



IGNATIAN ADVOCACY 101

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY TRAINING GUIDE



Jesuit Conference
Office of Justice and Ecology

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On the Cover:

Students from 8 Jesuit universities gathered in Washington, D.C. for a Congressional hearing on undocumented students in higher education. In conjunction with this effort, students advocated for more humane immigration policies with their congresspersons.

Photo Credit: Fairfield University

DEAR ADVOCATE:

ADVOCACY OFFERS US AN OPPORTUNITY TO BRING THE REALITIES OF OUR SISTERS AND BROTHERS FACING INJUSTICE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD TO THOSE WHO HOLD POSITIONS OF POWER IN OUR GOVERNMENT.

Jesuits identified the important role that advocacy can play during their 35th General Congregation:

“The complexity of the problems we face and the richness of the opportunities offered demand that we engage in building bridges between rich and poor and establishing advocacy links of mutual support between those who hold political power and those who find it difficult to voice their interests.”

Establishing and nurturing relationships with your elected officials plays a crucial role in the Ignatian Solidarity Network and our partners’ efforts to respond to unjust structures that exist within society today. When members of Congress know their constituents care about various issues, they are more likely to vote accordingly.

One way to build a relationship is to schedule a visit to your Congressperson at their office, either in-district or in Washington, D.C. Every senator and representative has an office—often multiple offices—in their home states. Visits to in-district offices are an impactful way to speak, neighbor to neighbor, with representatives and their staffs and let them know why and how the laws and policies pertaining to what you are advocating for impact your community. Visits to D.C. offices are an opportunity to not only build a relationship with your Congressperson but also witness where the decisions are actually made.

Additional ways to build relationships with your Congressperson are to write a letter or make a phone call to advocate for an issue you are passionate about. While not as impactful as personal visits, these outreaches do have an impact and should never be forgotten as you build bridges with your legislator.

We are grateful for your desire to be part of this larger network of individuals in “building bridges” between the marginalized and those who hold political power.

Please let us know how we can support you!

Sincerely,



Christopher G. Kerr
Executive Director

Increase your impact!

Visit igsol.net/advocacy to submit report-back forms for all of your advocacy efforts and find additional resources including talking points and editable sample forms.

Advocacy questions may be directed to:
info@ignatiansolidarity.net
(216) 397-4777

**The mission of the
Society of Jesus
today is the service
of faith, of which
the promotion of
justice is an
absolute
requirement.**

GENERAL CONGREGATION 32, DECREE 4

WHAT MAKES ADVOCACY IGNATIAN?

1. Service of Faith and Promotion of Justice

The mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement.

General Congregation 32, Decree 4

For the Ignatian Family, practicing our faith and working to build a more just society are inseparable, and so our faith compels us to advocate on behalf of those whose voices are forgotten or ignored. The vision of social justice we seek to share with policy makers is ultimately drawn from Jesus' call "to bring glad tidings to the poor...to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord." (drawn from Luke 4:18-19)

2. Recognition of Desire

The retreatant should ask God our Lord for what she or he desires.

St. Ignatius Loyola, Spiritual Exercises No. 25

One of Ignatius' key insights into the spiritual life was his recognition that God places within each of us deep, holy desires. Sharing our desires with God at the beginning of a prayer both makes us aware of them and provides direction to the prayer. Advocacy visits provide the opportunity to deeply and seriously ask ourselves about our desires for our world. In connecting these desires with real, pressing needs facing society, we can share our vision of what the world should and can look like with our elected leaders.

3. Reflection

One of the most central prayers in Ignatian Spirituality is the Examen, in which one takes time to review one's day and look for how and when God has been present. By recognizing how one has responded to God's activity during one's day, one is better prepared to stay attuned and responsive in the future.

Taking the time to honestly debrief and evaluate an advocacy visit can serve a similar purpose. Noticing what comments most resonated with the official you were meeting with, considering how your group worked together, and sharing the lessons you learned during the meeting enable you to recognize what went well, what did not, and how you can best respond with future advocacy.

4. More by Deeds Than by Words

Love ought to manifest itself more by deeds than by words.

St. Ignatius Loyola, Spiritual Exercises No. 230

While taking the time to observe and discuss issues in the world around us is an important starting point, the call for "deeds not words" demands that we strive for more. In moving from "words" to "deeds," we take the time to engage our public leaders in the issues facing our world. This also calls us to move from words to deeds after our advocacy meetings. After we call on our leaders to take action on the issues we raise, we return to our own communities to do the same.



Pictured: A group of Rockhurst University students advocated for immigration reform at Senator McCaskill's district office during Ignatian Family Advocacy Month.

VISITING CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES

Office visits are the most effective tool in your advocacy toolkit.

In a study by the Congressional Management Foundation, Congressional staffers reported that in-person visits from constituents have significant impact on an undecided Member. 97% said that visits to a Member's D.C. office had some or a lot of influence. 94% said the same about visits to a Member's district/state office.

This makes an in-person visit to a Member's office the most effective advocacy option available. Your Members of Congress want to hear from you, and your visits make a difference.

Pope Francis says, "Today, in view of the common good, there is urgent need for politics and economics to enter into a frank dialogue in the service of life."

(Laudato si' 189)

Office visits offer you the chance to engage in real, meaningful dialogue with those in positions of power in our country. Members and their staff get to hear about the issues that matter to you, and you get to hear about what is happening with these issues at the highest levels of our nation's government.

Purpose of Office Visits

- To put faith into action by demanding that senators and representatives understand that we, constituents and people of faith, want to see compassionate and socially just policies enacted.
- To persuade your senators and representatives to vote for policies that matter to you.
- To build relationships between people of faith and the public officials who make decisions that impact our communities.

PREPARING FOR YOUR **OFFICE VISIT**

Smart preparation is the key to a successful office visit.

Organize a Group

Be strategic in finding participants who best represent your community's "ask." Is anyone able to share personal stories that connect to the ask? Additionally, don't forget to engage community leaders who the senator or representative may already know and respect. Aim for 5-10 participants for a visit. If you are considering bringing a larger group, check with the member's scheduler to see how many people the office can accommodate, and be sure your meeting is well planned so that you are focused on your message and everyone knows their specific role.

Find Out Who Represents You in Congress and Know Their Stances

To find your senators and representatives, go to www.govtrack.us. This website allows you to find out where your member of Congress stands on the issues that are important to you as well as contact information that you will need in order to schedule a meeting.

Schedule a Meeting

If scheduling an in-district meeting, call the local office of your senators and representatives to request a meeting with the member to discuss the issues for which you wish to advocate. If you wish to schedule a meeting in Washington, D.C., call your congressperson's D.C. office to request the meeting. (In some instances the office will require a written request; find an example request letter on page 16.) Make sure to tell them how many people will attend. If the member is unavailable, ask to meet with a staffer who works on the issue for which you are advocating. Be persistent and don't be discouraged if you need to follow up in order to get a meeting scheduled.

Practice as a Group

Before you visit your members meet with the other participants of your group to assign roles. Practice role-playing before the day of your meeting so that everyone feels comfortable with their role and knows what to do. Review your talking points and prepare your materials. It can be tempting to try to cover every aspect of the issue important to your community, but keep the message clear, concise, and consistent. You can always send more information when you follow up with the office after the visit. On page 8 you will find an outline for the group advocacy training which includes assignment roles.

Prepare Leave Behind Materials

Gather educational information, policy recommendations, sign-on letters, charts, studies, faith resolutions, etc., all within a packet of resources to leave behind with the member's office. An example leave behind can be found on page 19 of this packet.



DURING YOUR OFFICE VISIT

The following is a suggested agenda. Please adapt the agenda to fit your group and issue.

1. Introductions: The Facilitator should start the meeting by thanking the member for his/her time, introducing the group as a whole, and then having each person introduce himself.

2. Story: Share a story demonstrating the reality of the issue. It can be a personal story or an interaction someone had relating to the issue.

3. Specific Issue Points: Provide the member with the materials you prepared and explain specific issues and statistics.

4. Make your ask: “We believe that in order to be **[Good neighbors... true to American values...etc.]** we must support **[Issue]**. Can we count on your support for **[Issue]**? How can we best support you in our mutual goal?”

5. Thank the staffer/congressperson: “Thank you for your time and support. We will be hosting **[Event/vigil]**. Can we count on your attendance? In the meantime, please let us know how we can be a support to you as well.”

Condensed Example:

*“People of faith throughout **[Town/city/state]** are committed to acting out our faith by supporting **[Issue]**. We do this by **[Include a story of the work you or other faith groups in your community have done in support of the issue]**. We count you, Senator/Representative **[NAME]** as our neighbor, too. We commend you for demonstrating the hospitality of our community by **[Find some comments or legislation the member has worked on in support of issue]**. We’d also like to ask how you plan to support **[ISSUE]** and look to create a just and compassionate **[Issue]**.”*



Remember to get the contact information and cards for the staffers you meet. Consider asking the member and staff to take a photo with your group. Most politicians love the photo op, and it can be added to your social media posts.

AFTER YOUR OFFICE VISIT

Office visits are a first step in an ongoing conversation with your congressperson's office. The post-meeting debrief and next steps strongly impact your meeting's overall effectiveness.

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING MEETING:

Debrief Your Meeting

It's important to make sure you are all on the same page immediately after leaving the meeting, while the conversation is fresh in your mind. Make sure to leave the office building, so your debrief conversation can't be overheard.

As a Group, Review:

- What did we hear?
- Did we get what we wanted?
- What are the next steps?
- How did we do as a team?

Choose one person to send a follow up email attaching the documents mentioned, providing answers to questions that came up during the meeting, and continuing to engage the member and staff in your group's work.

WITHIN TWO DAYS:

Communicate With the Ignatian Network and Your Base

Make sure to report back on how the meeting went to other groups you are working with, **including the Ignatian Solidarity Network**. Please submit a meeting report back form to the ISN at igsol.net/advocacy.

ISN will share these meeting notes with the Jesuit's National Advocacy Office and other D.C. partners to amplify national advocacy efforts.

WITHIN ONE WEEK:

Follow Up With Your Member of Congress

Send the staff you met an email or letter thanking them for their time, attaching any documents you mentioned, providing answers to questions that came up during the meeting, and restating your ask.

PREPARING FOR YOUR MEETING: **ADVOCACY TRAINING**

Time spent planning and preparing your group for the advocacy visit will pay off when you gather for the actual meeting.

Aim to gather your entire group for at least 90 minutes prior to your scheduled advocacy meeting. This is in addition to the time spent researching your congressperson's stances and developing your talking points. **The following training can be completed in 60 minutes, and an additional 30 minutes should be used to divide roles and come up with a meeting outline.**

ADVOCACY TRAINING GOALS

1. Participants will understand the protocol and procedures for a legislative advocacy visit
 - a. Review Do's and Don'ts of advocacy visits
 - b. Understand how to clearly make an ask
 - c. Role play scenarios for additional comfort
2. Participants will share stories about advocacy work

ADVOCACY TRAINING AGENDA

1. Brief overview of the legislative process (omit if not needed/5 minutes)
2. Review the resources in the advocacy training packets (5 minutes)
 - a. Review Do's and Don'ts of advocacy visits
 - b. Review how to plan an advocacy meeting (i.e., how to use the legislative advocacy meeting task sheet)
3. Discuss past advocacy experiences of students and the trainer (5 minutes)
4. Role play and debrief (35 minutes)

ADVOCACY TRAINING MATERIALS

1. Enough copies for the entire group of the following:
 - a. Issue talking points (develop your own or find sample talking points)
 - b. Legislative advocacy meeting task sheet on page 11
 - c. "Suggested roles" sheet on page 12
2. Device to keep track of time

PREPARING FOR YOUR MEETING: **ADVOCACY TRAINING**

ADVOCACY TRAINING OUTLINE

1. Briefly review the legislative process with the group; communally discuss why advocacy meetings play an important role in the legislative process.

2. Explain to the group that they are going to spend 35 minutes practicing visits in a role play scenario. Break up the group into 3 smaller advocacy teams (each team should have 2-10 people; adjust the amount of groups as necessary). Identify at least one staffperson or experienced advocate to play the roles of legislators/staffers.

3. Ask each small group to look at the “suggested roles” sheet and decide who will play which role. Note that one person can fill multiple roles. Ask the legislator/staffer volunteers to choose which stereotypical role they will play.

4. Ask the advocacy teams to spend 5 minutes planning for their visit—develop their ask, think about ways to tie the issue to the district, identify personal experiences with the issue to share.

5. Have each group conduct role plays one-at-a-time while others listen and take notes. Try to limit each group to 5-7 minutes of role playing. The goal is to show a condensed meeting; groups don’t need to cover every talking point.

6. After each role play, ask some questions to the group:

What did the observers see for group 1 (2, 3, etc.)?

- a. How did they introduce themselves and the issues they were there to discuss?
- b. Did they make a clear ask and obtain a commitment?
- c. Did they tie the issue to the local district?
- d. Did they share compelling stories?
- e. Did they get contact information for follow up?
- f. Did they leave information behind for the staffer/representative?

How did the group respond to the personality or position of the staffer? What suggestions, experiences, or ideas do you have for handling that situation?

7. To conclude the simulation, invite members of the group to discuss past advocacy experiences. This is a good time to draw out tips and best practices from veteran advocates as well as discuss increasing your impact by integrating social media.

PREPARING FOR YOUR MEETING: **ADVOCACY TRAINING**

Suggested roles for group members:

- **The Facilitator** will kick off the meeting by introducing your group, explaining the purpose for the meeting, and providing space for each person attending to briefly introduce themselves and the institution, school, or parish they represent. The facilitator will also subtly redirect the conversation if the meeting goes off-track.
- **The Note Taker** will serve as a scribe for the meeting, writing down any key points that the legislator or staffer brings up that the group may want to discuss later, including questions that you cannot immediately answer.
- **The Personal Story** is key to every meeting. Someone should be present who can tell a compelling story about why you are committed to the issue. This can be an individual's own personal story or a story about an interaction with someone being affected by the issue.
- **Specific Issue Points:** There will be specific points your group will want to make about the policy proposals currently being considered by Congress. It will be helpful to have one person take on each of these issues to show they are distinctly important. Present a brief reflection from a personal perspective on why the issue is important to your community.
- **The Ask** is the critical part of the visit when you call on your legislator to vote or act in a specific way. Be sure to allow the legislator or staffer to respond to the ask. Listen carefully and ask for clarification if their response is vague.
- **The Thanker** is responsible for bringing the meeting to a conclusion, distributing any leave behind materials, and thanking the legislator or staffer for their time on behalf of the group.
- **Follow-Up:** It is helpful to have one person assigned to send a thank-you letter to the legislator and/or staffer. This is also the opportunity to answer any questions or issues that came up during your meeting and to share what your group is doing regarding the issue(s) you discussed in your meeting.

Suggested stereotypical staffer roles:

- **Skeptical staffer:** A staffer who works for someone who needs a lot of convincing on this issue, asks a hard question or two, makes sure the group is clear on the ask.
TASK: See how the group could respond to the reality that their issue may not be supported.
- **Rambling staffer:** A person that rambles off topic, constantly making asides that are related to the group but not the issue they are meeting about.
TASK: See if the group could steer the conversation back on topic.
- **Distracted/focused on other issues staffer**
TASK: See if the group could capture your attention away from the emails and texts piling up on your phone.
- **Staffer who supports the issue:** What more can the group ask of you?
TASK: See how the group responds to you being completely supportive.

OFFICE VISITS

DO'S AND DON'TS

Following these basic do's and don'ts helps build your credibility as an advocate and promotes more effective meetings.

DO:

Your homework.

Take the time to figure out where your legislator stands on the issue you're addressing during your meeting. Knowing whether the office you're meeting with supports or opposes the issue you're advocating for can help you tailor your preparation to make the meeting as effective as possible.

Stay flexible.

If you get a few minutes into your meeting and the member or staffer you're meeting with is entirely on board with what you're saying, don't feel tied to the script. Incorporate what the member or staffer is telling you into your conversation.

Explain why you support or oppose the issue you're discussing.

This might seem obvious, but don't forget to share your unique perspective.

Connect the issue with the member's district.

Make a clear ask.

The ask tells the member or staffer exactly what you want.

Send a thank you note.

People complain about politicians all the time, but rarely express gratitude for their time and attention.

DON'T:

Worry if you're meeting with a staffer rather than the member.

These folks are professionals and will certainly relay your messages to their boss.

Be too surprised if your meeting is in a very cramped conference room or even in the hallway. Office space is tough to come by on Capitol Hill.

Forget that this should be a conversation.

Ask what your member has already done about the issue you're discussing. Use this meeting as an opportunity to learn and to listen.

Be afraid to respectfully redirect the conversation if need be.

Staffers and members can go off on tangents, and sometimes a subtle reintroduction to the topic at hand is helpful.

Let your leave-behind be any longer than one page. Hill staffers already have plenty to read, so brevity is appreciated.

Be nervous!

Whether you're meeting with a member or a staffer, their job is to listen to you. Even if they disagree, they're going to hear you out.

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY MEETING PLANNER

GENERAL INFORMATION:

Your Institution:

Legislator's Name:

Staff Person(s):

Meeting Date:

Meeting Time:

Location:

ROLES FOR GROUP MEMBERS:

Facilitator:

Note Taker:

Personal Story:

Specific Issue Points:

The Ask:

Thanker:

Follow-Up:

BEFORE MEETING:

In one sentence, what is the goal of your meeting?

What is the legislator's stance on the issue you will be discussing?

What points will your group be raising?

AFTER MEETING:

What sort of follow-up is needed?



“Advocacy work rooted in Catholic Social Teaching’s main principles provided me with a strong platform for further participation in lobby efforts. The opportunity to see justice in action, at such a young age, is unparalleled and empowering. We all walked away having learned something about ourselves, our government, and our common home after congressional visits.”

Loyola University Chicago Student

Pictured: A group of Creighton University and Creighton Preparatory students advocated for a fair minimum wage during Ignatian Family Advocacy Day.

Photo Credit: Jeff Peak

LET'S GET STARTED

Having familiarized yourself with the resources in this guide, you should be just about ready to get out there and start advocating. As you do, know that other members of the Ignatian family are joining in the same process all across the country.

After you've finished preparing, practicing, meeting, and following up on your advocacy visit, please let us know how your visit went by going to igsol.net/advocacy. By sharing with us the office you met with, the issues you discussed, and how the office responded to your ask, we and our colleagues at the Jesuit Conference can incorporate your experiences into our on-going advocacy efforts. In this way, we all contribute to a shared cause and have the best chances of bringing about the changes our society so deeply needs.

Advocacy gives us a chance to participate and contribute to the functioning of our democracy. As people of faith, we believe that each and every person deserves to have their voice heard. By advocating for issues of justice, we give voice to the marginalized voices of our brothers and sisters who might otherwise go unheard by those in positions of power in our country.

igsol.net/advocacy

6 Tips for Effective Advocacy:

1. Take time to educate yourself on the issues.
2. Prepare as a group.
3. Advocacy is a long process, so don't get discouraged if the meeting doesn't go exactly how you want.
4. Make your advocacy a relationship by staying in touch with the legislator or staffer you met with and telling them how you're engaging the issue.
5. Follow up with ISN via igsol.net/advocacy. When the whole Ignatian family engages issues together, we're far more effective than we are individually.
6. Have fun!



The Ignatian Solidarity Network (ISN) is a national social justice education and advocacy network inspired by the spirituality of St. Ignatius of Loyola. ISN was founded in 2004 and is a lay-led 501(c)3 organization working in partnership with Jesuit universities, high schools, and parishes, along with many other Catholic institutions and social justice partners.



The Jesuit Conference Office of Justice and Ecology brings the voice of Jesuit leadership to governments, international bodies, non-governmental organizations and corporations, advocating on behalf of marginalized communities. We put compassion into action through policy analysis grounded in the Catholic social tradition, working to build and engage our regional, national and global networks.