

Right now, when the Legislature is not in Session, there are **10 Things You Need To Be DOING to Build a Relationship with your Legislator**

1. **GET TO KNOW YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS.** Plan several visits to meet with your legislators. Have a small group of hygienists invite them for coffee or bring lunch to their office. Invite them to your dental hygiene meetings or community events and introduce them to constituent members. Take photos when they visit your events. Put photos on social media and send photos to the legislators.
2. **HELP CANDIDATES GET ELECTED.** Continuously VOLUNTEER your time! Make contributions to their campaign, help with fundraising, ring doorbells (block walk) in their district, write personal correspondence on their behalf, display yard signs, etc. Building a relationship is a time commitment and must be an ongoing thing! Survey your component members to match them to their legislators.
3. **MAKE AN APPOINTMENT.** Call your legislator's district or capitol office and set up a specific time to meet with them. The purpose of this visit should be to introduce yourself, explain you are a member of TDHA and express your concerns about access to care laws in Texas which prevent hygienists from practicing to the full extent of their education.
4. **BE PROMPT, PUNCTUAL and PATIENT.** It is not uncommon for a legislator to be late or need to cancel a meeting. Take the opportunity to get to know his/her staff. Become familiar with committees on which your legislator sits, especially if it is one of the health committees. Make the connection between access to dental care and the committee's activities. Get contact information for everyone you speak with.
5. **BRING SUPPORTIVE TDHA RESOURCE MATERIALS WITH YOU TO LEAVE BEHIND.** Your legislator may not be familiar with dental hygienists and our issues (local anesthesia, expanded settings in which we could practice, more relaxed supervision laws with less government regulation). GAC can provide you with handouts to leave behind.
6. **BE POLITICALLY CORRECT AND OUTLINE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:**
 - **ALL POLITICS ARE LOCAL.** Be sure the legislator knows you are a constituent (live in their district) and that you have voted. They can look up your voting history from past elections.
 - Discuss what has happened in other states around these issues. (44 states allow local anesthesia; many states have hygienists in expanded settings; many states allow collaborative practice relationships with supervising dentists). Offer to send documentation if legislator is interested.
 - Discuss with your legislator specific TX statistics to let them know how our state ranks at the bottom. GAC can get this information for you.
 - Discuss any opposition to an issue, for example, TDA.
 - Do not give misinformation to a legislator. Your credibility and integrity are your strongest assets. Be responsive to questions and if you do not know the answer say, "I don't know but I will find out and get back to you".
7. **UTILIZE ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS.** "FRIEND" your legislator through social media sites, texts or email and maintain ongoing communications.
8. **MAKE A PERSONAL CONNECTION.** Tell personal stories that illustrate problems with access to care, for example, lack of dental hygienists in nursing homes and long term care facilities.
9. **PHOTO OPPORTUNITY!** Take a photo and report the event in your dental hygiene newsletter, website, or during a meeting.
10. **ALWAYS SEND A BRIEF THANK YOU NOTE.** Leave your contact information and offer to be their ***DENTAL HYGIENE RESOURCE*** for any follow-up questions.

Remember, your GAC team is here to help you BEFORE and AFTER your visits.

TDHA is an organization of licensed dental hygienists whose main purpose is to serve the citizens of Texas with quality dental health services. The focus is primarily on prevention of oral disease and the maintenance of good oral health.
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