



Using Virtual Meetings as an Advocacy Tool: Planning Virtual Meetings with Public Officials

As your chapter launches virtual meetings and events, it's important to remember that the PFLAG Connects system can help with all your chapter work – including your advocacy efforts. To help your chapter advocate for LGBTQ+ individuals and their families effectively (and stay within our 501(c)3 rules), we've created some specific tools to help you advocate online like a pro.

Planning Virtual Meetings with Public Officials

While in-person meetings may not be possible during the coronavirus pandemic, many of the skills you need to meet in-person can easily be adapted for virtual meetings with lawmakers and their staff.

When planning a meeting with an elected official start by calling their office and ask to speak to the scheduler. Introduce yourself as a constituent, mention your role as a PFLAGer, and ask if the official is available for a meeting with your chapter. The scheduler may say that the official is unavailable but that their staff will take a meeting with you. They may also say that the official is only available a very short block of time. Don't take it personally, and don't get discouraged! This is very normal and meeting with staff, or even a very short meeting with an elected official, is still important and productive.

Please note, members of Congress will likely reject meetings over Zoom. State and local officials might be reluctant as well. Not to worry, though! Elected officials will have conference lines available and you and your chapter can have a conference call with them and their staff instead. Your message will get across no matter the medium!

A few tips:

Here are a few tips on how to make your meetings with lawmakers as productive as possible:

1. Come prepared! Have talking points ready for your chapter prior to the meeting. PFLAG National can help you with talking points if you need it.
2. Be civil. Even if they don't commit to support the bill you've set time to discuss, remain civil so that the conversation can continue.
3. Share personal stories and talk about how the issues you're discussing impact you and your family. Personal stories are powerful and lawmakers want to hear them.

4. Once the meeting is over, ask for a follow-up meeting! Keep the lawmaker engaged with you, your chapter, and with the issues you're there to discuss.

When your chapter has these meetings, please let PFLAG National know! We want to hear about the advocacy work you and your chapter are doing so we can elevate it. Please contact Patrick Cochran, Executive Assistant and Special Projects Coordinator (pcochran@pflag.org), with details about your meeting with candidates and elected officials.

The information in this section is also available in video format [here](#) and [here](#). If you have questions please reach out to Diego Sanchez, Director of Advocacy, Policy, and Partnerships (dsanchez@pflag.org).