

Advocate for Your Cause: Contact Your Legislator

A step-by-step guide to finding, contacting and speaking with your legislator

Mental Health Advocacy Day is Wednesday, March 15, 2017. To make a maximum impact, we are asking consumers, family members, providers and advocates to meet with their legislator that day to discuss mental health policy and budget issues in Kansas. Below is a guide to help navigate this process. Full schedule of events for Mental Health Advocacy Day 2017 is on the last page of this guide.

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STEP 1

Find your state legislators

- Go to <http://www.kslegislature.org/li/>.
- *Find Your Legislator* button on the left side of the screen.
- Click the *Search by Your Address* button underneath the *Find Legislator* submit button. A pop-up will appear informing you that you are leaving the page, click OK.
- Enter your home address in the box underneath the words, *Enter Your Address*.
- On the right hand side, your House representative and your Senator will appear. If you click on their name, you will be directed to another page that has their contact information.
- If you know your legislators by name, you can get their contact information at www.kslegislature.org under the *Legislators* tab at the top. The rosters are listed alphabetically.

STEP 2

Schedule a meeting

- Make appointments with your Representative and Senator now.
- Call their offices and request a meeting when you are at the State Capitol for Mental Health Advocacy Day on Wednesday, March 15, 2017.

STEP 3

Asking for an appointment

“Hello, my name is _____, and I’m from Senator/Representative _____’s district. I’ll be coming to Topeka on Wednesday, March 15th for Mental Health Advocacy Day. I would like to make an appointment sometime that day to talk for about 15 minutes about issues that are important to me and others in the district.”

BE SURE TO WRITE DOWN THE TIME AND ROOM NUMBER FOR YOUR APPOINTMENT.

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STEP 4

Preparing to meet your legislators

2017 Issue Papers

The Kansas Mental Health Coalition identified these topics as priorities for 2017.

- [Community Based Programs and Mental Health 2020](#)
- [Adult Inpatient - State Hospitals Issues](#)
- [Medicaid Expansion](#)
- [Mental Health Medications and Step Therapy](#)
- [Criminal Justice Issues](#)

STEP 5

Getting into the capitol

- Entrance to Capitol: There is only one entrance to the State Capitol and that is the Visitor Entrance on the North side, the 8th street side.
- Security Is Tight. No knives, any metal objects, large key rings, etc. Cell phones, belts with buckles, keys and change must all go in a container and through an ex-ray machine. Women, don't wear boots or high heels with metal rods in them, if you can help it. Don't wear belts with lots of metal or lots of metal jewelry.

STEP 6

What do I talk about?

- Pick one issue that is important to you.
- Does one of the issue papers talk about it? [Community based programs](#), [State Hospitals](#), [Medicaid Expansion](#), [Step Therapy](#), [Criminal Justice Issues](#), other?
- Share that paper with the legislators first.
- Tell your story, your situation, your recovery story.
- Ask for support and funding for the programs that are important to you.

Six talking tips

1. Know your stuff. You know your story, but practice anyway.
2. Be on time. A little early is better.
3. Get to the point. Keep it brief.
4. Bring issue papers, leave them with the legislators.
5. Lobby one issue at a time, whenever possible.
6. Be reasonable, courteous and tactful. Say thank you.

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Talking to Your Legislator (example)

Click the following link or paste the address into your web browser to see a short video on [“Meeting your legislators and talking about mental health”](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDtigojk2dc>

STEP 7

What if they cannot meet?

- Ask the legislators’ assistant for an appointment for Wednesday, March 15th. If they are not available:
- Give them your **CELL PHONE NUMBER** to call you that day if they need to reset the meeting, or time opens up for a meeting.
- Go to their office that day and ask if any openings have come up for a meeting.
- Leave a note introducing yourself as a constituent and include your contact information and the issue papers for Advocacy Day.

STEP 8

Cheat Sheets, taking notes and answering questions

- It is fine to have your own notes with items you want to cover in the meeting. Note cards or small notebooks are terrific for this.
- You can certainly take notes on the topics you are discussing and points you want to remember.
- If a Legislator asks for further information, and you do not have it, it is fine to say “I will get that for you later”.

STEP 9

Follow up and after action

After your meetings with your legislators, there are two things you should do...

- Jot down comments from talking to your legislators (comments they made on mental health services, Medicaid, substance use disorders or other).
- Write a thank you note to your legislator for meeting with you.

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Kansas Mental Health Advocacy Day

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

Schedule of Events

8:30 a.m. - Noon

Registration

Location: State Capitol Visitors Center

8:30 a.m.

Informational Briefings - will be repeated every 20 - 30 minutes

Location: State Capitol lower level

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Exhibits

Location: State Capitol, First Floor Rotunda

10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Mental Health Advocacy Rally

Location: State Capitol, South Apron outside

11:00 a.m.

Session of the Kansas House of Representatives – group will watch the House session from the gallery.

Noon - 1:00 p.m.

Lunch for Legislative District Advocates* and Legislators **(This Event is by Invitation Only)**

Location: State Capitol, First Floor North Wing

2:30 p.m.

Session of the Kansas Senate – group will watch the Senate session from the gallery.

Ongoing Activities for all participants:

- Legislative appointments - meeting with your legislators, whether it is in their office or in the hallway is the most important part of the day.
- Legislative Committees - choose from among multiple committee meetings to view legislative workings up close.

**Legislative District Advocates are members of the Grassroots Advocacy Network. Check out the [web page](#) to learn more about becoming a volunteer Legislative District Advocate.*