



2023 August Recess: Your Guide to Success

August Recess 2023: Your Guide to Success



The August congressional recess is just a few weeks away — approximately July 31 to Sept. 11 — and this is your guide to setting up successful meetings with your members of Congress. **Our goal is to have at least one August Recess activity in each state.**

Meetings and visits may be either in-person or virtual, depending on the individual office. This guide provides best practices for both virtual and in-person meetings as well as guidance for practice visits, town halls, and fundraisers to ensure optimal results.

Establishing a strong relationship with legislators is important, as legislators are key to passing laws related to the physical therapy profession. It's essential that lawmakers know what the profession does and how they can help. Setting up a meeting with lawmakers is easiest during a recess, as their calendars are usually dedicated to meeting with constituents. Since there may be options for both in-person and virtual meetings, there are many ways to make a personal connection with the office. Following are a few steps that you can take to best ensure a successful meeting.



Setting It Up

- Start early! August calendars fill up quickly, so start your outreach at the beginning to mid-July.
- Visit www.house.gov, www.senate.gov, or use the APTA Advocacy App to find contact information for the offices that represent you. If you have trouble, reach out to Grassroots and Political Affairs Senior Specialist Laura Keivel at laurakeivel@apta.org for scheduler information.
- It's often easiest to get a meeting by calling the district office. Be sure to follow up with an email request as well so they have the details in writing. Let them know up front if you want to meet in person or virtually.
- When you call the office, ask for the scheduler. Be sure to state who you are, where you're from, why you want to meet with the legislator (to discuss issues that affect the physical therapy profession and the patients we serve), and who will be attending the meeting (if there are others). Don't forget to leave your contact information in case the office needs to reach you. Meeting sizes should be kept fairly small, especially if it is virtual. There should be no more than four to five participants on a Zoom call, for example, to best ensure smoothness and brevity.
- If you have a virtual meeting platform in mind, such as Zoom, FaceTime, etc., be sure to communicate that well in advance, as the office may wish to use its own meeting platform. Coordinate the logistics with the office. If you have an in-person meeting, be sure to confirm the location and reconfirm a day or two before.
- If there are multiple attendees, meet with them in advance to go over who will speak when and who will make the "ask." Time is precious in these meetings, which generally last 15 minutes or less, so the less time you spend talking over each other, the clearer the message will be.
- Follow up with the office a day or two before to reconfirm the meeting.
- Please see the end of this guide for a sample meeting request note.

Best Practices for Each Type of Meeting

In-Person Meeting Best Practices

- Do your homework! Which relevant bills have the lawmaker supported in the past? What is their voting record? Research their background and be familiar with who they are. The APTA Advocacy App can help with this research.
- Arrive at the meeting at least five minutes ahead of time. Don't be too early, and definitely don't be late. If you are running late, please reach out to the office as soon as you can and let them know.
- When the meeting starts, make sure everyone in the group states who they are, where they are from, and their professional role.
- Take pictures! But ask permission before you do. We'd love to see your photos and possibly include them on social media, so please send them to Laura Keivel at laurakeivel@apta.org. APTA thanks legislators from its official APTA accounts; having photos and permission from participants allows us to publicly acknowledge them.
- Share your photos on social media, tag your legislator, thank them, and share a little about the meeting. Be sure to use the hashtag #PTAdvocacy.
- Don't forget to make the ask for support of specific legislation and/or issues.
- Print out and bring a few copies of the "leave behinds," sent separately from this guide and [available online](#), that offers more information regarding asks. These are usually position papers or other supplemental materials. They should be shared with the legislative staffer with whom you're to meet either before or after the meeting. You can follow up with a digital copy after the meeting.
- Be sure to follow up the meeting within the next day to two with a thank you note and the leave behinds. It's acceptable to email a thank you, and often preferable to a handwritten note that could take weeks to arrive.

Virtual Meeting Best Practices

- Do your homework! Which relevant bills have the lawmaker supported in the past? What is their voting record? Research their background and be familiar with who they are. The APTA Advocacy app can help with this research.
- If you are initiating the meeting platform, begin the meeting about five minutes ahead of time and test your technology in advance. Few things derail a meeting and waste time like technical problems, although sometimes they are unavoidable. Is the appropriate meeting platform software installed on your computer or smartphone? Do your speakers work? Do you have a good internet connection? Is your line muted when you aren't speaking?
- Consider the lighting where you will take the call. Natural light is best, but make sure you are in a well-lit room. The goal is to get rid of shadows.
- Framing is important! Make sure your camera is at eye level. You do not want to be looking up at the camera. Prop the camera up on a few books if you have to, and make sure you are not too close to the camera but not too far away from the microphone. Think of newscasters and their framing.
- Have a backup plan if your tech does fail, such as a phone number/conference line that all participants can use, or an alternate platform of your choice.
- When the meeting starts, make sure everyone in the group states who they are, where they are from, and their professional role.
- Take pictures! But ask permission before you do. Although the meeting is virtual, you still can take screenshots. We'd love to see your photos and possibly include them on social media, so please send them to Laura Keivel at laurakeivel@apta.org. APTA thanks legislators from its official APTA account; having photos and permission from participants allows us to publicly acknowledge them.

- Share your photos on social media, tag your legislator, thank them, and share a little about the meeting. Be sure to use the hashtag #PTAdvocacy.
- Don't forget to make the ask for support of specific legislation and/or issues.
- "Leave behinds," sent separately from this guide and [available online](#), offers more information regarding asks. They should be shared with the legislative staffer with whom you're to meet either before or after the meeting.
- Be sure to follow up the meeting within the next day to two with a thank-you note and the leave behinds. It's acceptable to email a thank you, and often preferable.

Town Hall and Tele-Town Hall Best Practices

Town halls and tele-town halls can run throughout the year as another way to connect with constituents. Though not all members of Congress host them, these events give constituents the opportunity to raise an issue in a public forum or thank the member of Congress for their support.

- When attending a tele-town hall, be sure to have your question or statement formulated in advance and be ready to ask it succinctly. It also may be a good idea for you to reach out to your contact in the office and ask in advance if your question can be asked. Be sure to connect with congressional staff after the tele-town hall, thank them for their time, and reiterate the issue(s) and ask(s) discussed during the meeting.
- Tele-town halls sometimes are conducted on Facebook. If you have the opportunity to attend one, be sure to have a complete and professional Facebook profile.
- At an in-person town hall, arrive early and consider bringing others. Groups tend to get more attention.
- Be sure to have your question or statement formulated in advance and be ready to present it succinctly. State where you are from and add in your personal story of how the issues impact you.
- It is a good idea for you to reach out to your contact in the office and ask in advance if your question can be asked. Be sure to connect with congressional staff after the town hall event, thank them for their time, and reiterate the issue(s) and ask(s) discussed during the event.

To find a town hall or tele-town hall, either sign up for your legislator's newsletter, follow them on social media, or contact Laura Keivel at laurakeivel@apta.org. And feel free to reach out to Laura for help with staffer contact information.

Practice or School Visit Best Practices

Practice or virtual school visits are excellent ways for members of Congress to see your work in action and learn firsthand what the physical therapy profession does. Hosting a practice/school visit requires advance planning and making sure the facility approves the visit.

- Plan the visit ahead of time. Walk the route you will follow and plan to show attendees something that will give them a clear picture of what you do.
- If you plan to take photos, first alert those in the room and ask permission. Please send photos to Laura Keivel at laurakeivel@apta.org.
- Share your photos on social media and tag your legislators. Be sure to use the hashtag #PTAdvocacy.
- Leave behinds, linked below and located [online](#), offer more information regarding asks, and should be sent to the staffer with whom you meet either before or after the visit. You may print out copies to give to the visitors during the visit.
- Be sure to follow up the visit within the next day or two with a thank you note and the leave behinds. It's acceptable to email a thank you.

Fundraisers

Some members of Congress will be hosting fundraisers during the August recess. These events provide APTA members with additional opportunities to develop relationships with lawmakers.

If a member of Congress supports physical therapy issues, PTPAC, APTA's federal political action committee, can provide financial support for APTA members to attend virtual or in person campaign fundraisers. Members of Congress appreciate when constituents can attend these events. Not only are you a constituent who can vote for the candidate, but PAC contributions go farther at home. For example, it often costs at least \$1,000 a plate for APTA's lobbyists to attend most Washington fundraisers, but that same amount might allow five or more APTA members to attend a fundraiser in a given state. For more information on getting involved in PTPAC activities, contact Mike Matlack at michaelmatlack@apta.org or 800-999-2782, ext. 3163.

Sample Meeting Request and Thank You Note

Sample Meeting Request Note

SUBJECT: Meeting Request: Issues Impacting Physical Therapy Profession on DATE AND TIME

Dear SCHEDULER,

My name is YOUR NAME and I am FROM YOUR CITY AND STATE. I am a PT/PTA/STUDENT and member of the American Physical Therapy Association. I am reaching out to request a meeting with Rep. REP'S NAME and/or the health legislative assistant on DATE and TIME. I am flexible if this day or time doesn't work.

I would like to discuss the physical therapy profession and my experience as a PT/PTA/STUDENT, issues impacting the profession, and the importance of physical therapy in the health care system.

Thank you very much for your time and assistance with this request. Please contact me at YOUR EMAIL or YOUR PHONE NUMBER to confirm an appointment or if you have any questions. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

YOUR NAME AND CREDENTIALS

CITY AND STATE

Sample Thank You Note

Please be sure to personalize this with the details from your meeting or practice visit and include any follow-up materials in your note.

Dear {Senator or Representative Last Name),

As a member of the American Physical Therapy Association, thank you for taking the time to meet with me on (date of meeting). I appreciate your interest in learning more about the physical therapy profession. (Include any reflections from the meeting, or personal notes).

(Include any follow up here, such as answering questions or including requested materials.)



On behalf of myself and APTA, thank you again.

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME AND CREDENTIALS

CITY AND STATE

August Recess Legislative Talking Points

Medicare Fee Schedule Cuts – Strengthening Medicare for Patients and Providers Act (H.R. 2474)

- APTA, along with other impacted provider groups, are working together in a coalition to support a united policy solution to address meaningful, long-term reform to the Medicare Fee Schedule.
- Institute annual inflation-based update to the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule
- Supported by over 100 health care provider organizations
 - **HOUSE ASK:** Please cosponsor H.R. 2474; thank them if they are a cosponsor.
 - **SENATE ASK:** Please introduce a Senate companion of H.R. 2474.
 - [Position paper available here.](#)

PTA Supervision

- The legislation would reduce administrative burden for small therapy businesses and provide flexibility by changing the current burdensome Medicare requirement of ‘direct supervision’ of PTAs requirement to ‘general supervision.’ Medicare allows for ‘general supervision’ of physical therapist assistants by physical therapists in all settings — except for outpatient private practice, which requires “direct supervision.”
 - **HOUSE ASK:** Please cosponsor the legislation when it is introduced.
 - **SENATE ASK:** Please cosponsor the legislation when it is introduced.

Telehealth – The Expanded Telehealth Access Act (H.R. 3875)

- The Expanded Telehealth Access Act (H.R. 3875) would make permanent the current temporary policy that allows physical therapists and physical therapist assistants to deliver and bill for services provided via telehealth under Medicare.
- The ongoing coronavirus pandemic has demonstrated the use of telehealth in the delivery of physical therapy services can help expand access, provide convenience for Medicare patients, and promote flexibility and innovation for therapy clinics.
- This bill specifically names physical therapists and physical therapist assistants, occupational therapists, occupational therapy assistants, audiologists, and speech language pathologists, and facilities that furnish outpatient therapy, as authorized providers of telehealth under Medicare.
 - **HOUSE ASK:** Please cosponsor H.R. 3875, thank them if they are already a cosponsor.
 - **SENATE ASK:** Please introduce a Senate companion bill to H.R. 3875
 - [Position paper available here.](#)

Locum Tenens – Prevent Interruptions in Physical Therapy Act (H.R. 1617/S. 793)

- H.R. 1617/S. 793 would allow physical therapists to use locum tenens arrangements (meaning “to hold the place of or substitute”) to bring in another licensed physical therapist to treat Medicare patients and bill Medicare through the practice provider number during temporary absences, due to illness, vacation, etc.
- Existing law applies only to physical therapists in rural and underserved areas. This limitation prohibits many physical therapists in private practice from taking needed absences without interrupting patient care.
- H.R. 1617/S. 793 would expand the use of locum tenens nationwide for outpatient physical therapists.
 - **HOUSE ASK:** Please cosponsor H.R. 1617; thank them if they are already a cosponsor.
 - **SENATE ASK:** Please cosponsor S. 793, thank them if they are already a cosponsor.

- [Position paper available here.](#)

National Health Service Corps/CHCs – The Physical Therapist Workforce and Patient Access Act

- The Physical Therapist Workforce and Patient Access Act would help provide greater patient access to rehabilitation services, including for long COVID-19 symptoms and post-ICU recovery, and nonpharmacological treatment options in medically underserved areas of the country.
- The bill would provide patients the ability to access their Medicare or Medicaid physical therapy benefit via federal community health centers (CHCs). It would give CHCs the option to hire PTs as full-time employees and allow the CHC to bill Medicare for PT services, similar to hospitals and skilled nursing facilities.
 - Currently, in a CHC setting, a patient visit to a PT must be incidental to a physician visit; CHCs are not able to bill for therapy services alone. As a result, there is very little to no PT care available in the CHCs.
 - For Medicare and Medicaid patients, this would not be a new benefit as those programs already cover PT services. Having the option to provide physical therapy services on site and employ physical therapists, as in a hospital or nursing home setting, will help address ongoing concerns regarding access to critical health care services.
- The bill would also add PTs to the list of medical providers eligible to participate in the National Health Service Corp (NHSC) Loan Repayment Program.
 - Currently, there is no physical rehabilitation care component within NHSC, a piece that would greatly complement the current program to promote health across the continuum of care.
 - The NHSC loan repayment program repays up to \$50,000 in outstanding student loans to certain health care professionals who agree to work for at least two years in a medically underserved area.
 - Many NHSC providers choose to work in CHCs, and more than 85 percent of those same providers continue practicing in the medically underserved region long after their service.
- Adding physical therapists to the NHSC and providing CHCs with greater flexibility to offer PT services will help increase PT care and services in the medically underserved areas.
 - **HOUSE ASK:** Please cosponsor the Physical Therapist Workforce and Patient Access Act when introduced.
 - **SENATE ASK:** Please cosponsor the Physical Therapist Workforce and Patient Access Act when introduced.

Telehealth – The Expanded Telehealth Access Act (H.R. 3875)

- The Expanded Telehealth Access Act (H.R. 3875) would make permanent the current temporary policy that allows physical therapists and physical therapist assistants to deliver and bill for services provided via telehealth under Medicare.
- The coronavirus pandemic has demonstrated the use of telehealth in the delivery of physical therapy services can help expand access, provide convenience for Medicare patients, and promote flexibility and innovation for therapy clinics.
- This bill specifically names physical therapists and physical therapist assistants, occupational therapists, occupational therapy assistants, audiologists, and speech language pathologists, and facilities that furnish outpatient therapy, as authorized providers of telehealth under Medicare.
 - **HOUSE ASK:** Please cosponsor H.R. 3875, thank them if they are already a cosponsor.
 - **SENATE ASK:** Please introduce a Senate companion bill to H.R. 3875
 - [Position paper available here.](#)

Pelvic Health Awareness – Optimizing Postpartum Outcomes Act of 2023 (H.R. 2480)

- H.R. 2480 is designed to address knowledge and access gaps for postpartum women in need of pelvic health services, in particular pelvic health physical therapy.
- The bill instructs CMS to issue guidance on pelvic health services performed during the postpartum or neonatal period under Medicaid and CHIP, including best practices, financing options, and technical assistance to state agencies.
- The legislation orders GAO to conduct a study on gaps in pelvic health programs.
- H.R. 2480 obligates the HHS Secretary to carry out a program to educate and train health professionals on the benefits of pelvic floor physical therapy, as well as a program for postpartum women on pelvic floor physical therapy's importance, what pelvic floor physical therapy is, and where to obtain pelvic health services.
 - **HOUSE ASK:** Please cosponsor H.R. 2480; thank them if they are already a cosponsor.
 - **SENATE ASK:** Please introduce a companion bill to H.R. 2480 and vote 'yes' if the bill comes before the Senate.
 - [Position paper available here.](#)

States Handling Access to Reciprocity for Employment Act (SHARE Act) (H.R. 1310)

- Ensure federal background checks are completed so PTs and PTAs can participate in the PT Compact.
- This bill would enable PTs and PTAs to work in medically underserved areas.
- This bill has strong bipartisan support and does not require additional federal resources
 - **HOUSE ASK:** Please cosponsor H.R. 1310; thank them if they are a cosponsor
 - **SENATE ASK:** Please introduce a Senate companion bill to H.R. 1310 and vote 'yes' if the bill comes before the Senate.
 - [Position paper available here.](#)

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Contact: advocacy@apta.org