



Inviting Elected Officials to Virtual Site Visits

Virtual site visits, such as inviting a Member of Congress and/or their staff to virtually tour a mentoring program, can be an effective tool in showing the positive impact that mentoring has on youth and in your community.

How to Invite a Member of Congress on a Site Visit

1. Use the [Scheduling Virtual Meetings Guide](#) to invite your Member of Congress to virtually visit your program. In this letter you should express:
 - a. Several options for dates you would like them to “visit” during this summer recess.
 - b. Specific information about your program.
 - c. The purpose for a virtual site visit. If you’re asking the Member to visit during a special event – maybe a virtual mentoring program orientation or virtual awards program – be very clear about that in your request.
2. Follow-up with the Member’s scheduler and assess whether the Member of Congress or district staff will attend. If neither can attend, try to find alternative dates that work. Do not be disappointed if they are not able to immediately schedule a date, just remember to follow-up.
3. Once the virtual visit is scheduled, consider working with the Member of Congress’ communications staff on a plan for garnering press attention for the virtual visit. The communications staff will be able to work with you to determine what level of press they would like for the virtual site visit. Some ideas for possible press include creating a press release or media advisory.

Before a Virtual Site Visit

- **Casting:** Inform your staff and any other relevant stakeholders (Board of Directors, volunteers, mentees parents, etc.) that the Member of Congress will be talking with and prepare them to answer questions if appropriate.
 - Be sure to remind all adults who may interact with the Member that it is never appropriate to make partisan remarks or challenge them on a vote or issue not relevant to their visit. Keep the virtual visit educational and respectful. You can always schedule a separate meeting to discuss specific legislative issues.
 - Be intentional as to what individuals will be doing during the virtual site visit and when people come in and out of the frame.
 - Appoint a main “virtual guide” to navigate the virtual experience so that everyone knows when they should and shouldn’t be on camera.
- **Stage:** Choose a mentor/mentee match or matches that best represents your mentoring program. Be sure to prep them and remind them to be conscious of lighting.
- **Back Stage:** If the virtual meeting platform (Zoom, GoToMeeting, etc.) you are using is new to you, practice with the platform. Practice with your colleagues or family to test your internet connection and/or phone signal. Assign people as Back-stage crew to support the virtual site visit. Create materials to send to the Member’s staff before the visit.

Technology

- Assess your technology needs. Make sure that everyone handling technology is proficient.
- Secure a strong internet connection.
- Be familiar with the video conferencing platform.

- If you plan on recording the Virtual Site Visit, make sure everyone is aware and consents to it.

During a Virtual Site Visit

- Introduce yourself and have your group introduce themselves and where they are from.
- Use your agenda to provide folks with a real-life experience of what your “site” is!
- You can broadcast live, pre-record, or a mix of both to produce the Virtual Site Visit. If using video, check and ensure that the audio work.
- Simulate eye contact by looking into the camera when talking to Members of Congress.
- Have staff member be an expert on all the technology to troubleshoot technology problems as they arise.
- Take a photo: Virtual Photo-op with the Members of Congress options:
 - If you are using Zoom, create a photo-op background (ie. your logo, landscape picture of your space) the Member of Congress and/or staff can use as a green screen to take a screenshot.
 - For instructions for the Congressional Office on how to add that virtual background [click here](#).
 - Take a screenshot of the “gallery view” that shows the Member of Congress and/or staff with your matches and staff.

We encourage you 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

Sample Agenda for Virtual Site Visit

1. CEO and select staff/volunteers greet the Member in the virtual lobby on a virtual meeting platform. *(This should be a small group of people who can say hello and introduce themselves. If young people are present, consider inviting one or two to join you to greet the Member.)*
2. “Tour the facility”. CEO will introduce the Member to a few mentors and their mentees to talk about their relationships and answer questions.
3. 15 minute small-group meeting with Member and select staff and volunteers to discuss their personal experiences and to cover the desired outcome(s) of the program. *(You should prepare what makes the most sense for your program in terms of topics before the Member’s arrival.)*
4. Thank the legislator for visiting and be sure to provide a virtual folder of materials for the Congressional aide.

Send a thank you letter to the Member of Congress and their staff for arranging the visit and keep in communication with the office.