

Music Therapy Advocacy

State Action ToolKit



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A GUIDE TO THE TOOLKIT

Advocacy is a process of building relationships, educating, and asking. Advocacy is for anyone with a passion for and commitment to a cause or idea.

Advocacy is for YOU as you seek recognition of your music therapy profession and the MT-BC credential required for competent practice.

The purpose of the **Music Therapy Advocacy: State Action Toolkit** is to provide you with resources, tips, and ideas to jump-start your advocacy efforts. This Toolkit contains tip sheets to help you get “face-time” with your legislators as well as template letters to help you request personal meetings and invite them to tour your programs (*NOTE: Although we use the term “legislator” throughout the Toolkit, this information is applicable for all state government officials and other key decision makers*). To round out the Toolkit, we’ve included the most current talking points on the pressing issues facing music therapists and music therapy consumers.

And, most importantly, we’re here for you! Let us know if you have any questions or just want to bounce an idea off of us.

To your advocacy efforts!

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What is Advocacy?



ADVOCACY IS

Advocacy is for anyone.

An advocate is someone who tells a convincing story expressing a personal belief. Anyone can be a successful advocate regardless of experience or professional training. The most important attributes for an advocate are passion and commitment for a cause or idea.

Successfully communicating that passion is advocacy.

Advocacy is a process that requires perseverance.

Few advocacy campaigns are immediately successful. The target of the campaign must be made aware of the subject (music therapy) and that a problem exists. Only then can they be educated on the issues. The legislator also needs to know the solutions being proposed by the advocate and what he/she is being asked to do.

This process takes place via a series of contacts over a period of time. These contacts can include letter writing, telephoning, emailing, social media connecting, and personal visitations during which a relationship of respect develops. The legislator begins to believe in that advocate's cause and is ready to take the action being requested, ideally convincing fellow legislators to become involved as well.

Advocacy is a language.

The manner in which an issue is stated will impact the perception of the recipient. Much like a therapist, an advocate speaks to the needs of the clients, not the advocate.

Speaking as an advocate can be as simple as a therapist requesting new equipment to increase the client's therapeutic benefits rather than phrasing the request in terms of making it easier for the therapist to add new interventions to the program. An advocate will state the benefits of music therapy services to the facility's patients/clients and how music therapy could coordinate with other therapies to make them more effective rather than requesting that the facility hire a music therapist.

Third party reimbursement is also a major legislative issue. Rather than asking for reimbursement so a music therapist can continue in the profession, an advocate would request reimbursement to ensure that music therapy services would be accessible to all in the legislator's district who could benefit but who cannot afford them.



ADVOCACY AT A GLANCE

Step 1: Figure out who represents you

The first step is to know who to contact and to do a little background research into their interests. This will help you as you begin to develop a relationship with him/her.

Legislative Research (pg. 7)

Step 2: Making Contact

Step two involves reaching out and connecting with your state legislators through email, snail mail, and phone calls. This process involves letting them know about you, educating them about music therapy, and seeking their help in determining how to get music therapy recognized. It's a process that is very similar to the therapeutic process of building rapport.

A Strategy for Building Relationships: Letter Writing (pgs. 9-11)

Tips for Writing Letters (pgs. 12-14)

Tips for Sending Emails and Making Phone Calls (pg. 15)

Sample Letters (pgs. 16-20)

Step 3: Taking a Meeting

Face-to-face meetings with your legislator can happen in your community (e.g. a coffee shop), at their legislative office, or at your facility (e.g. a facility tour). This meeting is a continuation of Step 2 as you continue to educate your legislator about music therapy, let them know how music therapy helps their constituents, and seek their knowledge about how to get music therapy recognized.

Tips for Meeting and Talking with Legislators (pgs. 22-24)

Sample Talking Points (pgs. 25-26)

Advocacy Role Plays (pgs. 27-28)

5 Steps to a Great Facility Tour (pg. 29)

Step 4: Follow-Up

Perseverance and regular contact is about as important as initially making contact. After you initiate the relationship, you want to maintain it by keeping in touch.

Maintaining the Relationship (pg. 31)

Sample Letters (pgs. 32-33)

Step 5: Building your Grassroots Network

You are not alone in your advocacy efforts. Creating a network of colleagues, friends, and clients who believe in music therapy can strengthen your cause and impact.

Building a Network (pg. 35)

General Guidelines

- **Look to your State Task Force.** Over 30 states have active state task forces. They have been through this process and can help provide information, support, and contacts for you. So look up whether your state has a task force, find out who serves on your task force, and keep in touch with them.
- **Check for updates through AMTA and CBMT.** Both AMTA and CBMT plan to roll out new websites in Spring 2011 and each website will provide the latest information about the advocacy activity in each state. Periodically check for updates on each organization's website.
- **Be prepared.** Familiarize yourself with the included Talking Points and basic resources. The supplemental AMTA and CBMT Official Documents can be shared with your legislators and can be used as leave-behind materials.
- **Give yourself a pep talk.** Throughout this process, there's no need to be nervous. You are a voter. You take care of voters. Your family is full of voters. These legislators are elected to represent YOU, so relax, have fun with it, and be polite.
- **Get creative.** What we offer you in this Toolkit is just a starting point. If you have an upcoming event or some other ideas that you think are ripe for advocacy involvement, go for it!
- **Let us know how it goes.** We want to hear what you are doing and we may even want to brag on you! So send us and/or your task force members pictures and drop us a line.



Step 1: Who Represents You?



LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH

The first step is to know who to contact and to do a little background research into their interests. This will help you as you begin to develop a relationship with him/her.

1. **Find your state legislators.** Visit www.Congress.org and type your zip code into the search engine. You will find information about all your federal and state legislators, including contact information and links to their websites.
2. **Read the websites of your state legislators.** Look for their interests and legislative causes, especially those that overlap with music therapy interests (e.g. education, healthcare, aging, disability, etc.). This background research lets you know a little more about your legislator before you contact him/her.
3. **Take note of connections.** State legislative work is part-time and most state legislators keep their “day job.” As such, they are often still involved and active in the community. Music therapists have gone to church with their legislators, went to the same school as their children, and see them at the local coffee shop or gym. Take note of any connection you have with your state legislators. This type of personal connection can be used to help you begin to develop a relationship with him/her.



Step 2: Making Contact



A STRATEGY FOR BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS: LETTER WRITING

Each step in the strategy outlined below is designed to systematically build a relationship with the elected officials that represent you. Much like building a therapeutic relationship with a client, this involves clear, concise communication that is positive in nature and builds rapport and trust between both parties. It is also important to focus on building this relationship with the leadership for the area in which you live. *You are their constituent and they are concerned with earning your vote.*

Note: You can find more information about writing letters on pages 12-14 and samples letters on pages 16-20.

First Contact: A Written Introduction

Encourage each music therapist to write to his/her state Senator and state Representative/Assemblyperson. This written introduction can be MAILED OR EMAILED.

- ✓ This letter should open with a general statement thanking the legislator for something they have done or an issue they support that is important to the music therapist.

- ✓ Next the letter should introduce the music therapist, where they live and work, and the clients they serve.

- ✓ The order of information is up to the therapist, but the letter should include the following points:
 - Brief description of music therapy
 - Sample goals/benefits/outcomes for the population/setting where the music therapist works
 - Brief statement of how music therapy is recognized nationally
 - Information about how the state music therapists have formed a task force to seek official state recognition of the credential (MT-BC) necessary to practice.
 - Request for information and guidance on how best to acquire state recognition.

- ✓ Thank them for their assistance. Extend an invitation for the legislators to see music therapy in action (if possible).

- ✓ Keep letter to one page.

Second Contact: Educating About Music Therapy

Encourage each music therapist to write a second letter to his/her state Senator and state Representative/Assemblyperson approximately 2 months after the first letter.

- ✓ If the first letter received a response, the second letter should thank the legislator for that response.
- ✓ The content of this letter should go into more detail about music therapy and the individual therapist's work with a specific client population or within a specific facility.
 - Print out pdf versions of related AMTA and CBMT documents and include them with the letter
 - Include copies of the AMTA/CBMT Joint brochure, AMTA PR brochure, AMTA Reimbursement brochure, and CBMT brochure.
 - Describe an actual example of music therapy in action, making sure to maintain confidentiality of client and family.
- ✓ Re-state task force efforts of obtaining recognition of board certification within state statutes and regulations and ask for guidance if it has not yet been provided.
- ✓ Thank them again for their assistance and extend another invitation to visit your work setting (if possible) if they have not yet responded.

Third Contact: Building Interest

Encourage each music therapist to write a third letter to his/her state Senator and state Representative/Assemblyperson approximately 2 months after the second letter.

- ✓ If the previous letters received a first or second response, begin by thanking the legislator for those responses.
- ✓ The content of this letter should go into more detail about access to music therapy in the state. Utilize state survey results to create a packet that can be included with this letter. The packet should include information about the following:
 - Schools within the state that offer music therapy degree programs.
 - The number of clinical training/internship sites available in the state and the types of settings.
 - Information on the availability of music therapy services in legislative districts as well as within various facilities across the state.
- ✓ This letter should also contain more information about board certification.
 - Even though this information may have been included in the first letter, be sure to state that the credential "MT-BC" (Music Therapist-Board Certified) is issued by the Certification Board for Music Therapists (CBMT), an independent, non-profit corporation fully accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies. The "MT-BC" is granted by the CBMT upon successful completion of 1) an AMTA approved academic and clinical training program and 2) a written objective national examination.

- Indicate that the task force would like for state statutes and regulations to list the MT-BC as the credential necessary to practice music therapy in the state.
- Include a copy of the CBMT Scope of Practice and indicate that CBMT has an established system in place to identify competent clinicians and to re-certify these clinicians every five years.

✓ Offer to meet with the legislators in their district or state capitol offices (depending upon where each MT lives) to discuss music therapy state recognition further.

Fourth Contact: The Meeting

(see pages 22-24)



TIPS FOR WRITING LETTERS

Content of the Advocacy Letter

The following guidelines will be helpful when drafting your letter.

Locate Your Legislators' Names, Addresses, and Emails

In most states, you have two state legislators, a Senator and a Representative or Assemblyperson. Usually your voter registration card lists your Senate and House/ Assembly districts. The website www.Congress.org can assist you in locating your legislators based upon your zip code. In addition, most telephone directories have a section dedicated to government offices for elected officials.

Use Formal Business Letter Style

The date should be at the top of the page. The legislator's name and address should be just below, on the left margin, above the salutation. If you are sending a snail mail letter, close with a handwritten signature and your typed address, email, and phone number. If you email the text of your letter within the body of an email, you do not have to include the date and legislator's address, but do include your complete contact information after your typed signature. You could also use an electronic signature if you send your letter as an email.

Introduce Yourself

Begin your letter with a brief introduction including your name, city of residence, and your credentials. Add the facility where you work, the type of facilities if more than one, and location. If you are in private practice, indicate where it is located. Add a broad statement about your primary client population.

Introduce Your Work

The purpose of this letter is to create awareness of your work. You will need to define music therapy concisely with some descriptive phrases. For example, you might choose some, but not all, of the following defining points (try to state them in your own words).

Music therapy

- *is an established research-based profession.*
- *has over 60 years of clinical history in the U.S.*
- *provides individualized treatment interventions addressing goals and objectives determined through client assessment and evaluation.*
- *uses music as a treatment tool.*
- *addresses physical, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and social needs of individuals of all ages.*
- *is utilized in many different settings including general hospitals, schools, mental health agencies, rehabilitation centers, nursing homes, forensic settings, and private practice.*

Introduce Your Client Population

Re-state your client population, this time with additional descriptive words, and give examples of some common goals you address with your clients. This should be just enough for the reader to better understand what you do. Don't overwhelm the reader. Include just enough for the legislator to become curious and want to learn more.

Follow-Up

The last paragraph should include a statement about how the state music therapists have formed a task force to seek official state recognition of the credential (MT-BC) necessary to practice. Tell the legislator that you look forward to meeting with him or her to discuss music therapy and obtain his/her guidance on how best to acquire state recognition. Indicate that you will telephone the local office to schedule a meeting. Also state that at that time you hope to arrange for the legislator to visit your facility and observe one of your therapy sessions, if that is allowed. As a closing, invite the legislator to contact you for further information.

Include Enclosures

Enclose your business card, the AMTA/CBMT Joint Brochure, and possibly additional AMTA and CBMT brochures if available.

Letter Length

This letter should fit on one side of a page. Choose your words carefully, always looking for one word that can replace three. Each word should be essential to the purpose of that paragraph. You do not want the legislator to pass up your letter because it looks like it will take too long to read.

Always Proofread

Read your letter carefully. Along with looking for grammatical problems and typos, make sure that all points are made using advocacy language. The focus of this letter should be the benefits of therapy to your clients.

Share Your Results With Us

Please communicate with your state task force to let them know the names of legislators you contact as it is beneficial to keep track of these advocacy efforts. Even more importantly, share any responses you receive from your communication. This helps determine which legislators are potential supporters for future advocacy projects.

AMTA Tips for Writing an Advocacy Letter

AMTA's Professional Advocacy Committee lists guidelines for writing generic advocacy letters on the AMTA website. The following are some excerpts:

Before writing a letter, answer these 4 questions:

- Topic: What am I writing about?
- Purpose: What do I want done?
- Audience: To whom am I writing?
- Timing: When should I write?

Beginning a Letter

- Be persuasive.

- Get to the point quickly.
- Be positive and non-threatening.
- Present your credentials. (Simply identify yourself as a board-certified music therapist who lives and works in the community. Do not list college degrees.)
- Present facts and reasons for action.

Other Suggestions

- Use language effectively.
- Keep sentences and paragraphs short.
- Use active words (e.g. “urge” rather than “wish”).
- Use simple statements rather than complex ones.
- Use familiar words. Avoid jargon.
- Be specific, giving concrete ideas and examples.
- Be polite and tactful.

Avoid these mistakes:

- Unnecessary wordiness.
- Dullness or vagueness.
- Generalities, such as “everyone knows that...”
- Emotional statements and/or threats.
- Apologies for taking the reader’s time.

Writing Your Letter

- Make sure your letter is written in a professional style rather than a conversational style.
- If faxing or mailing, the letter should be typed, not hand-written.
- Be sure to do a spell and grammar check.
- Have someone else read it to see if you got your point across clearly and concisely.
- Never use a form letter.
- Use titles of respect on the letter: “Mr.,” “Ms.,” “Dr.,” etc.
- Check your resources to include the full and proper address.
- Include your contact information in the letter. Never send an anonymous letter, or a letter lacking a full return address. Doing so completely diminishes your credibility.

Following Up

- It is important to make provisions to follow up with the letter recipient. A closing that indicates you are looking forward to a reply, or that you will be in contact within a specified period of time, lets the recipient know you plan to follow up.



TIPS FOR SENDING EMAILS AND MAKING PHONE CALLS

Sending An Email

provided by Kush, C. (2004) *The One-Hour Activist*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Be sure your email “screams” constituent.
- Put the name and/or number of your district in the “Re:” link of the email. For example, “Re: Request from District 36”.
- Your voting address should be in the first line of any email that you send. For example, “My name is _____. I am a constituent who lives at ...”.
- When articulating the issue that concerns you, put personalized, local information in the body of the email. Like letters, the more personalized your email is, the better.
- Be brief and clear about your request. What is the specific action you want them to take?
- Proofread your email to avoid sloppiness.
- The impact of your email will only be strengthened by having established a relationship with your legislator via a face-to-face meeting prior to the email contact. A well-crafted email is a nice way to follow up a meeting by thanking the person for taking the time to meet with you and re-iterating or summarizing the points or request made in the meeting.

When and How to Make a Phone Call

provided by Kush, C. (2004) *The One-Hour Activist*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Phone calls are most effective when time is of the essence and a particular piece of legislation is being discussed or voted on.
- Call during business hours and establish that you are a constituent early in the call.
- State your position and refer to the bill by its number.
- Request a response from the legislator’s office regarding the outcome.
- Again, this tactic is much more effective if you have already established a relationship with the individual in the legislator’s office.

Sample Letter: A Written Introduction

Date

The Honorable [FULL NAME]
[STATE] Senate or House of Representatives or Assembly
[ADDRESS]

By Fax: [IN-DISTRICT OFFICE]

Dear [SENATOR/REPRESENTATIVE/ASSEMBLYMAN/WOMAN]:

Thank you for [LIST SOMETHING YOU LIKE ABOUT THIS LEGISLATOR]. As a music therapist in your district, I understand the importance of providing services for ***.

Many of your constituents currently benefit from music therapy services. With over [NUMBER] music therapists in [STATE] providing a variety of services in facilities such as nursing homes, schools, hospitals, hospices, group homes, pre-schools, and adult day programs, music therapy addresses a variety of goals. These goals can include decreasing anxiety prior to surgery, improving social skills in a group home, or engaging in life review in a hospice setting. Many of the parents of clients see the benefits of music therapy for their children. A music therapist may assist a child learn to tell time, count money, or improve communication using music as the tool.

As an allied health profession, recognized by the National Institutes of Health, music therapists must earn a bachelor's degree or higher in music therapy from one of over 70 American Music Therapy Association (AMTA) approved colleges and universities which includes 1,200 hours of clinical training. At the completion of academic and clinical training, students are eligible to take the national examination administered by the Certification Board for Music Therapists (CBMT), an independent, non-profit certifying agency fully accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies. After successful completion of the CBMT examination, graduates are issued the credential necessary for professional practice, Music Therapist-Board Certified (MT-BC).

The music therapists in [STATE] have formed a task force to pursue state recognition of the profession and the board certification required for practice. We understand the importance of obtaining official state recognition in order to increase access to services for the citizens of our state. [INSERT EXAMPLE OF CURRENT STATE RECOGNITION, IF IT EXISTS]

I would welcome the opportunity to talk with you in more detail about the benefits of music therapy for [STATE] residents and to seek your recommendations on how best to proceed with achieving state recognition for music therapy. If your schedule permits, I would like to invite you to visit *** and observe music therapy in action.

Thank you for your time and attention. I look forward to meeting you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Title

Music Therapy Facility/Organization Name

Sample Letter: Request an In-district Meeting

Date

The Honorable [FULL NAME]
[STATE] Senate or House of Representatives or Assembly
[ADDRESS]

By Fax: [IN-DISTRICT OFFICE]

Dear [SENATOR/REPRESENTATIVE/ASSEMBLYMAN/WOMAN]:

Music therapists from [INSERT MUSIC THERAPY FACILITY/ORGANIZATION/or COUNTY] would like the opportunity to meet with you in your office on [INSERT DATE/or offer SOMETIME DURING THE WEEK or MONTH OF...].

Since [our founding/beginning our practice/work] in [INSERT YEAR], [INSERT MUSIC THERAPY NAME] has cared for [INSERT NUMBER] individuals with [CLIENT POPULATION/DIAGNOSIS] and their families in [INSERT COMMUNITY/COUNTY/REGION].

During our visit, we would like to talk with you about music therapy, the services we provide our community, ideas to improve access to services, and how we may be of assistance to you and the constituents we serve.

We would appreciate any opportunity to meet with you. Please contact me at any time to schedule a meeting. I have enclosed my contact information.

Sincerely,

Your Name
Title
Music Therapy Facility/Organization Name

Sample Letter: Inviting a Representative to Visit Program

Date

The Honorable [FULL NAME]
[STATE] Senate or House of Representatives or Assembly
[ADDRESS]

By Fax: [SCHEDULER'S FAX NUMBER]

Dear Senator/Representative/ Assemblyman/woman [LAST NAME]:

On behalf of [INSERT NAME OF MUSIC THERAPY PROGRAM] in [INSERT CITY/TOWN], I would like to invite you to come tour our program during the upcoming recess.

We would like to share with you the services our program has provided our community for the last [INSERT NUMBER] years. During your visit, we welcome you to sit in on one of our music therapy sessions, meet some of our clients and greet our treatment team.

We are happy to work with your scheduler to find a date that works well for you. I will follow up on this scheduling request within a week.

All of us at [INSERT NAME OF MUSIC THERAPY PROGRAM] look forward to offering you a more personal look at music therapy services available in our community.

Sincerely,

Your Name
Title
Music Therapy Facility/Organization Name

Sample Letter: Following Up on Request

Date

The Honorable [FULL NAME]
[STATE] Senate or House of Representatives or Assembly
[ADDRESS]

By Fax: [SCHEDULER'S FAX NUMBER]

Dear Senator or Representative or Assemblyman/woman [LAST NAME]:

I am writing to follow up on the scheduling request that I faxed to your attention on [INSERT DATE].

The music therapists working at at [INSERT MUSIC THERAPY PROGRAM] are eager to meet with you to [INSERT REASON].

We are happy to work with you to find a time that is most convenient for you. [INSERT MUSIC THERAPY PROGRAM] eagerly looks forward to any opportunity to meet.

I have enclosed my contact information, should you or a member of your staff need further information.

Sincerely,

Your Name
Title
Music Therapy Facility/Organization Name



Step 3: Taking a Meeting



TIPS FOR MEETING AND TALKING WITH LEGISLATORS

Fourth Contact: The Meeting

(see pages 9-11 for Contacts #1-3)

- ✓ Answer questions and provide additional details about music therapy applications and the research to support the profession.
- ✓ Continue to seek guidance on obtaining official state recognition.
- ✓ Ask for referrals to other state officials who may be able to provide assistance with the process.
- ✓ Offer to serve as resource of information about music therapy within various education and healthcare settings.
- ✓ Take a photo of MT with legislator and submit article to local newspaper.
- ✓ Continue communication efforts every few months to maintain relationship.

Guidelines for Legislative Visits

A letter-writing campaign is only the introductory contact in the advocacy process. The follow-up visit to the legislator's local office (following the state legislative session) begins the process of educating the legislator about music therapy and influencing him/her to support our efforts for recognition.

State elected officials are from, and usually remain a part of, the local general public. These people have ventured into politics because they want to accomplish good things and often have particular issues or viewpoints they wish to promote and be successful with. They understand that their constituents also have important ideas and issues and do not like to say "no" to any constituent request. It is financial reality that forces them to set priorities, which permit support of only a limited number of issues.

To become one of those chosen, an issue must catch the legislator's attention and have influence. At a previous regional conference, a speaker from the ARC listed four ways for an issue to catch a legislator's attention and have influence:

1. **Money.** Re-election needs money. Since we are not offering financial incentives, this is not of interest to us.

2. **Personal Interest.** A legislator will support what he/she truly believes in or can relate to, especially if there is a personal connection. Point out that music therapy is beneficial to many of his or her constituents at all of life's stages and may, on some occasion, touch the legislator personally. To highlight how many music therapy clients are in the area, mention the number of local music therapists in the legislative district and what client populations are receiving services. Give examples of the settings, naming a few specific facilities where the legislator's constituents are receiving services. The legislator may know someone connected with a facility as either an employee or a patient. Make it personal.
3. **Constituents.** Truly heartfelt communications from a constituent will influence a legislator's vote. A constituent with solid information who has personal conviction and belief can tell the story of the issue with a sense of commitment. Communications from music therapy clients and their families telling their story of music therapy is very important. Just as compelling is to hear from those who want music therapy but are not able to access services either because there is not a local music therapist available or they are not able to afford it.
4. **Good Press.** Good press and publicity are the basis for a successful re-election campaign. They also assure the elected official that he/she is popular and the constituents are happy. Suggest a local newspaper article detailing the ways in which the legislator has supported and promoted music therapy. A photo of the legislator and the music therapist would be a bonus. This is a prime opportunity for the music therapist to write a community awareness article that will receive greater visibility due to the political connection.

5 Steps to Effective Meetings with Elected Officials

1. **At your meeting, briefly and sufficiently describe the key issue.** Focus on only one or two key issues. Your time may be limited to 10 or 15 minutes. Include points about how the issue affects the Legislator's constituents, including your clients and their families. Always prepare a solution for every problem you present.
2. **Bring written materials to leave with your Legislator.** Include a brief cover memo with attachments expanding on your key issues. For your own use, develop talking points and stick with your message.
3. **Tell your Legislator how important music therapy is to the district and/or state.** Describe the population you serve, the types of services you provide, list numbers of clients served, point out the cost-effectiveness of music therapy, and the difference that your services make in your clients' lives.
4. **Ask for a commitment regarding how your Legislator will help.** For example, depending on what the Legislator suggests for resolving the issue, you might want to ask him or her to cosponsor a specific bill, write about your concerns, talk to the chairman of the committee that handles the issue, or go on a site tour with you.
5. **Follow up...and follow up again.** Within a few days of your visit, send a letter thanking the Legislator for his or her time, and briefly restate your issue and

request. Follow up a week later with a phone call to see if you can provide any additional information.

What are the things your state legislator wants to know?

provided by Kush, C. (2004) *The One-Hour Activist*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

What are the local statistics?

Present insights about the issue that come directly from your district. For example, how many people are you and/or your agency serving?

How is the money currently being spent in the district or state?

Are you currently receiving any state or federal funding you can demonstrate is well-spent? Can you demonstrate a cost-benefit for spending available money on music therapy?

Real-life stories that illuminate the statistics.

This is the part we all love about our jobs -- a success story. Who, specifically, in their district is benefiting and how? Share a "real-life" story as an example.

Your visibility and connectedness with the district or state.

This is where your network comes in. How many people are invested in this cause or concern and how are they mobilized? Communicate the types/numbers of individuals that are involved in the cause without being threatening.

The specific legislative action that you are seeking (e.g. "the ask").

Be clear, concise, and specific about what you need and want from this individual. Do you need sponsorship for legislation? Support for legislation going forward? Don't beat around the bush, know what you are asking for and make the request specific.



SAMPLE TALKING POINTS

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to meet with us.

Talk to you today about music therapy and its applications with different populations [related to your department/available in your district].

Start with a definition of Music Therapy-share some general information: AMTA PR BROCHURE

Applications in a wide variety of health and educational settings.

Qualified music therapists are board certified through a national exam conducted by the Certification Board for Music Therapists: CBMT SCOPE OF PRACTICE, CBMT BROCHURE, and STATE FACT SHEET

Research supports the use of music therapy across a broad spectrum of ages and disabilities. From pre-mature infants in NICUs, all the way to Alzheimer's clients in nursing homes, and many individuals in-between. Research demonstrates that music therapy can assist clients achieve functional outcomes in social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and spiritual domains.

(We have brief fact sheet and research documents categorized by different disabilities and treatment areas which we can forward to you for your review. We believe they provide evidence of music therapy's effectiveness and offer a glimpse at the impact music therapy services has on the residents of STATE.)

Music therapy is a reimbursable service through select Medicare programs, through some state Medicaid waivers, and on a case-by-case basis with private insurance companies. In more than 30 states, music therapy is a covered service under a variety of state agency programs, such as special education, developmental disabilities, mental health, substance abuse, and social services. REIMBURSEMENT BROCHURE

We are currently addressing a state recognition operational plan in collaboration with our professional association, AMTA, and our Certification Board, CBMT, to insure access to music therapy services for individuals who need music therapy. This plan follows our association's mission of increasing awareness of music therapy benefits and increasing access to quality music therapy services. AMTA/CBMT JOINT BROCHURE

We are seeking clarification within state agency documents/regulations to specifically list music therapy as a recognized service and the MT-BC credential as the required credential for practice.

- Education: Inclusion as a related service

- Aging: NH-Activity Directors-Therapy Providers
- Mental Health Facilities: Qualified Providers
- Medicaid: Inclusion in Home and Community Based Waiver Programs

We are seeking recognition of the MT-BC credential as equal to state licensure so service access is made easier. We are interested in learning the recommended method for state recognition of our national board certification.

We appreciate your assistance and welcome your recommendations on how best to move forward with this project.



ADVOCACY ROLE PLAYS

This exercise will vary depending on the size of the group, but it's best to not have more than 3 MTs talking with 1 "acting" legislator at a time. Offices usually are not very big, so logistically a smaller group is better. Plus, with this plan, each therapist has an opportunity to speak and no one gets left out of the process.

So...divide the group as needed and realize you may need to go through this a few times for everyone to have a turn.

It's best to demonstrate once with the speakers/task force playing all the parts and then have the speakers/task force serve as the legislators while session participants play themselves.

Each small group of MTs needs to have an action plan of who will speak when and in what order. Although the MTs can not anticipate every question, if they go in knowing who will answer certain questions, or who will at least initially respond and then turn to the others who may be better qualified to answer a particular question, that system will work best.

Sample dialogue (Please vary as you like)

Legislator: Welcome. Please come in. I'm

MTs: *Introduce themselves and where they live.*

L: What brings you to.....?

MT #1: We are here to talk with you about the benefits of music therapy for the residents of our state and to seek your support in obtaining official state recognition of our national board certification.

L: Oh, I've heard of music therapy. You play the harp when people are dying, right?

MT #2: There are musicians who offer that service, but they are not necessarily music therapists. The profession of music therapy is actually much more than that one example. We work in....*give brief list of settings and general MT definition.*

L: So do you teach people how to play an instrument? You know, I used to play the trumpet in high school.

MT #3: Do you still play?

Allow time for the legislator to talk about their personal experience with music.

Then continue: Sometimes MTs do use instrument instruction as a way to reach therapy treatment goals but we use a wide variety of music and techniques to help our clients make progress. For example, *then offer 3 examples of 3 different types of client interventions.*

L: I never knew music therapy did all that. So what I can do for you today?

MT #1: The music therapists in our state have been working with our national association and our certification board to seek official state recognition of our national credential. We are interested in the state accepting our board certification as the criteria for state certification, state registration or state licensure. Because we currently do not have official state recognition, access to services for the residents of our state can be difficult.

MT #2: We are listed within some state regulations, but the language is inconsistent across agencies. This causes confusion for facilities that employ music therapists and for agencies that do or could potentially fund music therapy. State recognition would eliminate these inconsistencies and improve access to quality music therapy services.

L: Well, I'm not on the committee that looks at state licensure but I could make a call to Senator..... and ask about the process. Would that help you?

MT #3: Thank you, that would be very helpful. We have some print materials we would like to leave with you to explain music therapy benefits in more detail. If you have any questions about music therapy with a specific client population or in a particular setting, we would be more than happy for you to come visit one of us, so you could see music therapy in action.

L: That sounds great! I really learned a lot today. Thanks for coming in to see me. I will do my best to help you.

MTs: Thank you! Here are our business cards. Feel free to contact us with any questions. We will be in touch in a couple of weeks to see what the next steps should be in obtaining state recognition.

This is a brief example, but it gives the participants an idea of what types of questions or statements might arise and how to respond and re-direct the conversation if needed.

Another option is for the MTs to offer information about MT with a specific population based on the knowledge that the legislator already has an interest in that area.

Other role plays can have the legislator asking more questions about certain client populations of interest to them. Other questions from the legislators could be about how music therapy is reimbursed or about how other states recognize music therapy.

Instruct the participants to *NEVER* make up an answer. If they are presented with a question they can not answer, let the legislator know they will seek the information and get back to him ASAP.



5 STEPS TO A GREAT FACILITY TOUR

Step One: Fax or email a polite, professional invitation letter to the legislator or in care of the staff person who schedules meetings.

Depending on the size of your state, your Legislator may have a Legislative Assistant (LA), or an Office Director, who assists in scheduling meetings. Respond to these individuals in a professional manner, as they can be invaluable to future communication and activity. When requesting a site visit, mention the number of clients who receive music therapy services, your service area, and the size of the facility, including the number of employees.

Step Two: Be as flexible as you can about the timing of a tour.

This would likely occur when the legislature is not in session. Allow adequate time for the legislator and his or her staff to get a sense of your program, and leave some time for questions.

Step Three: In conversations with staff about a potential tour, offer to invite the local media or a photographer to accompany the legislator on the tour.

If a tour is scheduled, alert the press beforehand about the visit.

Step Four: During the tour, involve employees – and patients, if possible.

Let the legislator meet some of the people involved in your program. Your legislator represents employees, patients, and their families.

Step Five: Share key facts about your program.

These include: what types of clients your organization serves, what types of services are provided, how many employees work at the facility, the economic impact of the facility in the region, and other information about the role that your organization plays in the community, and in the lives of clients and their families.



Step 4: The Follow-Up



MAINTAINING THE RELATIONSHIP

Perseverance and follow through are about as important as the initial series of letters, emails, and phone calls. These are the steps that maintain your relationship with your legislator and keeps music therapy on their “radar.” There are several different ways to follow through and the exact measures you take will vary based on the situation. Here are some general guidelines:

Send Thank you Notes

Thank you notes should be mailed or emailed following *any* face-to-face meeting. You will want to 1) thank your legislator for taking time to visit with you and 2) offer yourself as a resource should s/he have any questions.

Maintain Contact

It’s generally a good idea to continue contacting your state legislators on a regular basis.

- If there’s legislative activity happening in your state, your contact may be monthly, weekly, or multiple times a week. This may include emails to update your legislator on the latest activity or phone calls asking him/her to support a certain bill.
- If there’s no legislative activity happening, send your legislator an email or written letter at least every quarter. This may be as simple as a brief email to say hi and remind him/her to contact you if s/he has any questions.
- If there’s relevant news or media coverage that relates to music therapy (especially if it is a local story that features how music therapy benefits their constituents and/or residents in your state), email your legislator with a link to that story.

Sample Letter: Thank You for the In-district Meeting

Date

[LEGISLATOR or STAFF MEMBER'S FULL NAME]
[IN-DISTRICT OFFICE ADDRESS]

By Fax: [IN-DISTRICT OFFICE FAX]

Dear [INSERT LEGISLATOR'S or STAFFER'S NAME]:

I am writing to thank you for meeting with me/[INSERT PROGRAM NAME] at your office on [INSERT DATE]. You certainly made us feel welcome.

Thank you again for spending time with us/me. I/We look forward to future opportunities to discuss the benefits of music therapy for residents of [STATE]. I have enclosed my contact information, should you or a member of your staff need further information.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Title

Music Therapy Facility/Organization Name

Sample Letter: Thank You for Accepting Our Invitation

DATE

[Scheduler's Name]

[Office]

[ADDRESS]

BY FAX: [SCHEDULER'S FAX NUMBER]

Dear [Scheduler's Name]:

Thank you for working so patiently with us to schedule a visit from [INSERT SENATOR/ REPRESENTATIVE/ ASSEMBLYMAN/ WOMAN NAME]. We are delighted that the visit will work for [HIS/HER] recess schedule. We've already begun making preparations.

I will forward an agenda for your records in a week or so. Please don't hesitate to contact me, should you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you again,

Your Name

Title

Music Therapy Facility/Organization Name



Step 5: Building Your Grassroots Network





BUILDING A NETWORK

Effective advocacy is a group effort. As such, it's important to begin creating a network of individuals who can assist you at various stages in the advocacy process.

Who should be Included in your Network?

- Music therapists in your state
- Clients and/or their families (including parents/guardians)
- Businesses and Agencies you serve
- Any other advocate of music therapy, such as other professionals on your treatment team that are "music therapy friendly"

Helpful Information to Have about the People in your Network

- Who are they?
- Where do they live?
- Where do they work?
- What populations do they serve or are they connected to?
- How long have they served in that capacity?
- (For the music therapists in your group) How are they funded?
- Do they know others that might be willing to help with your cause?

How can Members of your Network Help the Task Force?

- Learn who serves their particular district.
- What are the political and personal interests of those individuals (e.g. Do they have a child with a disability? A parent in a nursing home?)?
- Provide information about current or potential funding and/or advocacy for music therapy.
- Contact their state legislators to begin building a relationship and educating them...BEFORE any specific action is needed.
- Invite interested parties to discuss and, if possible, to observe music therapy in action in their district.



Official AMTA/CBMT Documents



OFFICIAL AMTA AND CBMT DOCUMENTS

These nine AMTA and CBMT publications are available in pdf form in the supplemental “Official Documents” folder available with this ToolKit. They are meant to help you educate state-level legislators, government officials, and other key decision makers on the educational, clinical training, continuing education, and scope of practice standards required of qualified music therapists.

The following documents are available:

AMTA Advanced Competencies

Outlines competency-based standards for ensuring the quality of education and clinical training in the field of music therapy. The *Advanced Competencies* outlines where a music therapist applies and integrates a comprehensive synthesis of theories, research, treatment knowledge, musicianship, clinical skills, and personal awareness to address client needs. This music therapist has at least a bachelor’s degree or its equivalent in music therapy, a current professional designation, professional experience, and further education and/or training.

AMTA Code of Ethics

Applies to all qualified music therapists, music therapy students, and music therapy interns. The *Code of Ethics* lays out principles that support our right to freedom of inquiry and communication and our acceptance of the responsibilities inherent in that freedom.

AMTA Educational and Clinical Training Standards

Outlines competency-based standards for all three levels of education (bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral), with guidelines for the various curricular structures that are in line with standards defined by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM).

AMTA Professional Competencies

Outlines competency-based standards for ensuring the quality of education and clinical training in the field of music therapy. The *Professional Competencies* are designed for those with a baccalaureate degree in music therapy or its equivalent, which leads to entrance into the profession and Board Certification in Music Therapy.

AMTA Standards of Clinical Practice

Designed to assist practicing music therapists and their employers, the *Standards for Clinical Practice* describes rules for measuring the quality of music therapy services.

CBMT Code of Professional Practice

Describes professional and ethical standards in order to protect consumers of music therapy services and the public from harm and to insure the validity of the MT-BC credential. All

Board-Certified Music Therapists must adhere to the *Code of Professional Practice* or risk disciplinary action.

CBMT Scope of Practice

Revised every five (5) years following a *Practice Analysis Study*, the *Scope of Practice* defines the body of knowledge that represents competent practice in the profession of music therapy and identifies what an MT-BC may do in practice.

AMTA Cost Effectiveness References

Outlines three (3) studies that have investigated the cost-effectiveness of music therapy. This document includes citations for all three published studies and bullet-points of their major findings.

AMTA National Recognition of Music Therapy

Although we are working at advocating and achieving recognition at the state level, knowledge of how music therapy is recognized nationally can provide further support for your cause. This document outlines nine ways music therapy is recognized at the federal level.