

Talking Points for Hill Day Visits



Introduction

- Introduce yourself and allow members of your delegation to introduce themselves as well. Say you are a registered dietitian, registered dietitian nutritionist or nutrition and dietetics technician, registered or Dietetic Intern with the Tennessee Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Explain where you're from. Small talk is always encouraged.

Talking Points

- Talk about what a registered dietitian nutritionist does (nation's food and nutrition leaders, work in hospitals, long term care facilities, private practice, schools, and elsewhere in communities to improve health and prevent and treat chronic diseases).
 - He/She may speak of a dietitian in a hospital or some place or may ask where dietitians work and be prepared to explain 4-5 places a dietitian may be employed. Since you are a constituent, use specific examples the Legislator may be familiar with in your city/district. They may be familiar with dietitians in hospitals but not in private practice, universities, physician clinics, community health, cancer clinics, research and etc.
- Mention how many registered dietitian nutritionists are in your state (1,056)
- Highlight that RDN/LDNs are state licensed to protect the public in Tennessee.
- If he/she asks questions regarding the difference between a dietitian nutritionist and a nutritionist be prepared to explain. *"All RDNs are nutritionists but not all nutritionists are RDNs!" (This is where you can talk about the education that RDNs have to go through).*
- That we use evidenced based practice and have a strong nutrition therapy process used across the different care environments.
- Explain that RDN's are the forefront of helping Tennesseans live healthier, more productive lives. Share a personal story about working with patients/clients/students to improve health.
 - Remind that:
 - 5 of the top ten causes of death in TN are directly related to Nutrition: Heart Disease, Cancer, Stroke, Diabetes, and Kidney Disease.
 - 66% of adults in Tennessee are overweight or obese.
 - 33% of adults in Tennessee are obese, which is the 4th highest rate in the country
 - 17% of high school students in Tennessee are obese
 - 11% of adults in TN have Diabetes and nearly 40% of adults in TN have hypertension.
- We want to build relationships that can position us to have *continuous* communication with our legislators. If you have already met with your legislator and explained the basics of our organization and profession, you may be able to breeze past some of the above bullet points and discuss the following:
 - TennCare does reimburse Registered Dietitian Nutritionist for Medical Nutrition Therapy if there is medical necessity.
- **Focus conversations on how our services can help the health and well-being of Tennesseans and not about increasing dietitian jobs.**
- Ask the legislator what questions they might have and commit to follow up with any questions that you are unsure of how to answer. Ask if there is anything you can do to help their office with food, nutrition, or health policy concerns/issues. Thank them for their time. If they have follow up questions, write them down and report back to Emily Maddux, Angie Wallick, or Brian Jones, prior to leaving for the day.

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Helpful Tips for Visiting the Hill

- Prior to going to the Hill, read over your talking points. You will have about 15 minutes max to discuss and get your point across.
- When you arrive at the legislator's office door, check to see if you are seeing a Representative or a Senator or so you can address him/her by the correct title such as "Senator Norris or Representative Shaw"
- Select someone in your group to do most of the talking. That individual may want to have their business card readily available to give to the secretary or aide at the desk and one for the legislator.
- Do not give him/her anything other than the specially designated card and your business card. Remember to put at least 1 person's name and contact information on the card.
- Introduce yourself and the members of your group to the legislator or his aide. Let him/her know that you are their constituent.
- If you have had prior communication with the legislator, remind them of this.
- Be pleasant and stay positive about our profession and our roles as RDNs. Do not discuss other groups practicing nutrition unless asked.
- If he/she asks you a question you do not know; tell him/her you don't know and see if anyone else in your group knows and if no one knows the answer, tell him/her you will check and get back with an answer. ***Be sure to follow through on getting back to them with the answer.***
- He/She may want to discuss his personal weight loss or a family member and it is okay to discuss this but try to move the subject back to your topic before you leave unless that discussion came up at the end of your meeting.
- Believe your message and be a strong advocate for dietitians. Communication with elected officials is vital for our profession.
- Please return your ***Legislative Meeting Tracking Form*** to a peer who plans to attend the Networking/Debriefing event at Adams and Reese, LLP, or submit your form via email within 48 hours to the Executive Director at eatrighttn@gmail.com.
- When you return home, send an email or drop a note to your legislator to thank them for their time.
 - Consider asking for a follow up appointment in their home office.