

TSHA District Legislative Day (DLD) May 7, 2010

Dear DLD Participant –

Thank you for taking the time to meet with your legislator. There is no stronger ambassador for our professions, and we sincerely appreciate your support. In advance of your visit, we wanted to take the opportunity to equip you with some helpful guidance. While the following is a lot of information, we hope it will prove an effective tool as you prepare for the visit. We will share some basic tips for visiting your legislator's office, a step-by-step guide to involving a consumer in your presentation, and talking points about TSHA and the professions.

Purpose:

- To develop relationships with our Senators and Representatives in our home districts prior to the next legislative session.
- To educate our legislators regarding our professions.
- To celebrate May as Better Hearing and Speech Month.

General tips for visiting your legislator's office:

- 1. Introduce yourself** to one of the Senator's or Representative's staff members and identify yourself as a constituent in the Senator/Representative's district.
- 2. Find common ground**
 - a. Look online for his/her biography to find a personal connection.
 - i. "I visited you at the Capitol in March."
 - ii. "I attended the same university you did."
 - b. Ask questions
 - i. "Do you know anyone with a speech/hearing impairment or disability?"
- 3. Define your profession! (See pages 2-3 for descriptions and scopes of work.)**
- 4. Tell them why you are there!**
 - a. Develop awareness – describe your specific job and how you help Texans
 - b. Prior to meeting with your legislator, do your research (see talking points on page two)
 - i. Do not argue.
 - ii. If you do not know the answer to a question, do not guess. Tell them that you will happily get the information for them. Ask us (bess.fjordbak@txsha.org)!
 - c. Keep your visit short: **do not spend more than 15 minutes with the legislator.** You may spend more time with staff members.
 - d. Thank them for their time.
 - e. Leave them with your contact information.
 - i. They may have you enter your contact info in their guest book.
 - ii. Make sure to leave a business card.
- 5. Write a *handwritten* thank-you note after your visit to the district office.**

Involving a consumer:

In communicating the importance of our professions, the strongest testimonials are the faces of those who are directly affected by a speech, language or hearing disorder – and whose lives have been positively affected by our services. As consumers are not always available to take part in legislative visits, a quick video makes for a visual, compelling tool. Following are four simple steps to create and maximize such a tool.

1. Identify a consumer from your district who lends a powerful story. Consider the issues of particular interest/influence to the legislator with whom you will meet, and if possible, recruit a consumer whose story closely aligns.
2. If you have access to a Flip Cam or handheld video camera, film the consumer speaking for 30 to 90 seconds about how his/her life has been powerfully affected by working with a speech-language pathologist. He/she should greet the legislator by name (if known in advance), and should state his/her name, age, hometown and speech, language or hearing disorder. Keep it short and sweet, but make sure to touch upon key issues. For example, if you are school-based, ask a parent to address insurance limitations and the good fortune of having a school-based speech-language pathologist to address his/her child's needs. If you are in the private sector, choose a consumer with a powerful success story, such as recovering from a laryngectomy or using an augmentative communication device.

Note: For a step-by-step tutorial on using the Flip Cam, please refer to the following YouTube link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nq_iO OPCz0&feature=related

3. Take the video camera with you to your legislative visit, and play the video for the legislator. Use your best judgment as to timing: if you feel the video would serve as a compelling opener, let the consumer be the first to speak. If you feel it would be more useful in wrap-up, wait until the close of your meeting.
4. Please be mindful that the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) and applicable State law provide that patient health information is confidential and may not be disclosed to others without the patient's written authorization.

Talking Points:

1. The primary point is to educate the legislators about our professions and make personal connections.
 - a. Discuss the shortage of SLPs and Auds.
 - b. Discuss the need to maintain current standards and continue regulation through licensure.
 - c. Encourage support of loan repayment for graduate students (Master's in SLP, AuD for audiology, PhD for those desiring to teach in university communication disorders programs).
 - d. Discuss the need for increased funding for university programs to expand and increase enrollment.
 - e. If more specific information is requested at this early stage have them contact one of our lobbyists, Mark Hanna or Larry Higdon. (LegislativeAdvocacy@txsha.org)
2. Reiterate the need to ensure the highest quality standards for professionals who diagnose and treat those with communication disorders.

About Our Professions

Audiologists are experts in the non-medical management of the auditory and balance systems.

1. Audiologists specialize in the study of:
 - a. Normal and impaired hearing (selecting, fitting, and dispensing amplification systems such as hearing aids and cochlear implants)
 - b. Prevention of hearing loss (providing and fitting protective devices, and educating the public on the effects of noise)

- c. Identification, assessment, and rehabilitation of hearing and balance disorders, such as hearing loss, tinnitus (ringing in the ears) and balance system dysfunction
- 2. Audiologists may also:
 - a. Train future professionals in colleges and universities
 - b. Manage agencies, clinics, or private practices
 - c. Engage in research to enhance knowledge about normal hearing and the evaluation and treatment of hearing disorders

Speech-Language Pathologists evaluate, diagnose and treat speech, language and swallowing disorders in individuals of all ages, from infants to the elderly.

- 1. Examples of speech disorders include:
 - a. Articulation disorders (develop proper production of speech sounds)
 - b. Voice disorders (develop proper control of the vocal and respiratory systems for correct voice production)
 - c. Fluency (assist individuals who stutter to cope with their disorder and to increase fluent speech)
- 2. Examples of language disorders include:
 - a. Help children with developmental delays and increase their language understanding and production
 - b. Work with school-age children on grammatical aspects of language
 - c. Work with stroke patients whose language understanding and production has been affected (aphasia)
- 3. Speech-language pathologists may also work with patients with other diagnoses such as autism, cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury, swallowing disorders and others.
- 4. Speech-language pathologists may also:
 - a. Train future professionals in colleges and universities
 - b. Manage agencies, clinics, or private practices
 - c. Engage in research to enhance knowledge about human communication processes