



## Advice for Advocates: Briefing Elected Officials

The face-to-face meeting with an elected official is one of the most *effective* and *impactful* tools we have in the advocacy tool kit. Knowing this can be rather daunting for those who've never briefed an official before, JDRF Advocacy has come up with this five step process.

### Step 1 – Identify your elected official

You can find contact details for most federal, provincial and municipal officials using this handy tool <https://represent.opennorth.ca/demo/>. For those that have been missed, use a search engine to locate the information you're looking for.

### Step 2 – Schedule a Meeting

- Contact the official using the email or phone number provided for their Constituency Office (*Email is best* as there will be a record of the meeting request and any response should you need to follow up. Download our meeting request template email.)
- Tell them you are a constituent who would like 15-20 minutes to talk about the need to increase federal funding aimed at curing, preventing or treating type 1 diabetes.
- Feel free to mention your T1D connection.
- Let them know if any others will attend the meeting (such as family, neighbours or friends.)
- Bringing other constituents along to the meeting is a good way to get attention for your issue.
- In the unlikely event that you are told the official is unavailable or if it will be some weeks before he or she is available, you may wish to meet with a constituency staff member to convey your concerns.

### Step 3 – Prepare for the Meeting

- Prepare and print out copies of your briefing documents (for yourself, any other meeting participants and at least two copies for the MP – one for the official and an extra in case an assistant is part of the meeting.)
- Do your research. Visit their website, particularly if you don't already know them. Conduct a web search to find out if they have supported JDRF or type 1 diabetes research.
- Rehearse your key messages. If you are bringing others to the meeting, feel free to divide up the presentation in a way that makes sense or assign someone the role of note taker. Agree on talking points. If any of your talking points are causing debate or tension in the group, leave them out.
- Plan to spend 40% of your time talking, leaving 60% for discussion. Depending on how much time you are allotted and what you plan on saying about your own experience with T1D, you may need to adjust the advocate briefing by removing or skipping over certain pages. It is best to decide this in advance and to rehearse the timing of your presentation.

- Try to anticipate any questions they may have and have answers ready. Email any questions you have to [advocacy@jdrf.ca](mailto:advocacy@jdrf.ca) or call 1-877-CURE533 ext. 2003
- Don't worry about needing to know everything. It is fine to say you don't know or to offer to find out and get back to them at a later date (this can be helpful as it helps you build a relationship with the official!)
- Feel free to contact the office a day or two before your meeting is scheduled to reconfirm your appointment.
- Be punctual. But be prepared to wait. It is not unusual for appointments to run a little behind schedule.

## Step 4 – The Meeting

- Arrive at least 5 mins, but no more than 15 mins, before your scheduled meeting time.
- Introduce yourself (and your group if there is more than yourself.) Thank them for taking the time to meet with you.
- DO feel free to remind them if you have met before. And feel free to bring up any personal, professional or political connections you may have.
- DON'T describe yourself as a contributor to their campaign or party (even if you are!)
- At the top of the meeting, ask how much time they have for you (sometimes their schedule might require them to shorten meeting if they are behind schedule and it's good to know this at the start.)
- Stay on track. It's normal to begin with a certain amount of "small talk", but it's important not to get off track. "The reason I requested this meeting..." is a good opener when you're ready to start your briefing.
- Hand a copy of your briefing document to the official and to the staff in attendance.
- Use your briefing to keep your presentation on track.
- **Be respectful.** Elected officials are approached daily by a variety of stakeholders on a variety of issues. They can't champion every issue. And this may be the first time they are hearing about type 1 diabetes. Make your points clearly and firmly, but *don't argue*. Never speak badly of other legislators or organizations.
- Talk from your own experience. How has T1D impacted you and/or your family? Your personal story is powerful and will help them connect with your concerns.
- Don't worry if you don't have all the answers. If you are asked a question and don't have a planned response, don't worry. Offer to find out and get back to them. Don't make something up as this undermines your credibility.
- Take notes so that you can follow up on any important points.
- Leave a copy of any supplementary briefings or reading materials. A natural time to do this is when you have finished presenting the material in the briefing document.
- Actively listen. Are they supportive or not? Try to determine why or why not? What views, beliefs and values are they expressing?

- Feel free to ask “Can I count on your support?” Or “What can I do to get your support?”
- **BUT** be prepared to be told they need time to review the proposal. Feel free to ask them when you can get back to them.
- **Say “Thank You!”** Always end the meeting by thanking them for the meeting. Leave promptly.

## Step 5 – After the meeting

- Compare notes with others at the meeting. Was the official supportive or unsupportive? What commitments were made? What follow-up is needed?
- Complete [JDRF’s online advocate feedback report](#).
- Each person who attended the meeting should send a short email, letter, card or note to the official or their assistant to thank them for meeting with you. If you promised to get back to them with additional information or if they did, feel free to use this note to pass on the information that was promised or remind them of what they promised you.

For more information, please contact Patrick Tohill, Director of Government Relations at 647-789-2003 or [ptohill@jdrf.ca](mailto:ptohill@jdrf.ca).