



## How To Set Up an Initial Meeting with a Decisionmaker

Being an effective advocate means developing strong relationships with decisionmakers and their staff. Decisionmakers exist at all levels of government and they may be elected or appointed to their role. While legislators are often very busy when they are in session, they do want to hear from the people who live in the area they represent. Use the time when the legislature is not in session to introduce them to SVdP and the work we do to help their constituents. This could be the start of a beautiful relationship!

### To Schedule the Meeting:

- Request a meeting by calling your representative's district office, send an email, or fill out a request for meeting form on their website.
- Ask to be put in touch with the scheduler. Introduce yourself as a constituent and tell them that you want to talk about how SVdP is helping people in poverty in your community.
- Be prepared to offer several possible dates for the meeting, suggest where the meeting will take place, and provide the number of people who will attend with you.
- Once the meeting is scheduled, email a few days in advance to confirm the date, time, and place.

### Do Your Homework:

- Research your decisionmaker online and be familiar with their positions, legislative priorities, and voting record. Personalize your talking points to appeal to your representative's key issues and concerns.
- Prepare a folder of information to leave behind including an agenda, the names and contact information of everyone attending the meeting, local facts and data about poverty in their district, local facts about the impact your SVdP Conference has had in the community, and a client story or two that is representative of the types of cases you see most often. A sample PowerPoint Presentation can be found [here](#) with instructions about how to customize it for your conference.

### During the Meeting:

- Arrive early
- Introduce yourself and ask group members to introduce themselves. Look for ways to connect with your legislator: did you go to the same high school, live in the same neighborhood, etc.
- Tell her/him why you wanted to meet with them today

- Review local poverty statistics for their district and share some client stories to illustrate your point.
- Tell her/him you are willing to be a resource on poverty and the issues impacting the poor and ask if there is any further information they would like to receive.
- Present your leave-behind folder.
- Ask if you can take a picture to share on social media!

**After the meeting:**

- If you took a picture of you with your representative post it on social media and thank her/him in your post.
- Send a follow up thank you email or note.