**Home & Hospice Care Month Advocacy “Talking Points” for the Media and Home Visits with Elected Representatives**

**IF YOU ARE TARGETING THE MEDIA OR A STATE OR COUNTY OFFICIAL, you may choose to arrange a visit with a Home Health, Hospice, or personal care patient and plan to discuss:**

* The unique and important role these services play in preventing or postponing premature institutionalization in a nursing home or adult care facility;
* The cost-effectiveness of these programs when compared to skilled nursing facilities or adult care homes;
* Cost savings of in-home care programs;
* The vital role home care plays in providing jobs for South Carolina;
* The senselessness of pulling dollars from the bedside in order to pay for increased administrative costs in the Medicaid program;

**Tips on Lobbying the General Assembly and Congress**

* Keep your time brief unless the legislator or member of Congress appears as though they have the time to keep talking– 15 minutes is usually a long time to discuss your views on an issue. Your respect for their time will be appreciated and remembered the next time you want access to that office.
* Present yourself and your views in a respectful, dignified manner. Dress appropriately. It is not mandatory but business casual fits the definition. Be on time.
* It’s the quality, not the length, of your discussion that will be important.
* Be direct and concise in your presentation when there is a time crunch.
* If you’re going to see a legislator or member of Congress who has a bad record on home care issues, you might be tempted to tell him or her off. Don’t do it! If he or she says things that offend you, keep a cool head and respond rationally, with facts. In some offices, all you may achieve the first time out is a civil exchange of conflicting opinions but, if you handle yourself well, you can begin to establish a working relationship with the office. They’ll recognize your name when you write or phone the next time. Building a base for continuing communication is important.
* If a legislator has a good or excellent record of support –THANK THEM! Our friends in the General Assembly and Members of Congress need to know that their support is known and appreciated.

**Effective lobbying is:**

* Educating the legislator or Member of Congress without being condescending;
* Creating trust without misleading them; and
* Taking enough time without taking too much time.

**Relax!**

There is nothing magical about a meeting with your Senators, Representatives or Members of Congress. Use your common sense – you are there to help them, to give them information. Most of them want to talk to you – really! Remember – you know more about home care issues than they do, so don’t be scared.

**Remember, you are a home care provider.**

Although you definitely need to know the basic facts about legislation (its main points), do not get hung up on the legislative details. You are most effective when you speak from your own personal experience – how you as a home care provider believe the budget or bill will affect the clients you see, the clients and families in your legislator’s district. You are not expected to be the experts on the legislative details, but you are expected to share your views as a home care expert.

**Before the Meeting**

Be Prompt and Patient. Legislators and Members of Congress have hectic schedules so be flexible if he/she is late.

Be Prepared. Bring to the meeting information and materials supporting your issues. It is helpful to share with them information and examples that demonstrate clearly the impact or benefits associated with a particular issue or piece of legislation you are discussing.

**After the Meeting**

Follow up the meeting with a thank you letter that outlines the different points covered during the meeting, and send along any additional information and materials that were requested.