

SITE VISIT CAMPAIGN 2012

MAKING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN POLICY AND PEOPLE

A GUIDE TO GETTING STARTED



Chicago Alliance
making homelessness history

INTRODUCTION TO SITE VISITS:

SMALL EFFORT, HUGE IMPACT

A site visit is a great opportunity to show your elected officials what you are doing for their community and how you are making a difference in the lives of those experiencing homelessness. When policymakers *personally* witness programs in action, they are better able to make connections between policy and people.

There are many benefits to conducting a site visit. Personal stories and testimonials help representatives connect their work to real people in the community. Site visits also show firsthand how public funding is being put to good use and the potential negative impact of funding cuts. By conducting a site visit this fall, you can build a stronger relationship with your representatives and help us advocate for needed resources to prevent and end homelessness in Chicago. Get started today!

Step 1: CHOOSE WHO YOU WANT TO INVITE AND SCHEDULE A SITE VISIT

Decide which official(s) you would like to invite. You can choose representatives from any level of government (i.e. Alderman, State Representative or Senator, U.S. Representative or Senator) or an influential policymaker working at a government agency. Be flexible with your dates, as scheduling conflicts are always a possibility. Check legislative calendars to see when your representative is more likely to be available.

Step 2: SEND AN INVITATION

Once you have chosen who you want to invite, it is best to send a formal invitation to their office. Include a short description of your program and the impact you are having on the community. Outline the purpose of the site visit and who will attend. We have included a sample invitation on page four to use as a guide. After sending the invitation, you should follow up with his/her office to get a visit on the calendar.

Step 3: PLAN AND EXECUTE THE SITE VISIT

Work with your staff and participants to plan an exciting and effective site visit. You should include a tour of your facility/program and plenty of opportunities to meet and hear from participants. It is important to be prepared and reiterate the impact of your program on the community, while also making your guest feel welcome and appreciated.

Step 4: CONTINUE BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR REPRESENTATIVE

Once the site visit is over, there is still more work to do in order to cement your new relationship. You should send a thank you note as soon as possible following the visit. It is also a good idea to maintain regular communication with your representative, as well as his/her staff. Having a strong relationship with your elected representatives will keep your issues and programs top of mind while policy decisions are being made.

WORKING WITH THE CHICAGO ALLIANCE

The Chicago Alliance wants to help you plan and organize your site visit! We will be here to offer support from start to finish.

WE CAN HELP YOU:

PLAN AND SCHEDULE

- Choose which representative to invite
- Determine tentative scheduling options
- Send an invitation and follow-up with his/her scheduler

GET READY FOR THE SITE VISIT

- Put together materials about your program and community
- Prepare talking points and frame a policy issue to discuss
- Help consumers prepare their personal story
- Contact the media, if you choose to do so

FOLLOW-UP

- Send a thank you letter
- Determine how best to stay in contact with your representative



Contact Amanda Borta at (312) 379-0301 x 22
or aborta@thechicagoalliance.org to get started today.
The Chicago Alliance is here to help!

SAMPLE SITE VISIT INVITATION

AGENCY LETTERHEAD

October 1, 2012

The Honorable Katherine Davis
121 N. LaSalle Street
Chicago, Illinois 60602

Dear Alderman Davis,

I would like to invite you to visit Project Hope, a social service agency in your district working to prevent and end homelessness. At this visit, you will meet with staff, advocates, and several of your constituents who are working with Project Hope to move from homelessness to self-sufficiency. We would like to give you a tour of our innovative housing and service programs and discuss how we can work together to improve our community.

Project Hope provides temporary housing to 700 individuals per year in your district. We also provide job training and placement services to an additional 400 members of the community per year. Our mission is to provide a comprehensive model of stable housing and workforce development to help people get back on their feet and end their homelessness for good.

As you may know, Mayor Rahm Emanuel and the City of Chicago recently reaffirmed their commitment to ending homelessness by endorsing Plan 2.0, a seven-year action plan outlining strategies and goals to ensure everyone has a home. We want to take this opportunity to share Plan 2.0 with you and discuss how we can implement these best practices in our community.

The participants, staff, and Board of Directors of Project Hope appreciate your support of our work over the years. We hope that you can join us to see for yourself the progress our programs have made in preventing and ending homelessness in the district. We will be contacting your staff shortly to identify the best date for a visit. We look forward to your visit.

Sincerely,

Maria Johnson
Executive Director