



# Advocacy Summit Talking Points

## Calling on Congress to Fund Programs Key to Psychology



### Background Research

Before your meeting, go online and gather some background information about your Members of Congress to learn more about who you are trying to influence. People love to talk about things they enjoy – where do your interests overlap with theirs? Where in the state did he or she grow up? Where did he or she go to college?

Begin thinking about how you can weave your advocacy goals into the policymaker's legislative priorities. What committees or caucuses does the legislator sit on? What legislation has he or she recently introduced? Go online to your legislator's website and find his or her "Issues" or "Priorities" page. What are some of your legislator's priority areas that intersect or align with your advocacy goals?

**My Advocacy Goal:** *To persuade my Member of Congress to support the highest level of federal funding possible for programs key to psychology.*

**Senator \_\_\_\_\_'s priorities:**

#### Notes

Legislator's committee assignments, caucus memberships, personal interests, etc.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Senator \_\_\_\_\_'s priorities:**

#### Notes

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Representative \_\_\_\_\_'s priorities:**

#### Notes

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_



## Start to Build Rapport

At your meeting, introduce yourself as a constituent and a psychologist. Although you are representing the American Psychological Association, remember to include the name of your university/institution, or organization you work for.

*Based on the research you did above, are there any mutual interests you might want to spend a few moments talking about?* Feel free to mention where in the state/district you're from or grew up in to make the conversation more personal. Spending a few minutes chatting about what your audience (the Member of Congress or his/her staff) enjoys can help create a friendly atmosphere to continue the conversation.



## Lay the Groundwork for the Meeting. Make it Personal!

Next, explain the purpose of your meeting today. You are here to discuss federal funding for programs key to psychology. Please consult the list in the "Present the Solution" section of this document and select the programs that are relevant to your interests.

*Why should these programs be important to your Member of Congress?* Before getting into a broader discussion about a specific policy or piece of legislation, remember that it's your passion and personal story that makes a meeting memorable. Consider sharing your own personal story of why you first became, or hope to become, a psychologist.

*What are the mental and behavioral health needs in your community? What population(s) in your community are you passionate about helping (e.g. older adults, children, those suffering from chronic illness, veterans, victims of abuse, etc.)? How will the research you're conducting benefit well-being of populations, communities, and/or the nation?*



## Share Relevant Data

Start to frame the legislative issue by providing one or two key data points about the need for sustained federal funding for the psychology workforce, psychological research, school and campus-based mental health, and suicide prevention. These data points should be as specific to your Member's district or state as possible.. For example:

*In my hospital alone, we have seen instances of youth self-harm increase by 40% compared to two years ago. Our adult waiting list grew by 50%. There is a significant shortage of providers, including psychologists, and many patients are not getting the help they need. We need to recruit more psychologists.*



## Present the Issue. What's the Problem?

Next, use anecdotes to underscore the contributions being made by psychologists in the area you selected (e.g. education, science). Your message has the greatest impact when coupled with a compelling story. Discuss a few of the barriers you and/or other psychologists face in your work. *How do the programs you selected to talk about help your work and / or address your community's needs?*



## Connect it to Your Legislator's Priorities

Explain how untreated mental health issues can negatively impact other domains of life, such as poor health outcomes, lower levels of educational attainment, and less economic stability, and how continued federal funding would help meet these growing needs. *Based on the background research you conducted on your legislator, how do these factors impact some of his or her priorities? In what way(s) is supporting these federal programs in your legislator's interest?*



## Present the Solution: Your Legislative Requests

Present your legislator with your "asks" - solutions that will help address the problems mentioned above. Ask your Member of Congress to:

- Please support the highest level of funding possible for the *[pick one or two from the list below]*:
  - Minority Fellowship Program
  - Graduate Psychology Education Program
  - National Institutes of Health
  - National Science Foundation
  - Mental Health Service Professionals Demonstration Grant Program
  - School Based Mental Health Services Grant Program
  - Garrett Lee Smith Campus Suicide Prevention Grant Program
  - 988 and Behavioral Health Crisis Services
  - Mobile Mental Health Crisis Response Grants
  - Comprehensive Suicide Prevention Program
  - Department of Veterans Affairs Suicide Prevention Programs



## Express Appreciation for the Visit

Finally, thank the legislator or staff for giving you the opportunity to meet with him/her and reiterate that you hope you can count on them to support these important bills/programs. Ask if there is any further information that you (or APA) can provide. Let them know you will follow up with them after your meeting, and would like to be kept abreast of any progress on these issues.