

How to Contact Your Legislator

CASAs are in a unique position to influence legislative decision-making. Because of your status as citizen volunteers, you are able to bring a professional perspective to a legislator while still maintaining your role as a constituent with no vested interest in the outcome. We encourage CASA volunteers to contact legislators regarding issues of a general nature that are highlighted by your direct experience as a CASA volunteer.

It is important to make certain that you are writing as a constituent, not as a representative of the CASA program. And of course, it is essential that you not share any confidential information that you have learned as a result of your service as a CASA volunteer.

Experience suggests that there are three elements to a successful “pitch” – context, data, and a story. So in addition to the standard introduction and closing, you want to provide information on who you are:

(My name is ____, I am your constituent from ____ district, and I have been a CASA volunteer for ____ years.)

You let them know what you are contacting them about (i.e. “I am writing you concerning the issue of foster children on psychotropic medication.”)

You tell them what you know about the subject, focusing on what you have OBSERVED (rather than what you BELIEVE): i.e. “Foster children often appear to be put on medications without knowing what they are for and what the side effects are”...

...and then you tell them a story that illustrates your observation. “For instance, one of my CASA children, a 14-year-old girl, had a hand tremor. When I spoke to the psychiatrist about it, he said he hadn’t seen any side effects. The therapist apparently told her that her hand was shaking because she was ‘nervous’”.

Legislative information is available at <http://www.leg.state.or.us/>, or call 503-986-1000.

To find your personal legislator, follow the link below:

<http://www.leg.state.or.us/findlegsltr/>

Basic principles in writing a legislator are shared on <http://www.leg.state.or.us/citizenguide/>

This includes how to format your letter to the legislator and other helpful information.

Please let your supervisor or the program coordinator know if you have any further questions. Thanks for helping make the laws of the State of Oregon more effective for abuse and neglected children!