ENHANCING RELATIONSHIPS WITH LEGISLATORS

POINT OF CONTACT HANDBOOK

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YOU are the voice of neurodiagnostic technology in the legislature when a crucial issue is being debated.

YOU have influence over neurodiagnostic issues in your State Capitol.

Working together with your fellow neurodiagnostic technologists we can help shape public policy that impacts the profession and the well-being of patients.

When a neurodiagnostic issue is being debated in the General Assembly, Point of Contact team members are alerted by an Action Alert. This handbook is your guide on how to respond to an Action Alert and how to be an effective advocate for neurodiagnostic technology.

Want to become involved, but don’t know your legislator personally? This guide will provide you the information you need to build a long lasting relationship with your legislator. In the following pages you will learn tips on how to correspond, meet with, and telephone elected officials.

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Your Role as a Point of Contact Team Member

As a member of the Point of Contact Team your aim is to develop and maintain a personal relationship with your state legislators. This relationship will enable you to successfully express the message and viewpoint of neurodiagnostic technologists when it matters most.

Point of Contact members may be called on to carry out other tasks as well. These may include any of the following:

- Responding to Action Alerts, when action is required an Action Alert will be posted at the Neurodiagnostic Legislative & Regulatory Action Center
- Visiting your legislator in the district or at the State Capitol, developing relationships with legislators will help when we need to discuss issues that impact our profession
- Remaining current on legislative issues by visiting the Neurodiagnostic Legislative & Regulatory Action Center, regularly checking the website will keep you informed on the issues and prepared to discuss the issues with your legislators
- Developing neurodiagnostic technologists’ support for your legislator. Sharing information with your co-workers about legislators who support our issues
- Attending in-district fundraisers for legislators (occasionally attend low cost local events such as BBQ, coffee or breakfast events)
- Volunteering on your legislator’s campaign (possibly going door-to-door, making phone calls or helping with a mailing for a legislator). Legislators campaign each two to four years for re-election and can use help to get out their message

Understanding the Issues

Information on issues that affect neurodiagnostic technologists, and details on bills we have identified as impacting neurodiagnostic technologists, can be found at the Neurodiagnostic Legislative & Regulatory Action Center. The Center is located at www.aset.org under the Advocacy tab. It is important that you are knowledgeable about ASET’s positions when you discuss the issues with your legislators.
Neurodiagnostic Legislative & Regulatory Action Center

The best source of legislation and regulation impacting neurodiagnostic technologists is the Neurodiagnostic Legislative & Regulatory Action Center. You may access valuable information at http://www.capwiz.com/aset/home/. Updated legislative and regulatory data of direct interest to the neurodiagnostic profession and your right to practice are posted on the site. Easy online tools that allow you to have an active and timely role in our efforts to advocate for the profession are part of the site.

Some of the features of the Neurodiagnostic Legislative & Regulatory Action Center are:

- **Take Action on Important Issues!** We will post action alerts on the site that encourage you to send personalized messages to your state legislators to support ASET’s position on particular legislation that affects neurodiagnostic technologists right to practice. The suggested email messaging will already have been prepared. If you live in the state where there is an action alert, all you need do is enter your zip code and hit send. The message will automatically be delivered to your state representative and/or state senator.

- **View Key Legislation.** We will post information bulletins on legislation, rules and regulations so you can stay informed on what is happening in your state or at the Federal level on matters relating to neurodiagnostics.

- **Find Your Elected Officials.** Click on your state or enter your zip code to learn who are your elected officials. From there you can see each legislator’s bio page. Each bio page includes direct links to contact information, key votes and bills, and staff information.

- **Send Letters to the Editor.** The Center’s Media Guide allows you to send letters to the editors of local newspapers and magazines.

- **Capitol Hill Basics.** This primer provides you with tips on communicating with elected officials, visiting your state capitol, and meeting with legislative members and staff. It also describes step-by-step the legislative process. While the primer is written at the Congressional level, much of what is provided is similarly applicable to state houses of government.

- **Action E-List.** Join our Action E-List and receive important updates regarding the issues we are tracking and how you can speak out on matters impacting the neurodiagnostic profession. Note: If you are an ASET member, or if you have completed the Neurodiagnostic Census form, you may have already been signed in to the Action Network. To verify if you are already signed up, please visit the Action Network page, enter your email address in the box under Subscription Management and click “Go.”
What is an Action Alert?

An Action Alert is a notification about an upcoming legislative issue. ASET’s Government Advocacy Committee monitors legislative activity nationwide and is consistently on the lookout for bills that impact neurodiagnostic technologists. Once a bill is identified that will have an impact ASET staff develops a strategy for making sure our point of view is heard by the legislators. The initial step is to contact the legislator who sponsored the bill and the Committee to which the bill has been assigned. A letter signed by the President of ASET is sent to these legislators requesting them to consider our position on the legislation. To show support for ASET’s position Point of Contact team members will be activated to also contact their legislator(s) and reinforce our position. An Action Alert is sent to grassroots members asking them to request their legislator to vote for friendly legislation or against harmful legislation. An Action Alert includes important information such as the bill number, talking points on our stance, and convenient links for contacting your legislator.

EXAMPLE:

State Legislation - Pennsylvania

An Act amending the act of December 21, 1984 (P.L.1253, No.238), known as the Speech-Language and Hearing Licensure Act
Bill #: SB 137
Year: 2013

Bill Summary:

This bill was introduced in the Pennsylvania Senate in January 2013 and was referred to the Senate Consumer Protection & Professional Licensure Committee. The short title of the act is the "Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists Licensure Act." Areas of audiology practice proposed in the legislation include "administration of electrophysiologic measures of neural function, including, but not limited to, sensory and motor-evoked potentials, tests of nerve conduction velocity and electromyography, plus preoperative and postoperative evaluation of neural function, neurophysiologic intraoperative monitoring of the central nervous system, spinal cord and cranial nerve function."

View Current description of SB 137 from the Pennsylvania Legislature.
How to Respond to an Action Alert

**DO:**

Carefully review all the information provided with the Action Alert.

Take action immediately. The legislative process is time sensitive, at times legislation can move very rapidly. Schedule a meeting with your legislator to discuss the issue. If you cannot arrange a face-to-face meeting, call your legislators and discuss the issue.

Express only ASET’s position on the legislation. Conflicting messages will confuse legislators and reduce our effectiveness.

Remain current on the status of legislation. Amendments often can change our position on legislation. As the session draws to a close bills undergo many changes. Check the status on the Neurodiagnostic Legislative & Regulatory Action Center or contact ASET’s Governmental & Grassroots Advocacy Manager to check on the latest status.

Share with the legislator how the legislation will directly impact their district and constituents. Discuss how this bill will impact patient care.

Provide the ASET Governmental Advocacy & Grassroots staff with your legislator’s response. This helps us follow up with the legislators.

**DON’T:**

Tell your legislator that ASET asked you to call. They respond better to a concerned constituent.

Try to negotiate amendments to the bill, even when directly asked to do so by a legislator. Please let ASET’s Governmental Advocacy & Grassroots staff follow-up on the request.

Force the legislator into taking a position. Ask legislator to support your position, but don’t force a commitment if he or she is reluctant. When the issue is amended or voted on, your request will be remembered.

Stop trying to contact just because your legislator is not readily available. When at the State Capitol legislators are very busy. They attend committee hearings, meet with constituents and have votes on the floor. If you cannot reach them personally, leave the appropriate information, i.e., the bill number, bill’s version date and ASET’s position, with their staff.
Building a Relationship with your Legislator

Here are some tips for efficiently using your time when building relationships with legislators:

- Building a relationship with your legislator is more than informing them of our position on issues. Successful Point of Contact team members exchange points of view, ideas and their experience in neurodiagnostic technology.

- There are three ways to have a conversation with a legislator:
  1. The informal conversation held at social events where interaction is personal and subjects discussed are not legislative and/or business related in nature.
  2. The open-ended conversation where the topics discussed will be legislative and/or business related in nature. You need to try and identify the source of differences in opinion, not try to lobby the legislator on specific measure or try to win a debating contest. You can win the argument and lose the legislator’s vote.
  3. The pointed conversation where you hope to persuade the legislator of a point of view.

- It is important to know your facts and discuss them intelligently. Legislators are much more responsive to information over rhetoric.

- Often times your legislators will have a different opinion on issues than yourself. Legislators feel that they must balance the views of the various interest groups and constituents when deciding how to vote on a bill. It is up to you to explain to the legislator how the legislation will impact neurodiagnostic technologists and patient care.

- Stay true to your conviction. You can disagree without being disagreeable. Working to form coalitions with other groups that support our position will demonstrate strength to the legislator. The more groups that share the same opinion on a piece of legislation the easier it is for a legislator to support.

- It is critical that you thank the legislator when he or she supports our issue. Unfortunately, legislators are rarely thanked. They have a tough job to do and a hand-written thank you note goes a long way in developing a long-lasting relationship.
How to Correspond with your Legislator

- Address your legislator correctly.

**EXAMPLE:**
While the General Assembly is in session:  
The Honorable (Full Name)  
North Carolina General Assembly  
Legislative Building  
16 West Jones Street  
Raleigh, NC 27601

When the General Assembly is not in session:  
Look up your elected officials on the  
Neurodiagnostic Legislative & Regulatory  
Action Center at: http://www.capwiz.com/  
aset/dbq/officials/  
You can simply enter your home zip code and  
find a list of your federal and state elected  
officials.

- Write on your personal or business letterhead, if possible, and put your signature above your typed name.
- Identify yourself in your letter. For example:
  
  “I am a neurodiagnostic technologist working at Rex Hospital in Raleigh, NC”

- Be sure your exact return address is on the letter, not just the envelope. Envelopes often get separated from the letters.
- Write to your own legislators. Communicate your views to the legislators who represent you. As a voter and constituent they want to hear about your concerns.
- Be specific. It is important that you clearly identify the legislation you are writing about. Legislators consider thousands of bills each session. Instead of, “I am writing to you about the health care legislation I read about in my local paper,” write, “I am writing to you about House Bill 123.” Due to the fact that bills often are amended during the legislative process it is important to mention the version of the bill if possible.
- State your reason for writing. Make sure you use ASET’s talking points, but add your own personal experience to the letter. Explain how the issue would affect you, your family, patient care and the legislator’s constituents.
- Be reasonable. Legislators have to balance out all competing interest. Don’t ask for the impossible. Never tell them you will not vote for them if they don’t do what you ask. It will most likely result in the exact opposite result of what you want.
- Ask your legislator to state his or her position on the issue when responding. As their constituent, you have the right to know.
- Consider the timing. It is important to let your legislator know your opinion early in the process. Legislators hear from many different constituents and if you wait too late they may have already determined how they will vote on an issue.
- Thank legislators if they vote in your favor on your issue. Too often legislators only hear from constituents when bills are being considered. You will stand out if you take the time to call or write and thank them for their efforts on your behalf. If the legislator votes against you send them a note asking them to keep your opinion in mind next time the issue comes up. They will remember that you are paying attention.
How to Meet with your Legislator

• **Make an appointment.** Legislators are very busy and it is important that you make an appointment to discuss legislation with them. If you just drop by you will most likely not be able to talk with the legislator or if you do you will be making them late for a scheduled appointment.

• **Always introduce yourself.** Legislators meet hundreds of people and unless you have developed a relationship with them they probably will not remember your name. Don’t put them in the awkward position of trying to remember your name and which group you represent.

• **Get to the Point.** Legislators usually have little time for idle chatter. After you have introduced yourself get right to the point. Tell them why you are there and what you want them to know or do.

• **Be brief, be direct, and be simple.** Focus on one issue at a time. If you hit a legislator with a long list of issues you want them to deal with it is less likely anything will get done. You are more likely to have success being brief, direct and keeping it simple.

• **Be courteous.** You will be more successful being polite and courteous. Your role is to explain, inform and persuade your legislator. Elected officials should be treated with courtesy and respect, regardless of how they have voted on legislation in the past.

• **Make it easy** for legislators to support your interest by giving them good reasons to vote for or against a bill. Being arrogant and argumentative may allow you to win the battle but you will lose the war. If you turn a legislator against you often you will lose their vote.

• **Ways of establishing and maintaining a relationship with legislators:**
  - Invite them to tour your hospital or laboratory
  - Invite them to a meeting, luncheon or get-together so other neurodiagnostic technologists from the area can meet their legislator
  - Arrange for your legislator to speak at a chapter meeting
  - Attend meetings at which your legislator is appearing or speaking
  - Offer your expertise in health care issues to your legislator
  - Set up a meeting with their staff, they are almost as important as the legislator
  - Offer to volunteer on their campaign
How to Telephone your Legislator

Preparation
- Before you call your legislator know what you want to discuss. Review the purpose of your call and have a list of your main points written down and available while on the call.
- Do your research on the bill. Know the bill number, the sponsor, the focus of the bill, and the rational for your support or opposition.
- Know where the bill is in the legislative process. Know which committee the bill is in and when it is scheduled for action. If you legislator is on that committee he is in a position to help.
- Visit the Neurodiagnostic Legislative & Regulatory Action Center for the latest details on legislation.

When You Call
- Ask for the appointment secretary or personal secretary if you are calling to make an appointment.
- If your legislator is not available when you call about a bill, ask to speak to the legislative aide, and note his or her name.
- It is important for your legislator to know whom they are speaking with. If you are a constituent your legislator is more likely to take your concerns seriously. Start off the conversation by letting them know you are a constituent and that you live and work in their legislative district. Let the legislator know your name, your hospital or company name, and your position on the bill.
- As briefly as possible, state ASET’s position on the bill or issue and stress that other neurodiagnostic technologists share your opinion. It is helpful to let them know others support or oppose the legislation as well.
- Never argue or debate.
- Ask the legislator to state their position on the bill or issue.
- If the legislator’s position is favorable to ASET’s position, express appreciation.
- If the legislator is undecided, ask, “What kind of information would help you make up your mind?” “How can I assist?” or “Can we meet to discuss the issue further?”
- Thank the legislator or aide for taking the time to discuss the issue with you.

Follow Up
- Send a letter to the legislator reinforcing the substance of your call. This reminder will help remind the legislator of the issue.
- Make sure you point out any special assistance given to you by the staff and express your appreciation.
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How a Bill becomes a Law

- The Proposed Bill
- Bill is sent to the clerk of the House of the sponsoring legislator for numbering.
- Bill title, number and sponsors are printed in the House and Senate Journals.
- Bill is sent to the appropriate joint standing committee of the General Assembly, depending on the bill’s subject matter.

- Committee may:
  1. have the bill drafted in legal language;
  2. combine it with other bills and have it drafted as a committee bill;
  3. refer the bill to another committee, or
  4. take no action, so the bill fails.
  5. The committee may also write a new "raised" committee bill.

- Committee holds public hearings for the public, state agency representatives and legislators on all bills it wishes to consider
- Committee may report the bill favorably, defeat the bill or issue no report (the bill fails).

- After leaving the last committee, the bill is sent to the Legislative Commissioner’s Office to be checked for constitutionality and consistency with the law.
- The Office of Fiscal Analysis adds an estimate of the bill’s cost.
- The Office of Legislative Research adds a “plain English” explanation of the bill.
- Clerk assigns the bill a calendar number.

- Final printing of bill.
- Other house votes on the bill.
- A “yes” vote sends the bill to the other house for placement on calendar.
- Vote on bill.

- Debate and amendments in the house of origin. House may send the bill to another committee before voting.
- Bill returned to first house for concurrence if amended by second house. If not amended, bill is sent to the governor. If House and Senate cannot agree, the bill is sent to a joint conference committee.

- If one or both houses reject the changes, the bill fails.

- The bill becomes law if:
  1. the governor signs it;
  2. the governor fails to sign within a set amount of days specific to that state;
  3. the vetoed bill is repassed in each house by a 2/3 vote of the elected membership.

- Vetoed bill can be reconsidered by both houses.
- If governor vetoes, the bill is returned to the house in which it originated.
- If both houses pass the bill, it is sent to the governor. The governor can:
  1. sign the bill.
  2. veto it, or
  3. take no action.

As a Point of Contact member you have the ability to influence legislation during each stage of the process. Closely monitoring legislation of interest allows you to have the greatest impact on the legislative process. Relationships with legislators and their staff will allow you to influence public policy year after year.