

Building Relationships

Elected officials view their constituents as a resource and they want to hear from you. Building relationships with your legislators is a critical step to advocating for behavioral health. It is critical that legislators hear from you on a regular basis.

Plan a Visit with Your Legislator:

A good way to build your relationship with your legislators is to schedule a visit. Plan your visit carefully:

- Make an appointment.
- Be prompt and patient.
- Take advantage of any opportunity to discuss your issues with their legislative aide.
- Let them know you are a member of OACBHA.
- Be prepared and try to focus on only a few key issues. Organize your thoughts and make notes to keep you on track.
- Be direct and clear about what you want them to do.
- Prepare a one-page fact sheet with your main points to present them. Legislators deal with many people regarding many issues, it is helpful to leave a written reminder.
- Thank them for their time and follow up with a thank you note.
- Share the information you gained with OACBHA.

Invite Your Legislators to Local Board Meetings and Tours: Written communications are helpful, but nothing has more impact on members of the General Assembly than visiting your Board and provider sites. Personal testimonials from individuals who have received behavioral health services really make an impact.

Personally Invite Your Legislators to Special Events: OACBHA helps you develop relationships by hosting an annual Legislative Day at the Statehouse, along with other special events while the General Assembly is in session. The same principle applies to any special events that are taking place in your Board Area. Be sure to give legislators plenty of advanced notice, as there are many demands upon their time. Also be mindful of opportunities where you can generate positive publicity for legislators when they take the time to become involved in behavioral health issues.