



RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITH CONGRESS

In an effort to strengthen relationships started during the AHDI/CDIA (formerly MTIA) Advocacy Summit, and build new Congressional relationships, AHDI components and CDIA members may want to schedule visits with Members of Congress in local and regional locations over the summer and leading up to the 2010 Congressional elections. These meetings – often referred to as roundtable discussions or constituent coffees - are an opportunity for MTs and MTSOs to introduce elected officials to the industry and the role we play in the healthcare community.

The guide below should assist you in scheduling a local visit – in their office, your office, your home, or other location with private space – with your Members of Congress.

Instructions for Scheduling a Congressional Visit

1. Find out who your federal legislators are and locate their phone number on their official website:
 - a. Find out who your Representative is by using the zip code search at www.house.gov.
 - b. Find out who your two Senators are by using the “Find Your Senators” option at www.senate.gov.
2. Call each office and ask what their preferred methods for district schedule requests are and who the schedule request should be addressed to (what is the scheduler’s name).
3. Use their preferred method and submit the scheduling request. Make sure to include possible dates and times, topics to be discussed, approximately who (and how many) will be in attendance, and the point of contact. A draft request that can be used as a guide is below (make sure to personalize the request as the draft below is only an example and is not specific to any one Member of Congress or requesting group).
4. Approximately 2 weeks after submitting the request call the office to make sure they have received it and find out if the office needs any additional information. Continue to follow-up over the course of the summer until the meeting is scheduled or until you learn that it can not be. It often takes many weeks to schedule an event; your event has a greater likelihood of being scheduled if you 1)

offer multiple dates/times to hold the event, 2) suggest dates during a Congressional recess (August), or 3) suggest a Monday or Friday (when the Congress is in session). Congressional schedulers handle hundreds of request a day so please be patient and respectful of their time.

Sample Schedule Request

Dear Scheduler's Name,

Atlanta based, XYZ Transcription would like to invite Congressman X to our facility during the August Congressional Recess for a roundtable discussion with some of our executives and medical transcriptionists. We were hoping to discuss the current economic climate and issues affecting the transcription industry with the Congressman.

As you may know, the medical transcription and health information industries provide an essential service for medical professionals that protects the integrity of patient medical records and increases patient safety. There are nearly 300,000 medical transcriptionists serving the U.S. Healthcare System. XYZ employs 55 in the district and we work with 400 hospitals across the country.

We are available to host the Congressman at anytime during the week of August 9th and August 23rd. Attending the meeting will be 15 staff from our Atlanta office including:

Jared Taylor, CEO

Neil Margolies, President

Seth Wernick, General Manager

Jackson Reid, Customer Relations Manager

Should you wish to confirm this meeting or have any additional questions please do not hesitate to contact me at (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe

Guidelines for the Meeting

1. Identify an attendee who will give the Member of Congress a brief tour of the facility (if applicable) and moderate the roundtable discussion – someone who can keep the conversation going and knows all of the attendees by first name.
2. Make sure participants invited to the event have proper directions and arrive before the Member of Congress.
3. Briefly introduce those in attendance and their core functions. (less than 2 minutes)
4. For the most part Members of Congress are not familiar with our industry nor are they familiar with our terminology. To more effectively communicate with the

Member of Congress be sure to avoid detailed technical language when holding your discussion.

5. Roundtable discussions usually yield better results if they are “free flow discussions” – not rehearsed speeches. While it is perfectly acceptable to have notes handy try and talk without having to read text. In order to do this it is better to only target a few points to make (hopefully those you already know) instead of trying to absorb new ideas and talking points – especially if they are unfamiliar to you.
6. Make sure you give ample opportunity for questions and answers and provide for some visual presentation of the dictation-transcription process.
7. Make sure you give the Member of Congress the opportunity to not only listen but speak, ask questions, and offer insights on opportunities and challenges facing the nation.
8. Make sure you ask questions about anything you may be interested in. Personal conversations and anecdotes help to build the relationship.
9. Prior to the meeting do a quick “Google Search” on the Member of Congress and a review of their website so you can see what issues the Member takes an interest in and potential topics to avoid.

The “Ask”

As these roundtable discussions are primarily for relationship building we do not want to immediately make requests of the Member of Congress. However, good politicians will eventually ask what they can do to help you or the industry. Because you are likely to get that question we want to be sure to have an “ask” ready. We want legislators to (1) formally acknowledge the critical role of the dictation-transcription process in capturing and repurposing health information and (2) require functionality and interoperability standards that support structured narrative reports as vital elements of “meaningful use” and EHR certification. It would also be helpful to explain these “asks” in non technical terms.

Talking Points

During the discussion please talk freely about issues affecting you and your family as well as issues affecting the industry. Conversations typically go better when they appear natural and not rehearsed therefore it is best to discuss only issues you are familiar with. A few talking points are listed below for your convenience. While each underlined point below is accompanied by more detail do not feel “bound” by the notes and feel free to espouse on each point in vernacular you are comfortable with. Remember you are an expert in Medical Transcription – this industry may be brand new to the Member of Congress – this may require you to use non technical language to make your points

- MTs serve as an “essential set of eyes.” Regardless of the technology used to capture healthcare encounters, an “essential set of eyes” is still needed to ensure the quality, accuracy, and consistency of patient records, especially as the amount of information exchanged across healthcare enterprises grows exponentially, potentially worsening errors at multiple hand-off points and putting patients at greater risk. The risk-management support role of the healthcare documentation specialist can relieve the clerical burden of providers and facilitate improved documentation *without* removing physicians from frontline care.
- EHR adoption must be practical for physicians and patients. The dictation-transcription process remains the preferred method of physicians for documenting healthcare encounters because it is easy to use and is time-efficient, allowing physicians to focus on treating their patients. By making the dictation-transcription process a key component of “meaningful use,” physicians will be more likely to embrace the push for greater EHR adoption and to find the experience of using an EHR to be a positive one for them, their healthcare teams, and patients.
- EHRs must allow for capture of the patient’s full health story. Structured narrative reports will help improve the flow of information between narrative reports and EHRs, thereby enabling physicians to use the detailed and information-rich data in narrative reports for clinical decision-making. In addition, narrative reports will be more meaningful than a printout of disconnected data elements to patients seeking information about their health care. (See Health Story Project handout.)
- The medical transcription sector offers an established infrastructure for greater exchange of health information. Healthcare documentation service companies are experts in high-volume health data management and data security protocols. They are poised to deliver innovative, shovel-ready solutions to meet the need for greater exchange of health information in a safe and secure manner. (See Medical Data Exchange handout.)
- MTSOs and MTs are committed to safeguarding patient health information. The medical transcription sector has long been committed to safeguarding the privacy and security of patient health information and is already working with healthcare enterprises and providers to meet the new HIPAA obligations of the HITECH Act with the AHDI-CDIA *Manual of Ethical Best Practices for the Healthcare Documentation Sector* being the primary example.