

Scheduling Virtual Meetings with Members of Congress and Staff

Virtual meetings provide Members of Congress and their staff the opportunity to have a meaningful conversation with you about mentoring. It gives them an understanding of why mentoring is important and the type of positive impact it has in their communities.

Guide for Scheduling a Virtual Congressional Meeting

You have a few options to request a meeting: call the Congressional office and ask to speak to the scheduler, visit their website to fill out a meeting request form or email the scheduler the request.

1. Prior to requesting a meeting with a Congressional office, be sure to have access to a virtual meeting platform (Zoom, GoToMeeting, etc.) and feel comfortable utilizing it.
2. Most Members of Congress have a section on their website titled “Contact” with a dropdown option to “Schedule a Meeting.” Here you will enter relevant information regarding your meeting request.
3. If they do not have an online form, call the office and ask for the scheduler’s email address. In your email include your name, the name of your organization and the meeting topic so that the staff understands what you want to discuss during your meeting.
4. Congressional offices get many meeting requests so you may not receive a response right away. We recommend you follow-up on your meeting request about a week after initially reaching out.
5. If the Member of Congress isn’t available, but their staff is, take the opportunity to meet with them. Building relationships with staff is just as important as creating them with the legislator.
6. Upon confirming a meeting date, offer to “host” the meeting, though, the Congressional office may have a preferred platform that they might require you to use. Many offices may prefer using a conference call line instead of video and they will provide you with that information before the meeting.

Before the Meeting

- Visit MENTOR’s [Advocacy](#) page in order to view the current legislative agenda **and one-pagers on bills** and then download the [Legislative Agenda](#) for your meeting. This will provide you with talking points on key legislation to use during your meeting and with materials to “leave behind,” via email or the virtual meeting platform’s chat box, for the Member of Congress or their staff.
- If the virtual meeting platform the Congressional staff want to use is new to you or you are new to virtual meetings, practice with the platform. Practice with your colleagues or family to test your internet connection and/or phone signal.
- Secure a quiet, distraction-free space. Notify those who you live with in advance to ensure privacy.
- Avoid distracting backgrounds like open windows and be sure to silence your cell phone.
- If you are using Zoom, consider using a picture of your organization’s logo. For instructions on how to add a virtual background on Zoom [click here](#).
- Think about personal or organizational connections to mentoring to share during the meeting. Congressional staff like to hear personal stories about mentoring and about how the issue affects the people in their district. It helps them better understand why the issue you’re discussing should be a priority for their boss.
- Assign a leader to open and close the meeting, especially if multiple advocates plan to join.

- If you have any questions regarding specific legislation, don't hesitate to contact MENTOR's Government Relations Team.

During the Meeting:

- Introduce yourself and allow your group to introduce themselves and where they are from.
- Come prepared to tell your story and to cover your agenda. If a group of you are meeting together, determine before the meeting who will cover each topic.
- Be sure to talk about activities going on in your state and communities.
- Allow time for questions.
- Provide the legislator and/or staff with live links, via email or the virtual meeting platform's chat box, to supplementary materials that summarize your key points before you leave. Be sure to include your contact information!
- Don't forget to snap a screenshot. We encourage all advocates to post their pictures on social media using the hashtag #MentorIRL

Tip: To further your social media impact, be sure to tag your Members of Congress in your post. Many will retweet and repost messages from constituents

After the Meeting

- Send a thank you email or card to the Member of Congress and the Congressional aide(s) you met with to express your appreciation for their time. This is a great opportunity to *briefly* remind them of what you covered during your meeting.
- Log your meeting to this [form](#). MENTOR can help determine the best follow-up actions for you to take.
- Follow-up with the aide 2-3 weeks after the meeting to assess what actions are being taken by the Member of Congress in regards to the topics you covered. Continue to engage with the aide even when you don't have a specific ask for them. Fostering this relationship is important so that you don't only contact the office when you need them to act on an issue.

