If the meeting is held after December 1, there will be specific bills to discuss. Unfortunately, the winter weather may not cooperate. If the meeting is held after the session starts, Fridays are the best times to meet with Legislators because they are back in their districts then. Any time after February is probably too late.

Invitations:

It is particularly important for the LPHA Administrator to personally invite their Legislator(s). Do this by calling their offices, then following up with a written personal invitation (see sample attached).

Schedule the meetings through their Jefferson City offices to avoid schedule Conflicts, unless they have an active local office or you know them personally and can trust their scheduling! For legislator contact information, committee assignments and other valuable information, see:

<http://www.house.mo.gov/member.aspx> and
<http://www.senate.mo.gov/13info/SenateRoster.htm>

In many cases the Senator(s) in the area can help to get the Representatives in for the meeting. They seem to be used to working this way, in that the Senator will call everyone in for a regional type of meeting at least for the Representatives that are of the same political party.

Location:

Choose a central location, possibly where the DHSS district meetings are held. This needs to be a place where discussion can take place easily and without distraction. A noisy restaurant, for instance, would not be a good choice.

Meeting Planning:

Plan the meeting during daylight hours around a meal. If you can serve a buffet meal, it is more likely to attract the Legislators since they know they can come and socialize. Invite board members and/or County Commissioners to hear the conversation and hopefully agree with your reasoning during discussions. Request RSVPs so that you can plan for food and snacks.

Keep the meeting to no more than 2.5 hours and get people out on time.

Begin with introductions and housekeeping. This is a time for each Legislator to tell about their priorities and how public health can help them do their jobs. Ask them for any constituent issues that they have heard during the last session or during the campaign if they are newly elected.

Each LPHA should have a take minutes to give an overview of their recent successes and the particular challenges or issues they are facing.

Be sure to keep the conversation moving so that everyone can be heard.

Spend 30 minutes or so talking about trends in legislation from past years. Talk about potential changes to food laws, problems with proposed changes in laws related to food safety (including raw milk), communicable diseases, and challenges to immunizations or rule making authority. Talk about local board of health ordinance authority to make rules, regulations and orders to protect public health. Let them know that we need additional general revenue funding to keep

a statewide system of public health going.

If possible, spend a few minutes going over the 10 greatest achievements of public health over the last century (powerpoint available) and help them to understand that this is an ongoing process and is not something from the past. This is a good activity while they are eating lunch.

Handouts:

Put LPHA business cards together in a clear plastic sheet so that they can be given to each Legislator. Brochures from each agency are also good handouts. Be sure to also give after-hours cell phone numbers or other contact information, and make sure that Legislators know you will take their calls at any time.

Follow-up:

Send a thank-you note to each legislator or staff member who attended. Each administrator can do this for their legislators, giving a chance to reiterate their contact information and willingness to talk any time.

Tools to use:

How a Bill Becomes a Law (helps LPHAs understand the process)
PH Stories available on DHSS & MoALPHA websites (great examples)

Legislative committee assignments: consult individual legislator's home page at <http://www.house.mo.gov/member.aspx> and <http://www.senate.mo.gov/13info/SenateRoster.htm> or committee listings at <http://www.house.mo.gov/CommitteeList.aspx> <http://www.senate.mo.gov/13info/com-standing.htm>

Draft Invitation
Draft Agenda
Draft Thank-You Note

Powerpoint of 10 Greatest Achievements, with speaker notes (available soon)

Talking points for public health advocates (available soon)
Talking points for specific bills (if appropriate)

Graph of LPHA GR Funding (available soon)