

NBCC Guide to Advocacy Communication

Goal

The goal of advocacy communication is to professionally and succinctly convey information to help legislators reach an informed decision on an important topic.

Effective advocacy communication (written and telephone):

- Specifically identifies the topic (e.g., adding licensed counselors to the list of Medicare providers or the name and number of the respective bill).
- Provides information that identifies your constituency, including your name, city, state, and the name of your private practice (particularly if you live in another district).
- Explains how the issue affects you, as a constituent or professional, or the clients you serve. If appropriate, provide an example of the concern.
- Focuses on only one issue per communication.
- Limits information to known facts.
- Inquires about the legislator's position on the issue.
- Requests specific action (e.g., support legislation).
- Includes your current contact information (i.e., telephone number, e-mail, and mailing addresses).
- Expresses appreciation for considering the concern.
- Includes follow-up after two business weeks. If the first communication was by telephone, consider following up in writing. Briefly recap the information you previously provided. Follow up on your request for specific action.

Written communication (including email) should:

- Be brief (no longer than one page).
- Be personalized. Legislative offices recognize template letters very quickly.
- Include the elements identified in the “effective advocacy communication” section above.
- Also be sent (a copy) to GovtAffairs@nbcc.org so that our lobbying efforts can include your concerns.

When making telephone contact:

- Prepare yourself with brief bulleted information.
- Open with a concise statement identifying yourself as a constituent and the purpose of your call.
- Request to speak with the legislative assistant responsible for the issue.
- Include the elements identified in the “effective advocacy communication” section above.
- Remember that legislative offices are typically very busy (Do not expect long conversations.).

If you have questions about communicating with a legislator regarding a counseling advocacy effort, please contact the NBCC Government Affairs department at GovtAffairs@nbcc.org.