

NASW—**PACE**

CHAPTER **LEGISLATIVE** **OPERATIONS** MANUAL



National Association of Social Workers
Political Action for Candidate Election

CHAPTER LEGISLATIVE OPERATIONS MANUAL

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Contact Information

National Association of Social Workers
 750 First Street, NE, Suite 700
 Washington, DC 20002
 800/638-8799
www.socialworkers.org

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INTRODUCTION

Federal policies and legislation directly affect social work practice and programs for the people we serve. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) publishes its policy positions in *Social Work Speaks: National Association of Social Workers Policy Statements* (6th ed.). Using these policies as a guide, NASW advocates in the legislative and political arenas to bring about positive change.

Legislative action requires continuing nurturing and coordination, as well as periodic reassessment. Chapters have traditionally focused on state legislative issues. We hope this manual will be of use to all NASW chapters in providing ideas for initiating or strengthening their own legislative programs, and that it strengthens our joint working relations on national legislation. We have provided suggestions toward the back of the manual to help chapters devote 10 percent of their time to building relationships with federal legislators on key social work issues.

This manual will give chapter staff and legislative committees information and sample materials to assist you in building power for social workers.

NASW Involvement in Politics and Policymaking

NASW advocates for the profession and for social justice in several ways.

Government Relations: *Lobbying* current officeholders by advocating for and against specific legislation and regulations. Also called “legislative advocacy.”

Field Mobilization: *Grassroots activity* from NASW members calling, visiting, e-mailing, and mailing letters to legislators and their staff.

Elections: *Funding candidates* who advocate for NASW policy positions and *mobilizing* NASW members to vote for them. Also called “electoral advocacy,” this work is performed through Political Action for Candidate Election (PACE), the political action committee of NASW.

Why Social Workers Should be Active in Policymaking

Social workers are natural advocates, contributing an important perspective to the social policy debate. They should advocate in the legislative and political arenas for issues about which they are passionate. Working together as NASW members strengthens the power of social work on legislative and political issues that affect social work practice and the people we serve.

Involvement in policymaking helps social workers:

- Shape the policies that affect clients
- Provide a valuable perspective to politics, because social workers understand how policies affect people
- Work together on a common agenda
- Adhere to the NASW Code of Ethics. Section 6.04 says, “Social workers should engage in social and political action.... Social workers should be aware of the impact of the political arena on practice and should advocate for changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions in order to meet basic human needs and promote social justice.”

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE CHARGE

Legislative committees, also called social action or social policy committees, should have a clearly defined role in the chapter, with clear lines of accountability. Use the sample charge below to develop guidelines for the operations of your legislative committee.

Sample Charge

Authorization and Accountability

The Legislative Committee is authorized and accountable to the chapter Board of Directors. The committee is to present an annual report of their activities to the Board.

Members and Terms

Size and composition of the committee may vary according to characteristics of the chapter. The chair of the committee and all committee members must be members of NASW, and shall be appointed by the chapter president.

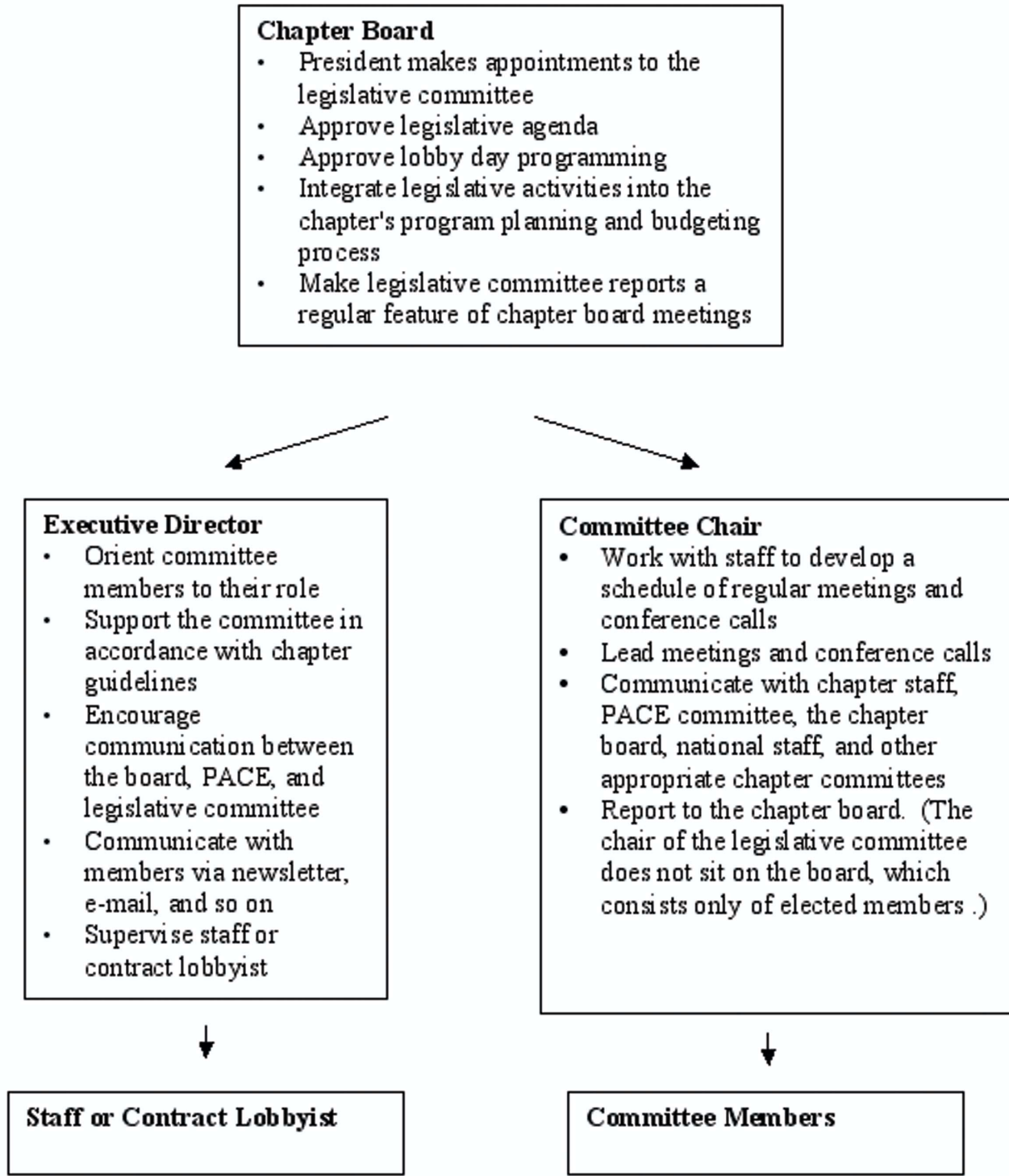
Time Frames

The committee shall be an ongoing board-established unit.

Purpose and Responsibilities

1. To promote NASW legislative policies consistent with the goals of the social work profession and those served by the profession
2. To recommend a legislative agenda to the NASW Board of Directors
3. To recommend programming for lobby days or other such legislative education activities
4. To promote education and action among members of the social work profession

LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES



STAFFING CHAPTER GOVERNMENT RELATIONS ACTIVITIES

Effective government relations staff can help your chapter reach its goals within the resources available. The executive director hires and supervises all staff, whether permanent or contract.

Contract Lobbyist

Many chapters contract with a government relations specialist for the legislative session. This contract should be executed before the legislative session starts and should be reviewed and approved by the national office. See the Sample Contract for Government Relations Services in the Appendix.

Contract staff may assist in developing the legislative agenda, but the chapter is responsible for determining the agenda, and should do this with emphasis on the criteria described in the section titled Developing a Legislative Agenda.

Before hiring contract staff, ask for references from other organizations, from clients who have used his/her services, and from legislative staff who have worked with the lobbyist on a legislative issue. Make sure the lobbyist's other clients have policy positions compatible with those of NASW.

Government Relations Chapter Staff

Some chapters hire a government relations specialist as permanent staff. The executive director may also register as a lobbyist. Chapters with a government relations specialist on staff may also want to budget for a contract position as a back up, in case something unexpected comes up during the legislative session.

Interns

NASW can play an important role in social work education programs by encouraging students to be knowledgeable and active on policy issues. Students looking for a field placement can learn more about macro social work while increasing your chapter's political effectiveness. An intern can:

- Track legislation
- Monitor votes to develop a voting record for legislators
- Communicate to members by writing newsletter articles and e-mail alerts on key bills
- Write fact sheets on legislative issues
- Help prepare for lobby day

What to Look For

When enlisting the aid of a lobbyist, look for an individual who displays knowledge and characteristics that comprise good lobbying skills. Look for:

- An understanding of the legislative process and the procedures used
- A familiarity with legislators' backgrounds and interests
- Experience
- Character and integrity
- A familiarity with NASW's policies and resources
- Good people skills and a team player
- A lobbying style compatible with the organization's needs
- Computer literacy and e-mail ability

DEVELOPING A LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

For an organization like NASW, whose membership encompasses broad interests, hundreds of bills each session will be of potential interest. A chapter's resources will determine how realistically representative its legislative agenda can be for a membership with diverse interests.

Benefits of a Legislative Agenda

A legislative agenda will prioritize your objectives by assessing them in context with your resources, and will:

- Act as a control against overextending your legislative capabilities through numerous unplanned activities
- Be a concise document to communicate your legislative interests and objectives to the legislature and public
- Help you assess your legislative objectives and successes after the session

Criteria for a Legislative Agenda

The agenda must be:

- Consistent with NASW policy
- Representative of the membership, by including issues that reflect professional and societal needs
- Realistic, so that it can be managed within available resources
- Reflective of issues in which NASW will have a distinct role, the legislative outcome will directly affect NASW's membership, and which involve members' specific expertise
- Balanced, to reflect varying levels of priority and legislative intervention

Process for Developing a Legislative Agenda

1. Gather information:

- NASW's Delegate Assembly program priorities
- NASW's federal legislative agenda
- Input from selected legislative staff to assess the legislature's priorities in the upcoming session
- Legislation that your chapter is promoting
- Bills that will be debated in the legislature
- Election results
- Board input
- NASW member input
- Internal staff recommendations
- Coalition plans
- Chapter resources such as money and staff time

2. Brainstorm:

- List every issue that came up when you gathered information. For example, write on a flip chart with butcher paper for the group to see.

3. Prioritize:

- Put each issue into one of the following three levels. (For example, by asking each member of the legislative committee to use colored dots on butcher paper, or by categorizing on a computer.)

Level 1 Priority Issues—NASW will take the lead in coalition efforts and can have a unique impact. Choose no more than three issues.

Level 2 Coalition Issues—NASW will work in coalition on issues important to the profession, while another organization identified with this issue leads the coalition. Choose no more than five issues.

Level 3 Back Burner Issues—NASW will recognize that these issues are important, but that the chapter is unable to devote the resources to work on them during this legislative session.

4. Get approval:

- Ask the board for final approval of the agenda before moving forward. Get approval before the legislative session begins. Urge the board to recognize that the chapter does not have the resources to work on everyone's "pet issue," and that the chapter must focus on being effective if it wants to be a strong voice for social workers.

Taking Positions on Bills

Chapters must follow the NASW policy positions outlined in *Social Work Speaks: National Association of Social Workers Policy Statements* (6th ed.). These policy statements are developed by NASW members and voted on at Delegate Assembly.

When a chapter wants to work on an issue not mentioned in *Social Work Speaks*, use several guidelines, including the *Code of Ethics* and *NASW Bylaws* that describe NASW's purposes:

- To promote the quality and effectiveness of practice
- To use research, knowledge, and skills to improve conditions in our democratic society
- To promote and maintain high standards of practice and preparation for practice, to alleviate and prevent deprivation, distress, and so on
- To promote and unify the profession

Individual members and staff have the right to their opinions, but may not publicly oppose the positions stated in *Social Work Speaks* when working in the name of NASW or identifying themselves as an NASW member on behalf of the organization.

Note: Only the national office is approved to lend NASW's name to "sign-on" letters regarding federal legislation. This holds true even if a coalition partner or elected official asks you to add your chapter's name.

COMMUNICATING TO NASW MEMBERS

Keeping members informed encourages them to be active participants in policymaking. NASW is more effective when members contact their legislators to make the social work voice heard.

- Prevent issue burnout by e-mailing alerts to members only about the issues you made a priority in your legislative agenda, and by being careful about how often you e-mail members. Once a week is standard, or more often when quick action is needed.
- Provide legislative updates in newsletter articles and by e-mail, so members know the results of the issue at hand.
- Share information about important legislation at chapter conferences and workshops.
- Remind members to contact only their own legislators. Mass e-mailings are a waste of time because legislators only pay attention to communication from their own constituents.

What to Include in an Action Alert

Compose your alert with the following items:

- Clearly identified subject line such as “NASW Alert”
- Bill number, name, and cosponsors
- An action request at the beginning of the message for those who do not want to read the whole message
- Talking points and background information
- When the issue will be voted on, and when action is needed
- Who to contact (House or Senate), and the appropriate phone numbers or e-mail addresses
- A request for a copy of the letter/e-mail that members send to their representatives if your chapter wants to tally and track responses

WORKING IN COALITION

Coalition lobbying is one of the best ways to maximize the use of available resources and broaden the impact of lobbying activities. All organizations within the coalition will have their own constituencies and resources available for use in a joint lobbying effort, and will also have their own issues to focus on outside the coalition.

NASW encourages chapters to work with allied organizations as it does at the national level. These can be formal coalitions that meet regularly and have elected leadership and dues, or they can be temporary coalitions that focus on one issue and disband after the legislative session.

Tips for Working in Coalition

- Determine your available staff resources and how active you intend to be with this group before getting involved in a coalition. Always give as much as you get—share information and contribute to the coalition if you plan to participate.
- Make sure the coalition has a clear purpose and statement of principles. Be specific as to the coalition's purpose and what you are asking the coalition to support. Ensure that everyone is aware of the areas in which coalition members agree to disagree.
- Clarify who will take the initiative for coordinating meetings and drafting materials. Share responsibilities within the coalition as much as possible through the use of steering committees and task forces.
- Establish how credit will be shared in coalition documents, at press conferences, and so on.

LOBBY DAY CHECKLIST

Most chapters have a version of lobby day, which can take many forms, such as a Student Lobby Day, Day at the Capitol, or Legislative Conference. Lobby days are good ways to reach many legislators in a short time to advocate for an issue, educate legislators about the social work profession, provide visibility for NASW, and highlight the power of social work.

Before Lobby Day

1. Determine the format and agenda of your lobby day. Take into account:
 - Students
 - Coalition partners
 - PACE participation
 - Food, such as a breakfast or reception for legislators
 - Transportation
 - Lobby training session and issue briefing
 - Speakers, such as legislators or legislative staff
 - Media involvement
2. Determine the meeting location for your lobby day. Take into consideration:
 - The size of the room
 - Technical needs such as microphones
 - Proximity to the offices of the legislators
 - Accessibility for people using wheelchairs
3. Determine on what issue you will lobby. Choose ONE issue. More than that will cloud the agenda and the message. You must know this before you contact a legislator's office for an appointment.
4. Determine whom to lobby: the House, Senate or specific legislators?
5. Determine the number of volunteers you will need to do the following:
 - Sign in participants
 - Hand out lobby day packets
 - Meet guest speakers and introduce them around the room
 - Help guide participants to the right offices
 - Handle the food
6. Determine how you will market the event and register attendees.
7. Order materials such as pencils, folders, note pads, nametags, and visibility items like buttons.
8. Determine how to handle appointments with legislators. Will each participant set his or her own appointment? Will the chapter make appointments? Will participants show up at offices without appointments?

Alert legislators' offices about your lobby day. If an appointment is not set with a legislator's office, it is highly unlikely that you will have an opportunity to meet with the legislator or a staff member. Make every effort to schedule appointments to meet with legislators. However, please understand that their schedules—which can change at the last minute—dictate their ability to meet with constituents. When calling to make an appointment, follow these guidelines:

- Identify your name, chapter, and position.
- Ask to speak to the scheduler and write down his/her name.
- Identify the event and date of the event.
- Identify yourself as a constituent.
- Ask to meet with the legislator for 30 minutes. Offer a time frame, such as “between 1 and 4 in the afternoon.”
- Identify the issue you will discuss.
- Identify how many people will attend.
- Provide your contact information.
- Thank the scheduler.
- Be persistent and proactive—you are calling as a voting constituent.
- Keep very careful notes of all calls. Record the following information:
 - The scheduler's name
 - When you called and the number of messages you left
 - Name of person the appointment is with
 - Time and place of the meeting

9. Prepare packets for participants including:

- An agenda of the day's activities
- A list of appointment times, room numbers, and telephone number
- Maps of your state's legislative building
- Talking points on the issue
- Lobbying tips
- Lobby report forms (one needed for each visit)
- Two copies of everything the legislator will receive (one for the participant and one to give to the legislator)
- A sample thank you letter
- Visibility items, such as buttons
- Information sheets on how a bill becomes law and a legislative glossary
- Legislative agendas from the chapter and national office

10. Compile a packet to give to legislators, including:

- A letter from the chapter's executive director or president that explains why your organization supports the issue you will discuss
- A fact sheet and information on the issue or legislation you will discuss
- A fact sheet on NASW and social work
- The chapter's legislative staff business card

On Lobby Day

- Ask volunteers to come early to help set up and receive training. Provide volunteers with identifiable nametags or shirts.
- Provide a sign-in sheet. Include a box for them to check if they are interested in participating in legislative activities after lobby day.
- Set up a table or contact location with someone always on duty to help with directions or questions. This location can also be used for participants to return their follow-up report forms.

After Lobby Day

- Send thank-you letters to participants and volunteers. Each participant should be encouraged to send a personal thank-you letter to the elected official or staff they visited.
- Send thank-you letters to the legislators.
- Write a follow-up article for the chapter newsletter.
- Review evaluations to see how next year's lobby day can be more successful.
- Review the meeting forms and pass on any follow-up that might be needed to the appropriate person.

See Sample Lobby Day Materials in the Appendix.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH FEDERAL LEGISLATORS

Members of Congress are important in the federal budgeting and appropriations processes, as well as in authorizing new programs and reauthorizing existing programs. They also provide vital constituency services in the state and in their congressional districts—services that social workers or agencies can use in serving their clients.

Many members of Congress—and their staff—have only a vague and limited notion of what a professional social worker is and what we do. They know little about professional social work education programs or levels of professional training. Most would be surprised to learn that their state or district contains several undergraduate or graduate social work education programs.

Since social workers excel at building relationships, we are asking chapters to spend at least 10 percent of their advocacy time connecting their members to the state’s U.S. Senators and Representatives through a choice of activities listed below. Constructing solid NASW member relationships with members of Congress and their state and district offices is the most effective way to promote federal legislation at the local level. Members of Congress and their staff are much more responsive to NASW national office lobbyists if they can connect the lobbyists’ advocacy efforts to constituents and programs that are familiar to them. Former Speaker O’Neill’s dictum that “all politics is local” still resonates.

Here are some suggested activities that can be used to build relationships with individual members of Congress in your state:

- Add members of Congress to your mailing list.
- Invite members of Congress to speak at chapter conferences (be aware that scheduling can be difficult).
- Invite members of Congress to visit agencies where social workers practice.
- Invite members of Congress to speak to policy classes, forums, or seminars in social work education programs.
- Help social work education programs schedule visits by policy classes to Congress members’ district or state offices to learn about constituency services.
- Cultivate relationships with Congress members’ district and state office staff.
- Visit members of Congress when they are at home in their states or districts during congressional recesses or adjournment.
- Attend town hall meetings hosted by members of Congress when they are at home in their districts.
- Make it part of your chapter’s work plan that the President and Executive Director will meet with your state’s U.S. Senators and Representatives. National NASW staff can provide materials and advice about topical issues.
- Always call or send a letter to thank your legislators for their help.

Communicating to Congress

When calling or writing letters to your members of Congress, always provide your mailing address and phone number so s/he can contact you, and so that you clearly identify yourself as a constituent.

Addressing correspondence to a Senator:

The Honorable (full name)
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator (last name):

Addressing correspondence to a Representative:

The Honorable (full name)
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms. (last name):

Your letter:

Your purpose for writing should be stated in the first paragraph of the letter. If the letter pertains to a specific piece of legislation, identify it accordingly, e.g. House bill: H.R. ____, Senate bill: S. ____ . For example: “As a member of NASW I am writing to (support or oppose) (state the issue).”

Explain your position, and use examples from either your life or the life of your clients.

Ask for the legislator’s position, and whether he or she will support your position.

Offer assistance and contact information.

Be courteous, to the point, and include key information, using examples to support your position.

Address only one issue in each letter and, if possible, keep the letter to one page.

Mail and Fax

Mail to Congress is delayed by months because it must be irradiated at a mail facility, therefore, you may want to fax your letter instead.

Telephone Calls

Get the phone numbers for members of Congress from the U.S. Capitol switchboard at 202/224-3121, the government pages of your phone book, www.house.gov, and www.senate.gov When you call, share your name and address, identify the bill by both its number and name, and convey your message. You do not have to be an expert; they want to know your opinion.

E-mail

Use the Congress Web function on NASW’s web site at: www.socialworkers.org/advocacy to send messages instantly to your members of Congress. For the subject line of your e-mail, identify your message by topic or bill number. ALWAYS include your address, and never send attachments.

Promoting Federal Legislation to Members and Students

Social work's voice is strongest when we work together. Success at the federal level is most likely when NASW members make their voices heard to members of Congress. Members of Congress take constituents' input seriously, because local constituents' voices underscore what the national government relations staff may already be communicating to them.

- E-mail federal legislative alerts and updates to your chapter members through your chapter e-mail list.
- Publish articles in your chapter newsletter about federal legislation pending in Congress, for which NASW is advocating.
- Educate students and professors about federal issues and available resources during visits to schools of social work.

Resources from the National Office

The national office sends regular alerts and updates to chapters regarding federal legislation, and offers several resources to stimulate individual member activity. They can be found at www.socialworkers.org/advocacy

- *NASW's Legislative Advocacy Network*—Individuals indicate their issues of interest and preferred level of involvement, based on those choices, receive action alerts, updates, and other communications from national government relations staff via the Advocacy Listserv.
- *Web Advocacy: Congress Web*—An e-advocacy tool that allows social workers to respond to NASW's legislative alerts by sending e-mails to their members of Congress through the NASW Web site. Social workers can compose their own letters or send letters already drafted by government relations staff.

APPENDIX

Sample Contract for Government Relations Services

This agreement is entered into between the _____ Chapter, National Association of Social Workers (hereinafter referred to as “NASW _____”) and _____ (hereinafter referred to as “Contractor”).

1. TERM

This agreement covers the period beginning _____ and ending _____, unless terminated in accordance with Section 5 prior to that time or renewed in writing for additional time.

2. SERVICES

- A. The duties performed under this agreement are set forth in Attachment A, which is made part of this agreement, but which may be changed from time to time in writing at the request of NASW _____ with the agreement of the Contractor. A failure to agree on the scope or particulars of the work shall be treated as termination of the agreement under Section 5. The Contractor is an agent only to the extent of authority as negotiated by the board and as required to perform the duties outlined in Attachment A. The Contractor has no independent authority to bind NASW _____ to any contract or promise.
- B. The Contractor shall provide periodic reports to the Executive Director of NASW _____ as scheduled or as requested by the Executive Director or the Board of Directors as established in Attachment A.
- C. The Contractor shall register as a lobbyist if required by state law and shall keep such registration current and shall provide NASW with a copy upon request.

3. COMPENSATION/REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES

- A. NASW _____ agrees to pay the Contractor a monthly retainer of _____ for each month that the _____ Legislature is in regular session and one month following regular session. During the interim the Contractor shall be paid _____ not to exceed _____ in a calendar month without prior authorization. Modest and routine expenses, not to exceed _____ a month, will be paid upon submission of receipts or other proper documentation without prior authorization.
- B. The monthly retainer shall be considered due and payable on or before the fifth of the month following the month after which it applies.

4. INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR

- A. It is expressly understood and agreed that the Contractor shall at all times work as and be deemed to be an independent contractor and shall not be considered an employee of NASW _____ for any purpose, including but not limited to all payroll-related taxes and Workers' Compensation coverage. The Contractor acknowledges responsibility for all such applications. NASW will provide an IRS-1099 Form for all earnings under this agreement at the end of the calendar year.
- B. The Contractor agrees not to serve other clients for the duration of this contract where the policies or best interest of NASW _____ are compromised or in conflict unless expressly agreed to in writing by the parties. If there are individual bills that pose a conflict, the Contractor shall notify NASW _____ and they will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. If conflict cannot be resolved, NASW _____ shall have the option of canceling this agreement under Section 5 of this agreement. The Contractor shall personally discharge the major duties of this agreement and shall not delegate them to any other person without the consent of NASW _____.
- C. All work products or work in progress created by the Contractor at the request of or for use by NASW _____ under this contract during the term of this agreement shall constitute work for hire and shall be the property of NASW _____.

D. The contractor acknowledges that in the course of the performance of services under this agreement, the Contractor may work with NASW policies, procedures, programs, or documents not generally made available to the public. The Contractor acknowledges that this information is confidential and proprietary to NASW and shall not without the express consent of NASW during the term of this agreement or subsequent to its termination, use, disclose, copy or make such information available to others.

5. TERMINATION

This contract may be terminated upon 30-days’ written notice by either party. In the event of a breach of contract, violation of law, or serious breach of any NASW policy, the contract may be terminated by providing 24-hour written notice. In the event of early termination by NASW _____ the Contractor shall be paid a fee based on the day-to-day proration of the total contract up to the time of termination. In the event of early termination by the Contractor, the Contractor will be required to complete all products deliverable during the timeframe in question. All records and equipment belonging to NASW _____ shall be returned in the event the contract is terminated, and final payment shall not be due until completion of delivery of all NASW _____ records, equipment, and other property.

6. MODIFICATION AND PREVIOUS AGREEMENTS

This contract and Attachment A contain the entire agreement between the parties, and no statements, promises, or inducements by either party or agents of either party that are not contained in this contract or Attachment A shall be binding or valid. This contract shall not be enlarged, modified, or altered, except upon written agreement signed by both parties. This agreement shall be interpreted under _____ law.

This agreement shall be effective upon signature of both parties and shall continue in effect until terminated.

The undersigned agree to the terms and conditions set forth in this document.

BY _____ Date
 Contractor

BY _____ Date
 Executive Director, _____ Chapter
 National Association of Social Workers

ATTACHMENT A: DUTIES

ATTACHMENT A

Duties

The Contractor proposes to support NASW _____ in carrying out their mission to further the practice of social work, increase access to health, mental health, and social services and advance social and economic justice issues for underrepresented populations in _____. This will be accomplished through developing strategies to educate and advocate in the legislative and electoral arenas. The Contractor will work with NASW _____ and staff to develop a comprehensive statewide approach addressing legislative and electoral strategies and initiatives.

Activities *(Choose from the following possible activities and remember to be realistic about the workload.)*

Legislative Branch

- Lobby the state legislature
- Track legislation and maintain legislative records.
- Attend and monitor legislative hearings.
- Provide weekly updates to staff on legislation and activities.
- Attend meetings of the legislative committee.
- Participate in lobby day.
- Advise staff in development of legislative grassroots strategies.
- Provide information to the chapter when it is developing legislative priorities.
- Assist in writing legislative alerts to members.
- Write and review articles for newsletters, updates or mailings.
- Assist in drafting legislation, memorials, resolutions, and amendments.
- Assist in preparation of testimony.
- Assist in preparation of fact sheets or other issue materials to give to legislators.
- Provide end-of-session report and analysis.

Executive Branch and Administrative

- Serve as liaison to the Governor's Office on Legislative and Administrative Issues.
- Monitor state budget process.
- Review comments for proposed rule-making.
- Maintain relationships with pertinent division and department heads.
- Attend various governmental task force meetings/workgroups.

Electoral Activities

- Share information with the PACE committee consistent with state and federal law.

Coalition Activities

- List coalition meetings the Contractor will attend.

SAMPLE LOBBY DAY MATERIALS

Sample Meeting Request Letter

The (chapter name) of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) will host its annual Lobby Day on (date). NASW members from your district would like to meet with you or an appropriate staff member on (date) at (time) for 30 minutes, to discuss (bill, with name, number, and sponsor).

NASW is the nation's largest organization of professional social workers, representing nearly 150,000 members throughout the United States, its territories, and the international community. The (chapter name) has (number) members. NASW members are employed in a variety of settings, including public and private human services agencies, mental health facilities, schools, colleges, hospitals, business, and private practices.

Your constituents will be contacting you to schedule an appointment. If you have any questions, please contact (name) at (number and e-mail). Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

(Your Name)
(Position)
(NASW Chapter)

Sample Letter to Give Legislators on Lobby Day

Dear Representative or Senator (name):

I am writing on behalf of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), the largest professional social worker organization, with nearly 150,000 members nationwide and (number) in the (chapter name). NASW promotes, develops, and protects the practice of social work and social workers, and also seeks to enhance the well-being of individuals, families, and communities through its work, services, and advocacy.

Along with psychiatry, psychology, and nursing, clinical social work is one of the four core mental health disciplines. Clinical social workers bring a unique perspective to mental health diagnosis and treatment and have pioneered the integration of families and community resources into the treatment of Americans with mental disorders. Numbering approximately 192,000, clinical social workers make up the largest group of mental health providers in the United States.

I urge you to support legislation that would.... (Include a paragraph about the bill and what it would do. Remember to keep it concise because the letter should not be more than one side of the page.)

Should you have any questions or require further information, please contact (name and title) at (number). Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

(Your Name)
(Position)
(NASW Chapter)

Sample Thank You Letter to Legislator

Dear Representative/Senator/Staff:

I would like to thank you for meeting with me on behalf of the (chapter name) of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) on (date). I appreciate the opportunity to share our position on (bill name and number). I hope we can count on your support.

As we discussed, (include information on the bill).

Once again, thank you for your time, and I hope that you will cosponsor and vote in favor of the bill. If I can provide you with additional information on these issues or on any other issue from the social work perspective, please contact me at (number) or our lobbyist, (name) at (number). NASW and I look forward to working with you on this issue.

Sincerely,

(Your Name)

(Position)

(NASW Chapter)

Sample NASW Fact Sheet

Background and Mission

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is the largest organization of professional social workers with nearly 150,000 members. With chapters in every state, NASW is a membership organization that works to promote the social work profession, advance social work practice, and shape public policy. About half of NASW members are clinical social workers in direct service.

Professional Social Workers

- Social workers are trained professionals who have bachelor's, master's, or doctorate degrees in social work. A social services employee, caseworker, or volunteer community worker is not a social worker unless he or she has a degree in social work.
- Professional social workers practice in a variety of settings, including human services agencies, mental health facilities, schools, hospitals, politics, and private practice.
- The Health and Human Services Administration identifies clinical social work as one of the four core mental health professions, along with psychiatry, psychology, and clinical psychiatric nursing. Of the core mental health providers, clinical social workers comprise the majority nationwide.
- Only one-third of all professional social workers are employed by federal, state, and local governments combined.
- Only one-quarter of all child welfare cases are handled by professional social workers, and only one percent of NASW members work in public assistance.
- More than 170 professional social workers hold elected office, including two U.S. Senators and four U.S. Representatives.
- Professional social workers constitute 40 percent of the licensed mental health practitioners participating in the American Red Cross Disaster Services Human Resource System.

NASW Activities

- *Advocacy*: NASW's public policy advocacy includes lobbying for legislation and working through its political action committee.
- *Standards and Ethics*: To protect the public and ensure high-quality social work services, NASW sets practice standards, enforces a code of ethics, and works to improve state regulation of social work.
- *Credentials*: NASW offers voluntary professional social work credentials, including the Academy of Certified Social Workers, Diplomate in Clinical Social Work, Qualified Clinical Social Worker, and specialty certifications in school social work, case management, and alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.
- *Professional Advancement*: NASW provides its members with services including continuing education, professional journals and other publications, and specialty practice sections to meet diverse member interests.

Sample Lobby Day Tips

During the Visit

- Introduce yourself.
- Start on a positive note by finding common ground. For example, if your legislator recently voted in support of an NASW issue, thank him or her.
- Clearly state NASW's position. This is key if your meeting is cut short.
- Use personal anecdotes. Explain your position with facts, and use personal stories when possible. Legislation affects you and your clients; make sure your legislators understand the personal ramifications or benefits resulting from their actions.
- Ask for an explanation if you don't understand something.
- Ask the legislator to clarify his or her position on the issue.
- Ask the legislator to take a specific action such as sponsoring a bill or voting for or against a pending measure.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, say so, and offer to get an answer.
- Thank the legislator as you leave.

After the Visit

- Complete and return the lobby report form; note any unanswered questions or information.
- Use the enclosed sample as a guide to write a thank-you letter to the legislators summarizing your priority points.
- Share the results of your visits with other social workers.
- Maintain ongoing communication with the legislators and their staff through letters, calls, and visits.
- Find out when legislators will be home in the district and organize a local visit.

Sample Lobby Report Form

Your name _____

Date _____

Chapter _____

Legislator's name _____

Name of person met with _____

Title of person met with _____

Was the person you met with aware of NASW? _____

Does your legislator have specific concerns about the bill (please list)? _____

What is the position of the legislator on this issue (circle one)?

- Supports NASW's position
- Leaning toward NASW's position
- Unknown/Undecided
- Leaning against NASW's position
- Against NASW's position

Follow-up needed

- Call or visit from NASW staff
- Generate phone calls/letters from NASW members
- Send additional materials (list)
- Other (list)

Please return this to NASW staff.



National Association of Social Workers
Political Action for Candidate Election

750 First Street, NE, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20002-4241

www.socialworkers.org