

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR REPRESENTATIVES

OCRA Advocate Leaders Program



Importance of building relationships

As an advocate for the ovarian cancer community, it is important for you to establish relationships with your elected officials at the federal, state and local level.

- These relationships can help facilitate the passing of certain legislation or action that supports the ovarian cancer community
- Additionally, by building these relationships, you establish yourself as a reliable expert on your issue area

Step 1: Getting to know your representative

One of the most important first steps in building a relationship with your representatives is to get to know them, what issues they support or oppose, what committees they sit on, and past or current action on your issue.

Your representative's website is a great place to get started – most elected officials have their own website, which you can find through an easy google search

Explore their websites. Some things to look for:

- See what issues they are working on (most websites have an 'issues', 'priorities' or 'legislation' tab which highlights issues they are in support of)
- See what committees or caucuses they are a part of (most websites have an 'membership' or 'committees' tab which shows the member's committee or caucus membership)
- Read up on latest news or actions taken by your representative (most websites feature press releases or news articles about the representative or have a 'news' tab)
- See if your representative has any personal ties to your issue. Sometimes this information can be found by reading the member's bio on their website or doing a quick google search using key words on your issue and the member's name

Step 2: Following your representatives' activities

Once you've explored your representatives' websites and read up on recent news, it's important to continue to follow their activities. You can do this in many ways, including:

- If you are on social media, following the accounts of your elected officials can also be a great way to keep up to date on your member's latest actions.
- Make sure to sign up for newsletters from your representative. Most member's websites have a space to input your contact information and sign up for this.
- If you follow certain news outlets, you may be able to adjust your notification settings to ensure you're alerted whenever your representative is mentioned

Step 3: Maintaining your relationship

It's important to make sure you continue the conversation of ovarian cancer with your representatives and establish yourself as a reliable expert. You can do this by:

- Share news articles or research studies about new developments on your issue area or how the policymaker's past actions have made a difference on the issue
- Invite them to events that showcase the positive impact their past actions or legislation they have supported has made a difference
- Send thank you notes to policymakers thanking them for a positive vote or their support on your issue
- Congratulate them on honors received or elections they have won

Additional Resources:

- All in Together provides tips on building consistent relationships with your representatives: [Building Relationships With Your Reps - All In Together \(aitogether.org\)](#)
- The Association for Career & Technical Education has a great website page with multiple advocacy resources: [Advocacy Resources - ACTE \(acteonline.org\)](#)
 - This page features resources on: [Building relationships with policymakers](#)