

ADA Grassroots Action Team Network Resource Kit: Action Team Leaders Guide

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I. Conducting an Effective Training Session with FACE-TO-FACE

An integral part of your Action Team's job is to conduct personal meetings with your lawmaker on issues important to dentistry. This type of meeting can be your most powerful tool for conveying dentistry's message on important issues — if you are properly prepared!

FACE-TO-FACE is a visually powerful training tool designed to educate and motivate your Team members, and other dentists in your area, to meet with lawmakers, and to do so in a confident, well-organized manner. This 20-minute video provides practical guidelines for meeting with lawmakers, and does so in an entertaining way that addresses the viewers' concerns. The video may be viewed by your Team members individually or as a group. For maximum benefit, you may want to incorporate FACE-TO-FACE into one of your regularly scheduled Team meetings, and supplement it with other information pertinent to your grassroots activities.

This guide contains some tips for using FACE-TO-FACE in a 35-60 minute training session. The Facilitator for this session may be your Action Team Leader, or other appropriate Team member.

FACE-TO-FACE Training Session Goals

The goals for a FACE -TO-FACE training program are to:

- Visually and verbally illustrate the "right" way to conduct a meeting with a lawmaker;
- Help your Action Team members achieve a high level of comfort, confidence, and enthusiasm for contacting lawmakers on key legislative issues;
- Convey to your Team members the importance of their grassroots efforts to the successful future of dentistry;
- Ensure that your Team members are assets — not liabilities — to achieving dentistry's legislative objectives.

Sample Agenda for a FACE-TO-FACE Training Session

3 minutes:	Introductory Remarks by Facilitator. (See "Sample Comments for Facilitator.")
20 minutes:	Show FACE-TO-FACE Videotape.
10 minutes:	Discussion of Videotape. (See "Discussion Questions.")
15 minutes:	Optional Role Play Exercise: Meeting with Your Lawmaker. (See "Conducting a Role Play Exercise.")
10 minutes:	Optional Discussion/Critique of Role Play.
2 minutes:	Closing Remarks/Adjourn.
60 minutes:	Total Session Length.

Getting Ready

- Secure an adequate meeting space.
- Arrange to have a VHS tape player and, at minimum, a 19" video monitor available on a tall stand if possible (multiple monitors should be used for groups over 35 people).
- Select a key legislative issue for dentistry and prepare a simple, hypothetical or realistic scenario for a role play exercise. (optional)

- Prepare an agenda that allows time for a role play exercise, discussion and questions and answers.
- Consider inviting a representative of your component or constituent society to address

Sample Comments for Action Team Leaders

- Thank you for taking the time to attend this meeting. Today we will be focusing on a key component of our job as Action Team members - holding personal meetings with lawmakers. There is no better way to express our views on a key issue to a lawmaker than to do it face-to-face, and I hope that you will have numerous opportunities to do so.
- By becoming Action Team members, we have all recognized the importance of being politically active on behalf of dentists nationwide. In the 105th Congress, we will face numerous legislative challenges. Our elected officials will be making decisions on issues such as health system reform, managed care, OSHA reform, and regulatory reform. There is no question that these decisions will profoundly impact our profession and determine the quality of care that we provide our patients. We must do all that we can to participate in the legislative decision-making process and protect our future.
- There's another good reason why this is the right time to be politically active through grassroots activities. Recent elections have shown that lawmakers are more concerned and more responsive than ever to the demands of their voting constituents. After all, we are the ones who decide whether their careers in politics will continue — not the President or their political parties. That's why they are very interested in hearing what constituents like us have to say.
- You have agreed to step forward and answer the call when your input and your help are needed on dentistry's critical legislative issues. In return, the ADA is committed to providing you with the education and resources you need to be an effective grassroots advocate.
- FACE-TO-FACE, the video I'm about to show, is one of those resources. It's very entertaining, and you'll enjoy watching it. But, take good notes, particularly during the opening segment wherein our "hero," John, visits his legislator. He makes lots of mistakes; see how many you can identify. I think you may be surprised at how much of this is common sense and how easy it really is to communicate with a legislator. Team members, convey support for their grassroots efforts, and help answer questions.

Discussion Questions After Showing FACE-TO-FACE

- There are at least six glaring mistakes in John's first meeting with Representative Jenkins. How many did you catch? How many identified one mistake? Two? Did anyone identify six or more? [Ask for volunteers to name some of the errors. The following errors occurred: (1) John was late for the appointment; (2) his appearance was disheveled; (3) he made a campaign contribution on federal property and in connection with a lobbying visit; (4) he dominated the conversation; (5) he failed to do his homework on the issue and did not know that Rep. Jenkins was a cosponsor of the bill he wanted to discuss; (6) he didn't identify the legislation of concern to him, make a case for his position, or offer any constructive alternatives; (7) he used inappropriate humor and showed lack of respect for the Representative's staff.]
- In your opinion, which mistake was the worst and why? [Note: You will probably get a number of different opinions. Try to direct the group toward the real conclusion: there was not one mistake that ruined John's meeting. His lack of preparation and his coarse, insensitive attitude made for a "bad" encounter with Representative Jenkins.]
- The video recommends focusing on only one issue in a meeting with a lawmaker. Can you think of a time when there may be exceptions to this rule? [Note: It may be appropriate to discuss more than one issue with a lawmaker, if the issues are included in one piece of legislation. Sometimes multiple parts of a bill have an impact on dentists. Team members should always be aware of their time limitations, however, and make sure the discussion stays focused on the most important points in the bill. In addition, it is always appropriate to discuss another issue, to the extent that Team members are familiar and interested in it, if the lawmaker brings it up. When a lawmaker seeks your opinion on some other issue, it is a clear sign that you have made a good impression and your meeting is going well!]
- Some members of your Team may have met with their lawmakers already, on either personal or dentistry issues. Invite them to share their experiences, both good and bad, with the group.

Conducting a Role Play Exercise

Prepare a Hypothetical Legislative Situation

Enlist a representative of your constituent or component society, or contact the ADA Washington office, to help you construct a hypothetical legislative situation, based on a real issue for dentists. Keep the scenario simple — all you need are a few key elements:

- A brief description of the legislative issue
- How it will affect dentists in the district, state or country
- Dentistry's position on the legislation
- Our opponents' view of the issue
- A fictitious status for the legislation that is about to come up for a vote
- A "lawmaker" who is undecided on the issue and represents a key swing vote
- One or two "pros" and "cons" about the legislation

Note: If your Team has recently been active on a particular issue or has received an issue briefing prior to this meeting, you may not need to perform this step. Instead, you may use an issue that is fresh in their minds to conduct the role play.

Identify the Actors

The Facilitator, or a representative of your constituent or component society may play the role of the "lawmaker" who needs to be convinced. Another Team member may be recruited to play the role of the "legislative assistant."

Before You Begin the Role Play

Distribute the hypothetical scenario, (or describe the issue that you have selected) and give the group about 5 minutes to prepare for a meeting on the issue with their lawmaker.

Randomly select one or two "constituents" in the audience (or ask for volunteers) to present their case to the lawmaker in a "meeting" before the group. (Limit the role play to 10 minutes.)

During the "Meeting"

The "lawmaker" and "legislative assistant" should create distracting conversation and events that may make it difficult for the "constituents" to get down to business. For example: Talk about people you and the constituents both know in the district, invite the constituents to your next fundraiser, talk about a pet project or key interest, be reminded to go vote on the floor in "three minutes," etc.

After the "Meeting"

- Lead the entire group in a discussion to critique what happened. Consider the following:
- Did the constituents conduct their entire meeting in the allotted time?
- Did the constituents seem to have a clear understanding of the legislation and its impact on dentistry?
- Did they convey the most important points about the legislation? Which points should they have included or excluded?
- Were they well organized?
- How did they handle the interruptions or distractions?
- Did the lawmaker understand their position on the issue? Were any of his/her questions left unanswered?
- Does the lawmaker now know what the constituents want him/her to do?
- How is the lawmaker going to vote on this issue? Did the constituents "close the sale"?

Remember that the role play exercise and critique are meant to be constructive and fun. Don't expect perfection. Ideally, your Action Team members will have much more time to prepare for their "real" meetings!

This guide was developed for the American Dental Association by Michael E. Dunn & Associates, Inc., a public and government affairs consulting firm that specializes in cultivating the political effectiveness of corporations and trade and professional associations. The firm develops and implements political action committees, grassroots lobbying programs, and political education and training programs at the federal and state levels.

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II. ADA Action Teams: On the Front Line

Guide to Using ADA Action Teams: On the Front Line

Role of Action Team Leader

The ADA Grassroots Action Team network represents a potent political force on behalf of the profession of dentistry. For this reason, the ADA is making every effort to increase the Teams' knowledge and commitment to this vital effort, as well as to expand the number of dentists and their spouses who are involved.

As an Action Team Leader in your district, you play a key role in helping your profession achieve this goal. The videotape, *Action Teams: on the Front Line*, and this guide have been prepared to provide you with an effective set of resources to assist you in two key areas:

- To generate enthusiasm and maintain interest on the part of your Action Team's members to be politically involved on behalf of their profession; and
- To encourage more dentists and spouses in your district to join your Action Team.

Audience for Videotape

- The following groups are likely audiences for showing *ADA Action Teams: On the Front Line*:
- Action Team members
- Dentists who are not Action Team members
- Spouses, particularly those involved in the Alliance of the American Dental Association
- Dental students

In addition, you should seek out natural forums for using this show, such as meetings of your local or state dental societies.

About the Video

ADA Action Teams: On the Front Line is a motivational show that describes why dentists and spouses must be involved in the political process on behalf of their profession and its future. It also provides ideas on how to be politically effective in representing dentistry's views in the public policy-making process through the Action Team network. The show's length is 13:27 minutes. ADPAC will provide every Action Team Leader with a complimentary copy of the video.

Hosting an Action Team Meeting Using the Video

Initially, you are encouraged to host a meeting with your Action Team to view the videotape and lead a discussion to cover key points about the goals of the Action Team network. This would be an effective way to begin a planning session to map out your Team's activities for the year.

In addition, you may organize and conduct other meetings for non-Action Team members, including dentists and spouses. This activity could be delegated to one or several members of your Team.

Other tips include:

- Try to limit the number of attendees to your meeting to 25 people.
- Allow 3-4 weeks to prepare for and promote attendance to the event. You may use the sample invitation and reply card at the end of this guide.
- Arrange to have a 1/2" VHS tape player and a 19" video monitor available on a tall stand.
- Make sure you have adequate meeting room space.
- Request copies of the ADA Grassroots Action Team brochures and sign-up forms from the ADA Washington office to make available at your meeting for new recruits.
- Ask your local and state society and the ADA Washington office for assistance in setting up and participating in the meeting.

The agenda for the meeting should be brief and might be held in connection with a meal function or a guest speaker. The following formats are suggested:

Breakfast Meeting with Action Team

8:00 a.m.	Continental Breakfast
8:20 a.m.	Opening Comments
8:30 a.m.	Show Videotape
8:40 a.m.	Discussion
9:00 a.m.	Action Team Planning Session
10:00 a.m.	Adjournment

Recruitment Meeting with Guest Speaker

5:00 p.m.	Reception
5:30 p.m.	Opening Comments
5:40 p.m.	Show Videotape
5:50 p.m.	Discussion
6:15 p.m.	Guest Speaker (possibly U.S. Representative, legislative staff, staff of ADA, local or state society)
6:30 p.m.	Q&A
6:45 p.m.	Adjournment

For More Information

You are encouraged to contact the ADA Washington office for further information and assistance. The staff can:

- Suggest guest speakers;
- Direct you to experts on specific legislative issues;
- Provide samples of ADA grassroots communications;
- Suggest additional ways to promote attendance to your meeting; and
- Help you with any specific problems you may have in preparing for and conducting the meeting.
- Conducting an Action Team Meeting Using the Video

Action Team Leader's Role

- Present suggested comments.
- Introduce and show videotape, *ADA Action Teams: On the Front Line*.
- Ask and respond to questions; summarize key points.
- Make closing comments.

Suggested Comments

Welcome to this special meeting of the ADA Action Team for the (#) congressional district of (state). It is my hope that this meeting will show each of us as Action Team members, or potential Action Team members, how to maximize our involvement in the political process on behalf of dentistry.

...Most of you may know me, I am (introduce yourself and say a little about your practice). I am the Action Team Leader for our congressional district.

...This meeting is an effort to reach out to dentists like you and me, and our spouses, to encourage us to become effectively involved in politics and to influence legislation that is critical to our profession. And the way to do this is by making a commitment to work together in the ADA Grassroots Action Team network. All of us in this room today work in a profession that is increasingly affected by decisions of Congress. Whether the issue concerns Medicaid, OSHA reform, managed care, malpractice insurance reform or funding for dental education and research — what we have in common is the fact that we are all dentists or spouses of dentists, and together we have the ability to shape these and other public policies that affect us.

In this meeting, we're going to talk about the real world of politics and what we need to do to compete effectively. This is important, if we are to understand how we can influence our own lawmaker's views on our issues and ultimately succeed in the legislative arena.

...One political reality we must understand is that the factors which affect how a lawmaker votes on legislation constantly change. And often those factors have a lot to do with which groups are involved in the political arena and communicating their views. Thousands of groups in the United States are organized for political action — including the dentists. These disparate groups all have one thing in common: the desire to change the political environment for the issues that affect their interests, and to transform their viewpoint on these issues into public policy.

...Another reality we need to recognize is that our political system is very competitive. Groups of citizens of every persuasion compete to have their views heard in the process. In the final analysis, those who do not compete in the political process and express their views to lawmakers, never have a chance of influencing public policy.

...So another reality about our system is that we have to compete, if we want a chance to win. More importantly, we have a way to compete effectively — through the Grassroots Action Team network. With that as a brief introduction, I want to show you a videotape, *ADA Action Teams: On the Front Line*. I believe you'll find this show defines the reality we face in very real terms — and underscores what we need to do if we want our profession to be effective in the political arena.

Show Videotape

As this show points out, there is a way to win the legislative battles ahead — and it's not by hoping someone else will do it for us.

Each of us in this room is a constituent of three Members of Congress. We have a citizen responsibility to communicate with these individuals and share our views on the issues facing dentistry.

...Currently, the ADA Grassroots Action Team network is highly focused on the development of dentistry's relationships with members of the U.S. House of Representatives — where a great portion of our legislative issues are shaped.

...Those of us here today are represented by (name of U.S. representative). We all are (her/his) constituents — because we live and vote in the district or our practices are located in the district. On that basis alone, each of us has the potential to develop a relationship with (him/her) to share our views on the issues, and to influence (his/her) votes.

The simple fact is that when we work together and coordinate our grassroots efforts through the Action Team, we can increase our credibility and persuasiveness. We can change those factors that our own lawmaker thinks are important in deciding how to vote on the issues that affect us.

Discussion Questions and Key Points

1. If the issues facing our profession are so serious, why isn't the ADA and our state society doing something more about them?

They are, but they need our help! The role of our profession's lobbyists is key to having dentistry's interests represented. It's their job to know the legislative players and to provide them with the facts and data necessary to help them make good decisions. They are our eyes and ears — and sometimes our mouths — in Washington and the state capital. We need them — but they also need us.

There are two tools we can use to influence government policy — persuasion and political power. Our lobbyists are responsible for making persuasive presentations concerning our issues, but this is only half of the equation. We must also demonstrate political power from the grassroots that will encourage the acceptance of persuasion.

2. What is your reaction to the statement that we live in a highly competitive democracy? What do you think that means for dentistry?

In today's political environment, we cannot afford to let someone else translate our own interests and concerns. Thousands of groups are organized for political action, and each has its own special concern and narrowly defined interest — and some are in direct opposition to our own. If dentists and their spouses want their viewpoint and expertise reflected in public policy, it will be because they decide to be direct participants in the public policy-making process.

3. Why should you join your colleagues and become a member of the Action Team?

Through the Action Team network, we can bring thousands of individual dentists and spouses together in a nationwide grassroots effort to demonstrate to legislators that there is a large and politically active constituency in the dental profession that cares about the issues that affect them and their patients. We can have this same impact closer to home and with our own U.S. Representative, too.

It is an effective and easy way to stay informed about the progress of the various issues facing your profession and to know when communications with your legislator can make a difference.

4. What will it take to be effective players in the political process?

In today's political environment, grassroots communications are a powerful way to influence legislative decisions. For us, this means that we must educate and mobilize dentists in every congressional district in the nation who will compete to have their views heard and influence the outcome of legislation.

Our grassroots communications are most effective, however, when we work to develop good relationships with our lawmakers — which means contributing to their campaigns, volunteering to help at election time, introducing them to potential new voters, hosting receptions and fund-raisers for them, and inviting them to visit our dental offices.

As Action Team members, we are the front line in our profession's efforts to be an effective player. We must take our responsibilities as Action Team members very seriously, build strong constituent and political ties to our U.S. Representative, and communicate with (him/her) on the issues that affect dentistry.

5. What resources are available from the ADA and my local and state society to help dentists and spouses be effective Action Team members?

- Action Team Seminars for Team members to educate and update them on the current political climate, to explain in greater detail important legislative issues impacting dentistry, to emphasize the critical nature of their role in shaping legislation on those issues, and to train them on how to use the most effective political action techniques.
- Action Team Member Resource Manual for Action Team members to use as a resource in carrying out their activities.
- The *Dental Advocate*, the monthly Grassroots Action Team newsletter, which describes activities and events held by Action Teams around the country, and offers new information and insights into issues affecting dentists.
- A resource kit, "Hosting a Fundraiser in Your Home," providing Action Teams with details on how to plan, organize, and host a home fund-raiser on behalf of their chosen candidate.
- As always, the ADA Board of Trustees, the ADA Government Affairs Division, the ADPAC Board of Directors, the Council on Governmental Affairs and Federal Dental Services, and your constituent and component societies all stand ready to answer your questions and provide you with any information you need to facilitate the activities of your Action Team.

Closing Comments

I think you understand that our legislators are responsive to constituent interests and concerns. They want to hear our views on the issues, and they need our expertise to help them decide how to vote. They also need us to help them get elected or re-elected. Clearly, as Action Team members, we have a major role to play in this process. If we want to prevail in the legislative battles we face, then each of us must individually assume this role.

Before you leave today, I want to ask you to do three things:

1. First, if you haven't done so already, I am asking you to make a commitment to be part of dentistry's grassroots efforts by joining our Action Team. If you already are serving as a member on the Action Team, I ask you to renew your commitment to becoming an even more effective participant who will work to cultivate a good relationship with our representative on behalf of the entire profession.
2. Second, I would encourage you to urge other colleagues and spouses to get involved in our Action Team as well.
3. Finally, I ask you to take politics seriously — just as seriously as politicians are now taking our profession.

As Action Team members, we have assumed a leadership role within dentistry and the politics of our community. Now we need to start leading.

III. Sample Promotional Flyer

If you are a member of the ADA Grassroots Action Team Network — or a dentist or spouse who wants to be more politically effective with your lawmakers...

You are invited to attend a special meeting of your local Action Team.

Increasingly, public policy decisions are having a very real impact on dentists — how we practice our profession, and how we care for our patients.

These decisions are not made in a vacuum, but are a result of intense competition between constituents and interest groups who advance their particular viewpoints on the issues.

When these issues are concerned with dentistry, there is no more effective way to communicate our profession's views than by dentists — as constituents — at the local grassroots level.

As a dentist and a member of your local Action Team, you can be a valuable resource to your U.S. representative and a pivotal player in politics on behalf of your profession. This special meeting of your local Action Team is designed to show you how to get started.

Here's what you will learn at the Action Team meeting:

- Why grassroots political action is vital to the profession and your role as a member of the Action Team is so important.
- How to develop two way relationships with your lawmakers based on trust and respect.
- Who is already involved among your dental colleagues and spouses in the community.
- What resources are available from the ADA and your local and state societies to help you be a successful Action Team member.
- Which activities your Action Team may be involved in this year.

This Action Team session will provide an interesting and stimulating discussion about the role of dentists in grassroots politics. A special videotape program, *ADA Action Teams: On the Front Line*, also will be shown to provide fresh insights and spark discussion.

The politics of dentistry is too important to be left in the hands of politicians.

Don't delay your decision — complete and send the reply form today!

IV. Sample Reply Form

YES! Sign me up to attend the special ADA Action Team meeting on [date] at [location] from [time].

Please print

Name _____

Address _____

City, State and Zip _____

Telephone _____

Date ____/____/____

Return to: [Use appropriate address, fax number and telephone number to receive replies.]

[NOTE: Please edit and retype reply form and enclose with the sample promotion flyer.]