

PRACTICE DEMOCRACY

A Guide to Help You Contact Your Elected Representatives

This guide was created by Area Board 4 on Developmental Disabilities (707) 648-4073

How to make government work for you!

Elected representatives make many decisions that affect your life. With their votes, legislators make laws that protect your civil rights and can decide how your rights will be protected.

Your elected representatives need to hear from the people they represent to know what services and programs are needed. They decide how much money will be available for: regional centers, mental health agencies, education, transportation, and affordable housing.

TAKE ACTION! Tell your representatives how their votes will change the quality of your life. With supports and services, people with disabilities can have inclusive, productive and independent lives.

When you contact your elected representative...

It is a good idea to meet in person with your representative if you have the time. Before the meeting you can write a letter, then at the meeting you can refer to the letter. Try to make only one point in the letter and in the meeting. It is also good to ask the representative a question. This gives them the opportunity to do some research and find out more about people with develop- mental disabilities and their challenges.

Get to the point quickly. Be personal. Say how the issue you are talking about will directly affect you. This will help your representative understand what is important to you. Keep the meeting short. Your elected representatives have many responsibilities and appreciate when others value the time they have to give to their constituents.

Always be respectful. Being positive when talking about the issue that affects you will bring better results than being rude. You want to persuade your representative to your point of view. You want to educate and get your representative on your side.

Be sure to thank your representative for talking with you.

When you write a letter...

- 1) Address your letter correctly. Elected representatives are called, "The Honorable" followed by their name and address.
- 2) Tell the representative who you are, where you live, and if you have a job, what you do.
- 3) Tell the representative if you are a registered voter...that is important.
- 4) Keep your letter to the point. Only talk about one thing that is important to you in the letter.
- 5) Use your own words to say why this issue is important. Tell how this issue affects your life.

If you are not sure who your elected representatives are....

Call the Registrar of Voters in your county:

Marin County (415) 499-6456

Solano County (707) 421-6675

Napa County (707) 253-4321

Sonoma County (707) 565-6800