



Illinois Hospital Association

A Mini-Residency Program for Hospitals and Their Legislators

*Guidelines and resources from IHA to help hospital
leaders build strong relationships with state legislators*

2010

Why a Mini-Residency for Legislators?

Recognizing that all politics is local, IHA encourages every member hospital to heighten relationship building by inviting their legislators into their facilities for a mini-residency.

The goals of a mini-residency are twofold: (1) to get legislators to care about hospital issues and (2) to encourage legislators to view hospital leaders as reliable and trusted sources of information on health care issues. When an issue affecting hospitals arises in the General Assembly, we want the legislators in your district to be able to stand up and say, “Here’s what hospital leaders in my district think about that issue.”

Legislators need to know that hospitals and health care providers should be central to any discussion of health care issues. Legislators also need to recognize that in most communities, the local hospital is a major center of employment and a strong economic engine. Hospitals provide jobs to hundreds - sometimes thousands - of the legislator’s constituents. Over the course of a year, the hospital serves hundreds and even thousands of patients, each of whom likely has numerous relatives and friends in the community.

Included in this guide are several documents to help you, the hospital leader, and your staff to schedule and conduct a mini-residency for your legislators:

- A sample agenda for a mini-residency hospital visit.
- Tips to ensure a successful experience.
- A template to provide information about your hospital.
- A sample letter inviting your legislators to participate.
- A sample follow-up letter.
- A sample employee newsletter article and news release.

Information about IHA’s positions on critical health care issues legislators are likely to confront this session is available on IHA’s web site at www.ihatoday.org. Of critical importance is to continue to advocate for protecting hospitals and health care in the state budget, and supporting cost based Medicaid reimbursement in the outpatient setting for Critical Access Hospitals (SB3264 and HB5765), along with the reinstatement of the Community Hospital Inpatient Psychiatric Services Program (CHIPS) through HB5696. Finally, remain vigilant toward hostile and harmful legislation, such as nurse staffing ratios, by highlighting the positive impact that has occurred as the result of your hospital’s implementation of the Nurse Staffing by Patient Acuity Law (e.g., creation or modification of nursing committees, staffing adjustments made due to feedback of direct care staff, etc.). Use the information to initiate discussions about the benefits to the community that your facility provides and your commitment to improving patient care and safety.

Sample Mini-Residency Agenda

I. 10:00 a.m.: Welcome and Introductions (Hospital CEO) (15 minutes)

- Consider meeting in the hospital lobby or in a conference room located near the starting point for the hospital tour.

II. 10:15 a.m.: Hospital Tour (60 minutes)

- Invite your chief nurse executive, chief operating officer and medical director or other physician leader to join the tour.
- Alert department heads about areas to be visited. Ask them to lead their portion of the tour and prepare employees to greet the legislator(s).
- Highlight hospital services the legislator(s) may be unaware of or areas that may be affected by current or future legislation, such as services that may be impacted or eliminated due to Medicaid under-funding or continued delays in other payments. Discuss your hospital's implementation of Nurse Staffing by Patient Acuity. (e.g., creation or modification of nursing committees, staffing adjustments made due to feedback of direct care staff, etc.)
- Introduce legislator(s) to as many people as possible throughout the tour.
- Provide a fact sheet including the number of hospital employees and the importance of the hospital payroll to your community. Use the Hospital Fact Sheet template on page 5 for suggestions.
- Discuss future expansion plans, new services and community outreach projects. Explain how these projects/expenditures will result in better service to the community.

III. 11:15 a.m.: Group Discussion of Pertinent Issues (45 minutes)

- Hold the discussion in a conference room or other private area near the room where the luncheon will be served.
- Suggested attendees and the issues to discuss include: medical director (patient safety and staffing issues); chief nurse executive (nurse staffing, mandated ratios and workforce shortages); chief financial officer (Medicaid/state employee health payment delays your hospital's charity care, discounts for the uninsured and benefits provided to the community, financial assistance policies, and other financial issues); hospital board chair (community support and local issues); CEO or government relations officer (pending legislative issues).
- Encourage each attendee to come prepared to lead a 5 to 10 minute discussion on his or her portion of the agenda. Background information on critical issues is available from the IHA web site, www.ihatoday.org.
- To conclude, the CEO should talk about the high quality care, outreach and community benefits the hospital provides along with challenges it is facing.

Sample Agenda Continued

IV. 12:00 noon: Lunch (60 minutes)

- Consider inviting 20 to 40 individuals from your management staff, governing board and other hospital leaders. Personally introduce the legislator(s) to every attendee.
- Before the luncheon, ask the legislator(s) if he or she wishes to address the attendees.
- After lunch, the CEO should offer a brief comment thanking the legislator(s) for attending the program.
- Allow the legislator(s) to comment if he or she wishes to do so.

V. 1:00 p.m.: Adjourn

Tips for a Successful Mini-Residency

1. Modify the sample invitation letter on page 7 to suit your hospital and send your legislator(s) a letter confirming the visit and thanking him or her for participating.
2. Schedule a time when you can be present for the entire visit. If possible, arrange for your board chair to also be present for the entire visit.
3. Plan ways to showcase your hospital. What new services have you added or plan to add? Discuss the input received by your staff nurses, adjustments or changes made as a result of the Nurse Staffing by Patient Acuity Act (e.g., creation or modification of nursing committees, staffing adjustments made due to feedback of direct care staff, etc.).
4. Don't schedule a general tour of your facility; focus instead on the programs and services that uniquely identify your hospital, that are most essential to your community, or that may be affected by pending or future legislation. Include community outreach programs your hospital may be cosponsoring with schools, faith-based organizations or other community groups.
5. Prepare caregivers in each area you'll be touring to greet the legislator(s) and briefly explain what they are doing.
6. Prepare a fact sheet on your hospital to give to the legislator(s) during the visit. (See Hospital Fact Sheet template on page 6.)
7. Familiarize yourself with background information on the legislator(s) – committee assignments, legislation introduced, etc. This information is available from IHA Government Relations.
8. Reserve a room to meet with the legislator(s) for the pre-luncheon issues discussion.
9. Ask your hospital's public relations department to take pictures during the mini-residency. After the program, send a photo and a news release to your local newspapers. (See sample on page 8.)
10. Prepare a short article for your employee newsletter summarizing the legislator's visit. (See sample on page 8.)
11. Send a personal note thanking the legislator(s) for taking the time to participate. (See sample on page 7.) Enclose a copy of the newsletter article.

12. Legislator(s) should leave your hospital remembering:

- Your hospital is a trusted, reliable source the legislator(s) can turn to for information on health care issues.
- There are a lot of voters – employees and volunteers – who work in and support your hospital.
- Your employees are competent, dedicated and knowledgeable about health care issues.
- Your hospital makes significant contributions to the community over and above the medical care it provides.

Template for a Hospital Fact Sheet

Community Memorial Hospital
123 Garden Street, Anytown, Illinois
Web site: www.ourhospital.org

Chief Executive Officer: [Name, phone and email]

Government Relations/Community Relations Director: [Name, phone and email]

Summary of mission statement, service area (x, y, and z counties), and programs or specialty services that uniquely identify your hospital.

Organizational Characteristics

Teaching Hospital: Yes/No

Medicaid Disproportionate Share Hospital: Yes/No

Medicare Disproportionate Share Hospital: Yes/No

Critical Access Hospital: Yes/No

Perinatal Designation: Level ___ /None

Trauma Designation: Level ___ /None

Utilization Characteristics

Staffed Beds: xxx

Bassinets: xxx

Admissions: xxx

Inpatient Days: xxx

Births: xxx

Inpatient Surgeries: xxx

Outpatient Surgeries: xxx

Outpatient/Clinic Visits: xxx

Emergency Room Visits: xxx

Personnel

Registered Nurses: xxx

Total Employees: xxx

Physicians on Staff: xxx

Financial Indicators

Total Patient Revenue: \$xxx

% Medicare: xx%

% Medicaid: xx%

Uncompensated Care Provided: \$xxx

Community Benefit: \$xxx

Annual Payroll: \$xxx

Value of Goods and Services Purchased: \$xxx

Other Community Services

- Sponsors block nurse program to help shut-in seniors.
- Provided uncompensated care in 2005.
- Provided 2,000 blood pressure checks in area nursing homes, etc.

Sample Letter of Invitation

Dear (*Legislator*)

The leadership of (*your hospital name*) would like to serve as a valuable, knowledgeable resource on the many health care issues you'll be considering as a member of the Illinois House of Representatives/Illinois Senate.

We invite you to join us in participating in the Illinois Hospital Association's Mini-Residency Program for legislators. The program's goals are to help hospital leaders and legislators get acquainted and establish a comfortable working relationship. On behalf of our leadership team and board of directors, I invite you to visit our hospital so that you can learn more about our role in serving the residents of District (*legislative district #*) and our thoughts on important health care issues. We would also like to highlight some recent changes at (*your hospital name*) that have increased our ability to serve your constituents in (*name of community*).

I will call in the next few days to discuss when your schedule will permit you to visit our hospital and learn more about our service to the community.

We look forward to visiting with you.

Yours truly,
Hospital President/CEO

Sample Thank-you Letter for Visit

Dear (*Legislator*):

Thank you for taking the time to visit with us at (*hospital name*) yesterday. It was a pleasure to *meet you/see you again* and have the opportunity to share with you the services and programs we offer. I've heard from many employees since your visit that they appreciated seeing you here and having the chance to talk with you about issues important to them.

As you continue your service in the General Assembly, I hope that you will feel free to contact me if there is any way we can be of assistance as you contemplate the various health care proposals in the legislature.

Thank you again for visiting with us.

Yours truly,
Hospital President/CEO

Sample Employee Newsletter Article or News Release

State Senator/Representative (*name*) visited (*your hospital*) on (*date*) to talk about legislative issues important to (*your hospital*). (*Name of legislator*) represents the (*number*) Senate/Representative District in the Illinois General Assembly, which includes (*local community name*).

The legislature will be dealing with a variety of health care funding and policy issues. *Sen./Rep. Name* and other legislators will be making important decisions regarding state funding, nurse staffing, patient safety, and other issues that may affect (*your hospital*) and (*name of community*).

“I’m pleased that (*legislator name*) took the time to meet with us and learn more about our service to the community,” said (*name*), president and CEO of (*your hospital*). “We had a good discussion about health care funding as well as (*fill in the blank*).”

During *his/her* visit, (*name of legislator*) toured many different areas of the hospital, including (*give examples*). *He/she* also met with hospital leaders and board members to discuss community benefits, mandated nurse to patient ratios, the need for appropriate and timely state payments and appropriate funding, workforce shortages, patient safety, and other critical health care issues.

The visit to (*name of hospital*) was arranged by the Illinois Hospital Association as part of its Mini-Residency Program for legislators. The program’s goals are to help hospital leaders and legislators get acquainted and establish good working relationships. The mini-residency gave hospital leaders an opportunity to tell (*name of legislator*) about the hospital’s role in serving the residents of (*legislative district #*) as well as the challenges it faces.

[If adapted for a news release, please add the following paragraph]

The Illinois Hospital Association, with offices in Naperville and Springfield, is an advocate for more than 200 Illinois hospitals and health systems and the patients and communities they serve.

Mini-Residency Feedback Sheet

Name of hospital & city:

Name Senator(s) or Representative(s):

Name and title of person who led the program:

Date of Mini-Residency visit: _____

Activities:

____ Toured hospital

____ Met employees

____ Met with board chair/key management staff

____ Discussed appropriate Medicaid funding and/or state employee health payments

____ Discussed your hospital's implementation of staffing by acuity, workforce shortages and why nurse staffing ratios is bad policy

____ Discussed hospital charity care policy, community benefits, discounts for uninsured

____ Discussed patient safety issues

____ Took photographs

____ Alerted local newspaper

____ Sent follow-up thank-you letter

____ Other: _____

Any comments from legislator(s) on priority issues listed above:

Other issues raised by legislator(s):

Please photocopy this page and return by fax to IHA Government Relations at: (217) 541-1166.