How to Become an MCAAP Key Contact and Begin Your Legislative Advocacy Journey

In addition to being available for opportunities pertaining to your child health issues of interest, the job of the key contact is to develop ongoing relationships with your representatives on Beacon Hill.

Meet your legislators in Person:
Many MCAAP members meet their representatives for the first time during an advocacy event concerning a specific child health issue. However, the best plan is to meet for the first time in an informal, in-person setting without an agenda. Try to attend a meeting your representative may hold in the home district and they’ll be free from office distractions. Otherwise make an appointment to meet at the district office.

How to Set up and hold your first meeting:
- Call the legislator’s district office in advance to set up a brief meeting. Explain that your purpose is to meet the legislator and talk briefly about child health in the district and state.
- Introduce yourself as a constituent at the beginning of the meeting. Identify where you work, live and the type of pediatrics you practice. Talk about the patients you typically treat.
- Prepare to discuss the general state of child health in your district and the issues you see regularly. The meeting isn’t about specific legislative issues but be prepared to respond to questions.
- If you have a personal connection (an alma mater, mutual experience or interest), mention it.
- Always focus on the kids and families. These are the legislator’s constituents and you want to be thought of as a resource when questions arise on child health issues arise.
- Keep the meeting short. Don’t run over the scheduled time unless invited to keep talking.
- Leave your business card with the legislator.
- Follow up your meeting with a thank you note. Email is fine.
- Report back to the chapter legislative contact that you’ve had your meeting and any interesting issues that may have come up.

Building Your Relationship as a Key Contact and Meeting on Chapter Legislative Issues:
- A key contact is a trusted resource not only for the legislator but for staff members. Never feel slighted by meetings or phone calls with staffers. The staffers do the lion’s share of the information gathering and are valuable contacts. Make yourself indispensable on matters of child health and a staffer will begin to rely on you.
- Whether you’re on the phone or in the legislator’s office, your conversations should be focused and concise. This may take practice!
- When you meet over a specific piece of legislation, know the bill number, the contents of the bill and the Massachusetts Chapter of the AAP’s position on the bill.
- Ideally, you’ll leave the legislator with a Chapter fact sheet about the bill and our position.
- Try to bring a story with you for every issue. Anecdotes from your professional experience convey the impact and importance of the child health issue in the district and in Massachusetts.
- If you don’t know the answer to a question, be honest. Say “I don’t have the answer to that, but I’ll get back to you.” Then contact the chapter or another appropriate resource and follow up immediately. This is a great excuse to follow up with the staff and remind them of the meeting.
- As a Chapter member, you will only be representing the specific issues that the Chapter has officially vetted. You can obviously advocate for other issues with your representatives but you must always be clear when you are speaking for the Chapter and when you are speaking independently as a pediatrician or a citizen. You should not be speaking in the same meeting as a Chapter representative and as an independent constituent. Boundaries are important.
- Do not reference any past or future financial support for a campaign or fundraiser.