

# **A Mini-Residency Program for Hospitals and Their Legislators**

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



**2008**

## Why a Mini-Residency for Legislators?

Recognizing that all politics is local, IHA encourages all member hospitals to continue the process of relationship building by inviting their legislators into their facilities for a mini-residency.

***The goals of a mini-residency are twofold: to get their legislators to care about hospital issues and to encourage the legislators to view hospital leaders as reliable sources of information on health care issues. When an issue affecting hospitals comes up 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 many communities, the local hospital is a major center of employment and one of its economic engines. Hospitals provide jobs to hundreds of the legislator’s constituents. Over the course of a year, the hospital serves dozens, hundreds, and even thousands of patients, each of whom may have many more relatives and friends in the community.

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

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

In addition, 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](http://www.ihatoday.org). Use the information to initiate discussions about the benefits to the community your facility provides, your commitment to improving patient care and safety, along with CON extension/reform, the Medicaid payment cycle, workforce shortages, and proposed mandated nurse to patient ratios, just to name a few.

## 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 rank-and-file 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/eliminated due to unworkable charity or discount proposals or further Medicaid under-funding.
- 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 facilitate 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 (hospital assessment/need for supplemental appropriation for current assessment, charity care, discounts for the uninsured, benefits provided to the community and other financial issues); hospital board chairman (community support and local issues); CEO or government relations officer (extension of CON/reform and other pending legislative issues).
- Encourage each attendee to come prepared to lead a 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](http://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.

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

- Consider inviting 20 to 40 individuals from your management staff, governing board, and other hospital leaders to the luncheon. Personally introduce the legislator(s) to each person attending.
- Before the luncheon, ask the legislator(s) if he or she wishes to address luncheon 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 chairman 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?
- 4.** Don't plan 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 rank-and-file 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 picture 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 in the mini-residency. (See sample on page 7.) Enclose a copy of the newsletter article.

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

- Your hospital is a 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](http://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

### 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 offer ourselves as a valuable resource on the many health care issues you'll be considering as a member of the Illinois House of Representatives/Illinois Senate.

Our hospital is 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. To begin that process, I would like to 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 (*name of community*).

I will be calling in a 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 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 at (*your hospital*). 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.

The legislature will be dealing with a variety of health care funding and policy issues. Legislators will be making important decisions on community benefits, certificate of need reform, Medicaid under-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*) was given a tour of the hospital. *He/she* also met with hospital leaders and governing board members to discuss community benefits, mandated nurse/patient ratios, Medicaid under 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 a good working relationship. 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: -----

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Name Senator(s) or Representative(s):

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Name and title of person who led the program:

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Date of Mini-Residency visit: \_\_\_\_\_

Activities:

\_\_\_\_ Toured hospital

\_\_\_\_ Met employees

\_\_\_\_ Met with board chair/key management staff

\_\_\_\_ Discussed need for CON extension/reform

\_\_\_\_ Discussed Hospital Assessment, Supplemental Approp. & Medicaid under-funding

\_\_\_\_ Discussed workforce shortages/nurse staffing ratios

\_\_\_\_ 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:

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Other issues raised by legislator(s):

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