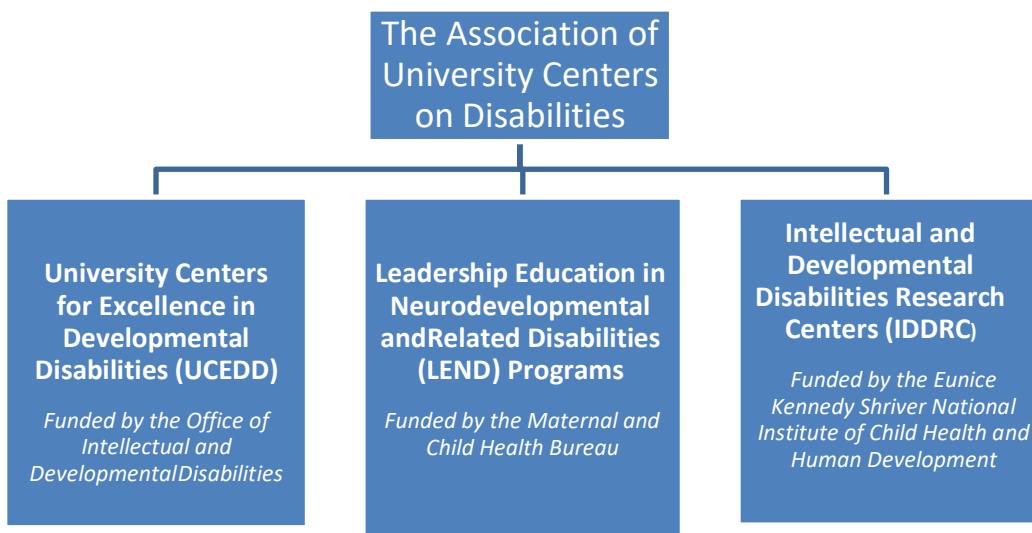


HILL VISIT TOOLKIT: HOW TO PREPARE, SCHEDULE AND FOLLOW-UP ON HILL VISITS

About AUCD

The Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) is a membership organization that supports and promotes a network of university-based interdisciplinary programs located in every state and territory. AUCD's mission is to advance policies and practices that improve the health, education, social, and economic well-being of all people with developmental and other disabilities, their families, and their communities by supporting our members in research, education, health, and service activities that achieve our vision.

AUCD includes three different types of network members: University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD), Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) Programs, and Intellectual and Developmental Disability Research Centers (IDDRC). AUCD's members are located in every state and territory and include 67 UCEDDs, 60 LENDs, and 16 IDDRCs.



Flow chart of AUCD with its three types of programs: UCEDDs, LENDs, and IDDRCs, including the funding source for each type of program.

Note: AUCD has created a series of “How-To” and Other Background Materials at <https://www.aucd.org/template/page.cfm?id=27>. The materials are also linked throughout this Toolkit.

About Congress

Congress is made up of two chambers, or groups: the House of Representatives and the Senate. Both chambers are responsible for writing and passing federal, or national, laws, including laws that set the federal government's budget and funding for programs each year. A bill, which is an idea that may become law, must pass both chambers and be signed by the President before it can become a law. The current Congress is called the 117th Congress because it is the 117th group of elected Members of Congress meeting together to make laws. It began on January 3, 2021, and will end on January 3, 2023. While each Congress meets for two years, they take breaks, called 'recesses', throughout that time. During a recess, Representatives and Senators are not in Washington, D.C., do not vote on bills, and are instead working in their district, state or territory.

House of Representatives

The House of Representatives is one of the two chambers that are part of Congress. Each of the 435 members represents a set number of people who live in a Congressional district, or part of a state. States have different numbers of Representatives based on their population. For example, Montana has a smaller population, so there is one Representative for the whole state; in comparison, New York has a larger population, so there are 27 Representatives.

Representatives are elected for two years at a time. Legislation introduced in the House of Representatives begins with H.R. for 'House of Representatives' followed by a number to identify each bill. You have one member of the House (Representative) who represents you. You can find your Representative at <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>.

Senate

The Senate is the other chamber that is part of Congress. Every state, no matter their size or population, has two Senators for a total of 100 Senators. Each Senator is elected for six years at a time. In addition to writing and passing federal bills, the Senate has the job of approving Presidential nominees for positions in the Executive and Judicial branches. Legislation introduced in the Senate begins with S. for 'Senate' followed by a number to identify each bill. You have two Senators who represent you. You can find your Senators at <https://www.senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm>.

Congress During the Pandemic

Both the House of Representatives and the Senate have changed their rules during the COVID-19 pandemic to keep Members of Congress, staff and the public safe. In the House of Representatives, Representatives can vote on legislation remotely (through the end of September) and can hold committee hearings remotely. In the Senate, Senators must still vote in-person but can do some committee work remotely. The U.S. Capitol Building and Congressional Office Buildings remain closed to the public. Each Member's office is individually deciding whether to hold virtual meetings or have in-person meetings. Offices taking in-person meetings require visitors to be escorted by staff. Group meetings are limited to small groups.

Congress.Gov

[Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov) is the official legislative website for the United States. You can use it to find information about your Representative or Senators and up-to-date information on legislative activity.

Find Your Members of Congress

You can use [congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov) to find your Representative and Senators by entering your address into the box on the right-hand column of the congress.gov home screen. The search will return your Senators' and Representative's names, photos, state, political party, years served, and links to more information.

Follow the Actions and Votes of your Members of Congress

You can view the legislative actions of your Representative and Senators by going to their [congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov) profile. Type their last name into the search box at the top of the home page and select "Members" from the dropdown box to the left of the search box. Press enter and click on the name. The page will include information on the legislation that the Representative or Senator has sponsored or cosponsored. It will also include their votes.

Follow Legislation of Interest to You

You can follow specific pieces of legislation that interest you on [congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov) by typing the name or bill number of the legislation into the search box at the top of the home page (e.g. H.R. 1234 or S. 567). Press enter and click on the name of the legislation to find information, such as a summary, text, actions taken, amendments, sponsors and cosponsors. Bills that have been passed by the House and the Senate and signed by the President to become law begin with P.L. for 'Public Law'.

Requesting a Meeting

Due to the ongoing public health emergency, each Member of Congress' office is individually deciding whether to hold virtual meetings or have in-person meetings with constituents. Offices taking in-person meetings require visitors to be escorted by staff. Group meetings are limited to small groups. You will need to contact your Member of Congress' office to see if they are taking virtual or in-person meetings. For virtual meetings, you will be meeting with the Members' offices either on a video platform (i.e., Zoom) or on a conference phone call. You will probably have to provide a link for a video platform or a conference call number.

Contacting Congress

We recommend you contact your Member of Congress' offices as soon as possible to set-up your meetings. The best way to schedule a meeting is via email or phone call.

You can call the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 to schedule meetings. Ask to speak to the staff that covers health or disability issues. These are the best people to educate about UCEDDs/LENDs/IDDRCs. If you want to discuss employment or education issues, ask for those staffers. It is not uncommon to need to get to know and build relationships with multiple staff in the same office.

You can also send your email requesting a meeting to:

- the general office email for the Member of Congress;
- the office staff scheduler;
- the office staffer(s) who works on issues related to health, education or employment, etc.

You can find the general office email and sometimes the office scheduler email on the Member's website. You can also reach out to Cindy Smith at csmith@aucd.org or Kevin Ryle at kryle@aucd.org and we can share contact information for your state or territory.

Typical email addresses for office staff in the House of Representatives are `firstname.lastname@mail.house.gov` and for office staff in the Senate are `firstname_lastname@lastnameofsenator.senate.gov`.

Scheduling Meetings

Staff of Members' offices meet with many people and have busy schedules. We recommend that you try to schedule an-person meeting while you are in Washington, D.C. If this is not possible, you should offer the office alternative dates and times for a virtual meeting. Please share your meetings with AUCD. [A survey](#) has been created to collect this information prior to and at the conference.

What to Write in an Email Requesting a Meeting

We have provided [a sample script](#) that you may individualize to set-up a meeting.

Every email to request a meeting should include:

- Your name and contact information;
- Center name and names of other participants in the meeting (keep this small for in-person meetings);
- Your availability to meet (dates and times);
- Your reason(s) for requesting the meeting; and
- Thanking them for taking the meeting.

Follow-up to Scheduling a Meeting

You may not receive an immediate response to your request. Congressional staffers are busy, and it is normal to need to follow-up on your emails and calls. If you do not receive a response after a few business days, you can make a follow-up call or send a follow-up email.

Preparing for a Meeting

Where to Learn About the Issues

AUCD is committed to supporting public policies that advance the rights of persons with disabilities across the lifespan. Policy issues that impact people with disabilities and their families include, but are not limited to, civil rights, education, employment, and healthcare. AUCD has several tools and resources you can use to learn about and stay up-to-date on issues impacting persons with disabilities:

[Disability Policy News](#)

AUCD Disability Policy News is sent out every other Monday and includes public policy updates that affect the disability community. [Subscribe.](#)

[Tuesdays with Liz](#)

'*Tuesdays with Liz*' is a video series highlighting current issues in disability policy. It is hosted by Liz Weintraub, a long-time disability advocate and AUCD Senior Advocacy Specialist, and produced by AUCD.

AUCD's Policy Priorities for the 118th Congress

While you are in D.C., you will be here during what is known as the "lame duck session." This is the session after the election when the current Members of Congress return to D.C., to complete must-do items before their terms end in December. In January, the 118th session of Congress will begin, and every bill that does not pass will need to be re-introduced.

AUCD is working to finalize AUCD's policy priorities for the next session of Congress. They will be available at the conference and [posted here on the Monday of conference](#). We recommend that you prepare for your Hill meeting(s) by learning about AUCD's policy priorities for the 118th session of Congress (these will be available at conference [and posted on the Policy Issues page of the AUCD website](#) once approved). We suggest sharing these new priorities with Members of Congress to help them prepare for the new session.

[Learn more about policy terms in plain language.](#)

Below is information and resources on policy issues to AUCD recommends that you prioritize at your meeting(s).

Budget and Appropriations

The Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations (LHHS) bill provides funding for almost all disability programs. A continuing resolution was passed on September 29th, which extends funding for the federal government through December 16th at current levels. The continuing resolution prevented a shut-down of the federal government. After the election, it will be determined how Congress will complete the process for Fiscal Year 2023.

In the House of Representatives, the LHHS subcommittee [marked-up and passed the Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies; Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bills and Revised Report on the Subcommittee Allocations](#) for the House of Representatives for Fiscal Year 2023 on June 30th.

In the Senate, Chairman Leahy (D-VT) [released the Chairman's mark of the 12 appropriations bills](#) in the Senate for Fiscal Year 2023 on July 28th. The Chairman's mark is the draft of bills released by the Chairman of the LHHS subcommittee that have not yet been agreed to with the Ranking Member. The drafts await agreement and mark-up in the LHHS subcommittee.

ABLE Age Adjustment Act ([S. 331](#) / [H.R. 1219](#))

Original Sponsors and Co-sponsors: In the Senate by Senator Casey (D-PA), Senator Moran (R-KS), Senator Wyden (D-OR), Senator Van Hollen (D-MD), Senator Boozman (R-AR), Senator Blumenthal (D-CT) and Senator Murkowski (R-AK) and in the House of Representatives by Rep. Cárdenas (D-CA), Rep. McMorris Rodgers (R-WA) and Rep. Chu (D-CA).

Summary: ABLE accounts are tax-free savings accounts that allow people with disabilities to save money, while not disqualifying them from federal benefits like Supplemental Security Income or Medicaid. Currently, ABLE savings accounts are eligible to people who develop a disability before the age of 26. The bill will increase the age of eligibility for ABLE accounts from 26 to 46.

Status: The ABLE Age Adjustment Act was included in [the Enhancing American Retirement Now Act \(EARN Act\)](#) which was passed by the Senate Finance Committee on June 22nd. The EARN Act is waiting to be voted on by the full Senate.

Resources and Factsheets: More information can be found on [Senator Casey's website](#) and this [Factsheet](#) from the Consortium for Constituents with Disabilities.

Better Care Better Jobs Act ([S. 2210](#) / [H.R. 4131](#))

Original Sponsors and Co-sponsors: In the Senate by Senator Casey (D-PA), Senator Wyden (D-OR), Senator Schumer (D-NY), Senator Murray (D-WA), Senator Duckworth (D-IL), Senator Brown (D-OH) and Senator Hassan (D-NH), and in the House by Representatives Rep. Dingell (D-MI), Rep. Pallone (D-NJ), Rep. Schakowsky (D-IL) and Rep. Matsui (D-CA).

Short Summary: The bill would increase funding for and make needed changes to improve Medicaid's home and community-based services (HCBS). States would be eligible for a permanent 10 percentage point increase in the federal Medicaid match for delivering HCBS as well as enhanced funding for administrative activities.

The bill will also strengthen and expand access to HCBS by increasing the age of eligibility for HCBS; requiring coverage for personal care services; expanding supports for family caregivers; adopting programs that help people navigate enrollment and eligibility; expanding access to behavioral healthcare; improving coordination with housing, transportation, and employment supports; and developing or improving programs to allow working people with disabilities to access HCBS.

Furthermore, the bill would strengthen and expand the HCBS workforce by addressing HCBS payment rates to promote recruitment and retention of direct care workers; provide additional incentives to help states build HCBS workforce programs; require states to establish state HCBS ombudsman programs to support care quality; require all state Medicaid programs to adopt HCBS quality measures; provide funding for states to develop HCBS infrastructure improvement plans with public input; permanently authorize protections against impoverishment for people whose spouses are receiving HCBS; make the Money Follows the Person Rebalancing Demonstration permanent, and more.

Status: The bills looked to translate President Biden's proposal for \$400 billion in funding for HCBS into legislation that would improve the structure of HCBS as well as authorize additional funding. The funding proposal was originally included in the draft of the Democrat's reconciliation package that was proposed in 2021. The Better Care Better Jobs Act did not pass in the reconciliation package and saw no movement in 2022.

Resources and Factsheets: More information can be found on the [Senate Aging Committee website](#) and on [Rep. Dingell's website](#). Also, see a [Policy Brief](#) created by the Lurie Institute for Disability Policy at the Heller School at Brandeis University.

Transformation to Competitive Integrated Employment Act ([S. 3238](#) / [H.R. 2373](#))

Original Sponsors and Co-sponsors: In the Senate by Senator Casey (D-PA) and Senator Daines (R-MT) and in the House of Representatives by Rep. Scott (D-VA) and Rep. McMorris Rodgers (R-WA).

Summary: This bill will phase out the use of 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act (5 years after it is signed into law) which currently allows paying people with disabilities subminimum wage. The bill will also assist employers providing employment under 14(c) in transforming their business models to support individuals with disabilities through competitive integrated employment. The bill creates technical assistance centers to support businesses as they phase out subminimum wage practices

Transformation to Competitive Integrated Employment Act ([S. 3238](#) / [H.R. 2373](#)) (continued)

Status: The bills are currently in committee in the House and Senate.

Resources and Factsheets: Liz Weintraub interviewed Senator Daines about the Transformation to Competitive Integrated Employment Act on her YouTube Channel: *Tuesday's with Liz*. [You can click here to watch the interview!](#) More information can be found on the [Senate Aging Committee website](#). AUCD has also created [this explainer](#).

The 21st Century Assistive Technology Act ([S. 2401](#) / [H.R. 9028](#))

Original Sponsors and Co-sponsors: In the Senate by Senator Casey (D-PA), Senator Collins (R-ME), Senator Hassan (D-NH), Senator Cramer (R-ND) and Senator Murkowski (R-AK) and in the House of Representatives by Rep. DeSaulnier (D-CA) and Rep. Sempolinski (R-NY).

Summary: This bill reauthorizes through Fiscal Year 2026 the Assistive Technology Act passed in 2004. The bill will increase the availability of funding for access to and training about assistive technology devices and assistive technology services through statewide programs. An assistive technology device includes for example, a piece of equipment, or system that is used to maintain or improve the functional capabilities of people with disabilities, such as wheelchairs, hearing aids, screen readers and computer software. An assistive technology service is a service that directly assists a person with a disability with selecting or using assistive technology devices by evaluating the person's needs or expanding access to devices and technology. Assistive technology devices can support people with disabilities to get a quality education, live independently, attain and retain competitive integrated employment and more.

Status: The bills are currently in committee in the House and Senate.

Resources and Factsheets: More information can be found on the [House Committee on Education and Labor](#).

Learn About Members of Congress

In addition to learning about policy issues, we suggest you learn about the Members of Congress with whose offices you will be meeting. For many Senators and Representatives, some issues are more important to them than others based on the needs of their state or territory, personal beliefs, or committee assignments. Learning which issues are important to your Member of Congress will help you tailor your conversation to what the Member's values and is most likely to support. Visit the websites of your Members of Congress. Learn more about how to get to know your Members of Congress with [this AUCD Factsheet \(plain language version.\)](#)

Meeting with Members of Congress

Meeting with Members of Congress is an important way for individuals to communicate with policymakers on the important value and needs of the AUCD Network and the larger disability community. Through meetings and follow-up communications, you can share your concerns and establish yourself as a resource on issues affecting people with disabilities in the Member of Congress' state or territory.

Advising Policymakers versus Advocacy or Lobbying

All AUCD Network members have some responsibility to be engaged in advising and educating policymakers. As a representative of a federally-funded program, you can engage in advising and educating Members of Congress by:

- Educating offices on the impact of current or proposed policies and laws;
- Sharing research, publications, and policy analysis; and/or
- Responding to information requests from policymakers.

While representing your UCEDD/LEND or IDDRRC and/or while traveling on federal funds, you cannot meet with Members of Congress and use the opportunity to lobby that a specific law be passed or defeated, support a specific political candidate or party, or engage in civil disobedience. Learn more in the [Education versus Lobbying Factsheet](#).

How to Start a Meeting

You will most likely be meeting with a staff member rather than the Member of Congress. Staff are very knowledgeable about the issues and policy positions of their boss and will bring the information and stories you share to the Member of Congress. You should think of this meeting as a chance to build a relationship with your Member's office, rather than just the Member him/herself.

We recommend you follow these basic steps in your meetings:

Describe Your Center or Program

The Member of Congress or staff with whom you meet may not know about AUCD or your UCEDD/LEND/IDDRRC. We recommend you begin your Hill meeting by describing AUCD's network of programs and centers, your center, any key projects on which your center is currently working or key projects your center has just completed, and the outcomes achieved.

Educate Your Members of Congress

Educate the Member of Congress or staff by expanding upon the 2-3 topics you highlighted in your meeting request. This is a great opportunity to discuss the challenges and barriers faced by members of the disability community in your state or territory, and the important work your UCEDD/LEND/IDDRRC is doing to address these challenges. This is also a time to educate members about legislation or the need for increased funding. As a refresher, review the [Education versus Lobbying Factsheet](#).

Share Your Stories

If you are comfortable, share your personal stories with disability. Connecting policies to people in the community helps Members of Congress and their staff to understand the real-world effects of policies in their own state or territory. [Read a sample format for sharing your story](#).

Other Factsheets to Prepare to Meet with Members of Congress: [Guide to Meeting With Your Members of Congress](#) ([plain language version](#)) and Make the [Most Out of Your Visit](#).

Other Tips for Meetings

- If several members of your UCEDD/LEND/IDDRC are attending the meeting, we recommend you plan in advance who will say what during the meeting. This will reduce confusion in the meeting and allow you to make the most of your time.
- If there are multiple UCEDDs/LENDs/IDDRCs in your state or in the district, we suggest you coordinate having one meeting. This will make the best use of a Member of Congress' or staff's time.
- Confirm the location of the meeting. If in-person, confirm the location to meet staff to be escorted into the building. If the meeting is virtual and will take place via video platform or conference call, make sure every attendee has the meeting ID number and password. Start the meeting a few minutes early to be sure everyone can join and there are no technical issues. You may need to provide a link for web conferencing or a call-in number for a conference call.
- Have everyone in attendance introduce themselves by saying their name, position, and relationship to AUCD. Try to limit introductions to 2-3 minutes.
- When referencing the Member of Congress in conversation, use 'Senator/Representative' and their last name. For example, 'Senator Duckworth' or 'Representative Young'.
- If you do not know the answer to a question, it is okay to say "I don't know, but I will get back to you with an answer." And, then do some research and follow-up with the office.
- The staffer may refer to the Member of Congress as 'my boss'.
- Thank the staff member for meeting with you at the end of the meeting. Ask for the business card(s) of the staff at the meeting.

After the Meeting

- After your meeting, send a 'thank you' email to the staff with whom you met, ideally on the same day or the next day. In addition to thanking the staff, you can attach materials, and expand upon the topics you discussed. Your follow-up email is an equally important part of the policy process!

Follow-up with AUCD:

The AUCD Public Policy Team requests that you share the following information with us after your meeting(s):

- Office(s) met with and names of staff members that were present in the meeting;
- Brief list of what you discussed, and any follow-up needed from the AUCD Policy Team;
- [A survey](#) has been created to collect this information prior to and after the conference.

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