



**Consumer and Advocate Guide  
for Communicating With Legislators**

**GETTING YOUR POINT ACROSS IS  
AS EASY AS**

**1 – 2 – 3**



**555 Towner  
Ypsilanti, MI 48197**

**Phone: (734) 544-3000**

Supported by state and federal funds through the Michigan  
Department of Community Health

## **THREE TYPES OF MESSAGES:**

### **1. The Visit –**

Face-to-face meetings are the most compelling way to make your point. They leave a lasting impression and are surprisingly easy to schedule. Call your legislator's office for an appointment.

### **2. The Phone Call –**

A phone call is nearly as effective and often more convenient than a face-to-face meeting. Ask to speak to legislators directly. If they're not in, state why you called and request a call back. You will get a call.

### **3. The Letter or E-mail –**

A personal conversation is the preferred method. If this is not possible, letters from constituents get attention and are a top priority. When writing, always include a return address. The address is crucial because legislators want to know when the writer is a constituent. Include your phone number and ask for a response. Then, watch your mail.

### **Michigan Legislative Reference Guide:**

Governor Jennifer Granholm  
P.O. Box 30013  
Lansing, MI 48909  
Phone: (517) 373-3400

### **Your State Representative:**

#### **Address to –**

Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
House of Representatives  
P.O. Box 30014  
Lansing, MI 48909  
Phone: (517) \_\_\_\_\_

### **Your Senator:**

#### **Address To –**

Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
Michigan State Senate  
P.O. Box 30036  
Lansing, MI 48909  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

# 3 Tips for communicating well

## 1. Get to the Point –

The quicker the better. A brief statement works better than a speech, stacks of material or lots of data. Also, a handwritten note works better than a lengthy letter. Use this formula:

- ❖ Say who you are and indicate where you are from.
- ❖ State your support for existing mental health services and inquire of their feeling on issues.
- ❖ For extra impact, tell how services have impacted your life.
- ❖ State directly what you would like to see changed or improved.

## 2. If Questioned, Don't Panic –

You do not have to know everything about mental health or existing services to be effective. But be sure to listen, and refer questions you can't answer to your local Board. If a legislator disagrees with you, don't argue. Be prepared, however, to politely restate your position.

## 3. Remember to Say "Thank You" –

Legislators are people too. Nothing is more gratifying than a "thank you" or "well done." Legislators rarely get congratulations; so let them know when they've done a good job (even if it's just for listening to your concerns). A "thank you" is a powerful way to earn you legislator's attention.

## **Contact Check List:**

- ❑ Choose the Method (a visit, phone call, letter or email)
- ❑ Schedule and plan the contact
- ❑ Make the contact
- ❑ Report back to the local Board with feedback if desired

## **DON'T FORGET...**

- Stay brief and to the point.
- Don't be concerned if asked a question or if the legislator disagrees with you. Listen and be courteous.
- ALWAYS thank your legislators for their time and attention.
- Follow-up with a note of appreciation.

**Adapted from the guide developed by the Michigan State University Extension Service**