

## Attending a Town Hall Meeting

One of the most effective ways to gain the attention of elected officials and their staff is to attend a town hall or community meeting. Members of Congress arrange these meetings to hear from people in their districts and states. They generally occur during district work periods, which happen around holidays and through much of August. Your [Hydrocephalus Action Network](#) team will keep you apprised of upcoming events.

### What happens during a town hall meeting?

Although the format varies from state to state and member to member, usually, the member of Congress makes some opening remarks and introduces his or her staff. There may be local leaders in attendance as well who wish to make remarks. Then, the floor is opened up to comments from the audience – that’s where you come in! Use the “developing your story” information to prepare a few sentences outlining why this is important to you. If you can, bring a copy of the [Congressional Hydrocephalus Issue Summaries](#). You can hand that to the legislator or staff person after the event.

Before you attend a town hall meeting, take a moment to learn a little about the member of Congress hosting the event. You can learn about bills they’ve introduced and the specifics of their district through the US Congress website at [www.congress.gov](http://www.congress.gov) as well as individual member sites available at [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) and [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov)

Should you decide to attend a town hall meeting (and we strongly suggest you do!) let your Hydrocephalus Action Network team know. We can help provide up-to-the-minute talking points that will help you deliver a truly effective and timely message.

### Developing Your Story

So you’ve agreed to attend a town hall meeting and be an advocate. What next? The most important thing to remember is that you have something of value to contribute. You connect the things that happen in Washington, D.C. back to citizens. When policymakers make decisions on issues like funding for research, working with veterans, or tracking the incidence of hydrocephalus, they need to know how their votes will impact the people they represent. That’s where you come in.

The best place to start is with your story. Think about your own answers to the following questions:

- What is hydrocephalus (see the fact sheet at: )
- How are you connected to this issue? (are you a patient, a care-giver, a health care provider, something else?)
- How has the incidence and treatment of hydrocephalus impacted your life or the lives of those you care about? Have they (or you) had to undergo multiple surgeries? Has it impacted your home life? Work life? Has it cost you money? The answer to all these questions is probably “yes.” Expand on those answers. For example, if your loved one has had to have multiple surgeries to replace or repair shunts, tell the policymaker that.

- Why did you become an advocate?

Use the answers to those questions to weave together a story. It may look something like this:

- Hello, my name is [] and I'm from [].
- I'd like to talk to you about hydrocephalus, a condition in which there is an abnormal accumulation of fluid – cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) – within cavities called ventricles inside the brain. This condition may occur at any age. The only current medical treatment is the insertion of shunts in the brain.
- I am a (patient, care-giver, etc.) who (has had to undergo multiple surgeries, has a child who had to undergo surgeries, has lost a job because of the condition, has faced enormous medical bills). Insert information about your own connection with the condition here.
- I became an advocate because I believe policymakers can do more to help those with hydrocephalus. We need to have a better of what causes it. We also need to find better treatments.

When developing this story, you'll want to relay your passion for finding solutions. At the same time, consider this quote from Ben Franklin:

If passion guides you, let reason hold the reins.

In other words, you want to tell a compelling story without going overboard.

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To join the Hydrocephalus Action Network, email [advocacy@hydroassoc.org](mailto:advocacy@hydroassoc.org). For additional resources about hydrocephalus and information about the services of the Hydrocephalus Association, please contact:



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