

Speaking to your Legislator:

Legislators speak with hundreds of people every day during the legislative session so, if possible, talk to them in your community before they leave for Santa Fe in January. Have your name, address and phone number with you on a piece of paper. Try and have your main points in writing as well. This will help your Legislator concentrate on you and what you are saying if you will supply the basic notes.

Come with a pleasant, non-confrontational manner. Compliment your Legislator for the time and effort he or she is expending. They work long, long hours for no pay and with no staff. Everyone needs a pat on the back occasionally and your Legislator will have positive memories of you if he or she doesn't feel attacked. No one is open to changes or new ideas when on the defensive.

Be specific. Tell your story and then make specific recommendations for addressing the problem. Having a solution to suggest will keep you from sounding like just a complainer.

Have documentation, if possible – numbers, facts, names of studies. If you are asked for information and you don't have it with you, offer to look it up and send it later. It's alright to say "I don't know" but NEVER make something up.

Fact Sheets:

Fact sheets are very helpful when you want to quickly brief many people but don't have time to do an in-depth educational campaign. They are essential for the legislative session when Legislators are hearing from hundreds of people about hundreds of issues. A fact sheet is your means of briefly stating the important points of your issue and giving your recommended solution.

BE ACCURATE! This cannot be stated more strongly. You must be able to back up with documentation every point stated as fact if you are asked for the source. Factions opposing your actions will be quick to point out every inaccuracy in your fact sheet. If this happens you have lost the trust of the Legislators and may not be able to get it back.

Keep it short – no more than one page/one side. Legislators don't have time to read pages and pages of information. Have back up documentation packets available if people request them.

Use easily understood language (don't use technical jargon). Remember that just because you are familiar with the issues, acronyms and other technical terms doesn't mean that Legislators know about what you are speaking.

Prepare your fact sheet in an easy to read manner. Use bullets points and try to answer the questions you would expect to be asked.

Writing Letters:

If you are writing a letter to your Senator or Representative, keep it short – one page if possible.

Legislators are incredibly busy during the legislative session and don't have time to read pages and pages. If you are writing about a specific bill include the bill number and title if you know it.

Discuss only one topic or issue in your letter. Legislators, the Governor and state employees file correspondence by topic or issue. Including more than one topic may cause the other concerns to be disregarded. Even though it is time consuming, if you want to comment on several issues, write a separate letter for each.

Introduce yourself and tell why you are interested in the topic. It is especially important to tell how the issue affects your family personally.

Invite the Legislator, Governor or state employee to contact you to discuss the issue. Include your name, address and phone number. Your Legislator will know that you live in his or her district and are a constituent by your address.

Thank the person to whom you are writing for considering your position or concern and, if desired, request a reply.

Giving Testimony:

If you take the opportunity to attend a legislative hearing you need to know that there is a legislative way of doing business and the public is expected to act accordingly. The Chairman of the committee runs hearings and the public must only sit and listen until the Chairman asks for public comment. Wait to be recognized. After the Chairman has asked if anyone wishes to make public comment or during the legislative session speak on behalf of or against a bill, raise your hand and the Chairman will tell you when it is your turn.

Address the committee by first recognizing the chairman of the committee – Mr./Madam Chairman, Members of the Committee.

Thank the committee for the opportunity to speak. This is a courtesy offered by the Chairman and is not a requirement for the committee.

Introduce yourself – say who you are, where you are from, and why this is important to you.

Keep your testimony SHORT and to the point. Give a brief statement about why this issue is important to you and how it affects your family. Ask the members of the committee to support or vote against the bill. Thank the committee again then sit down. If any committee member wants more information he or she will come back to you with questions.

When answering a question – first address the chairman – Mr./Madam Chairman, then the legislator asking the question – Representative _____ or Senator _____. Give your answer then sit back down when the Legislator has been satisfied.

Commenting on Regulations:

First and foremost, you need to have an official version of the regulation being proposed. By having the official version you can be confident that your comments will be directly related to the regulation; the section, paragraph, and page numbers will track exactly. New language will be underlined and language to be removed will have a line through it. Medicaid regulation is posted on [the Human Services Department/Medical Assistance Division website](#). There are proposed regulation and final regulation. Only proposed regulation is open for comment and only until the listed closing date and time. The announcement will tell you where to send your comments. State law requires that a public meeting be held to receive oral comment from any interested party. Only one hearing is required and usually it is held in Santa Fe.

Written comments:

Make your comments as long as necessary to articulate your point(s). This communication with state personnel will go into the public record kept for the proposed regulation.

Begin with thanking the agency for the opportunity to make comments. A little courtesy goes a long way.

Introduce yourself and explain why you have an interest in this subject.

Point out any positive points of the proposed regulation.

Identify the exact language you want changed by citing the title number, Chapter number, part number, section number, paragraph number or letter and the clause (ex. 8.324.4.10.B). Give your rationale for the change.

Propose the new language you want. Continue until all your points have been made.

It is always appreciated if you have a written version of the comments you made in person at a public hearing.