

There are several ways for you to communicate with the people who have been elected to represent you. We can help you prepare and get organized with tips to make the most out of your interactions with your legislators.

Meet With Your Legislators

Meeting with your legislators in person is one of the most effective ways to educate them about celiac disease and advocate for change. There are several ways to get face time with your legislators or their staff:

- ➔ Schedule an appointment at one of their district offices near you
- ➔ Attend a local fundraiser for your legislator
- ➔ Attend a town hall meeting or other public event

Be polite but persistent. It may take several tries to schedule a meeting. When you call to make an appointment, ask to speak to the office scheduler. Follow up if you don't hear back from them.

Sample script to use when making an appointment:

"Hello, my name is [NAME] and I am from [CITY]. I am a volunteer with the Celiac Disease Foundation. I would like to stop by the [REPRESENTATIVE'S or SENATOR'S] local office and briefly talk with them about supporting issues that are important to patients like me who are living with celiac disease."

The meeting may be scheduled with an aide rather than with the legislator, but don't be discouraged. A meeting with a key member of the legislator's staff can still be highly productive.

Call or Email Members of Congress

Calling or sending an email is a good option if you are unable to meet with your legislators or want to relay a message quickly. We recommend calling and emailing your legislators' health aides directly from your email rather than using the standardized web forms, although both can be effective. You can learn who the health aides are by calling your legislators and asking.

Tips for Communicating With Your Legislators

Do Your Research

Once you've identified your legislators, do some research about their background, their interests, and the healthcare measures they may have supported or opposed.

Prepare for Your Visit

Practice telling your celiac story. Keep it short — a 2-3 minute synopsis of your experience. Consider whether you can connect your personal story to the policies you are advocating for to drive home how their support would impact you.

Bring hard copies of handouts to your meeting. These can be helpful to remind you to stay on topic and it can serve as a reference point for the legislator after you leave. Handouts can be found at celiac.org/advocacytoolkit.

Be Prompt, to the Point, and Polite

Give yourself a little extra time before your meeting, even if it's a scheduled phone call. **Being punctual is important.** At the same time, be flexible if the legislator is running behind. You can use the extra time to continue your meeting preparation.

Make sure you clearly **explain the action** you would like your legislator to take. This may seem obvious, but many lawmakers have said it is frustrating to meet with their constituents and not know what they are looking for. Always start the meeting with the 'ask,' for example, "I'm here to ask you to support NIH funding for celiac disease research."

Be straightforward and courteous in expressing your views, and be receptive to the lawmaker's questions and comments. If the legislator doesn't volunteer his or her position on the issue, feel free to ask.

If you're asked a question that you can't answer, don't guess. Instead, say that you will look into the question and get them an answer as soon as possible. Email us at sierra.manning@celiac.org with any questions that you cannot answer.

If you are meeting in person or over the phone, **send a thank you email/note** (examples can be found at celiac.org/advocacytoolkit) and reiterate the key points you discussed.

Continue Your Advocacy Efforts

- ➔ Update us! We'd love to hear about your advocacy work. Email us at sierra.manning@celiac.org and our advocacy staff can help you follow up.
- ➔ If you took a picture with your legislator, send it to them with your thank you email reiterating the asks. Don't forget to send us a copy as well!
- ➔ Subscribe to CDF Advocacy emails to stay updated about our advocacy work by clicking the "Sign Up For Updates!" button at celiac.org.

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