



Take Your Legislator To Work



Utah Developmental
Disabilities Council™

utah department of
human services
SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Welcome to the Take Your Legislator to Work Campaign!

Thank you for wanting to share your employment experiences with lawmakers! You are representing individuals with disabilities who want to work in the community and make a living wage. You will show your elected official that work is important for everyone. Everyone deserves a job so they can pay taxes, give to the community, and make our state a better place to live. Leaders in the State of Utah are working to create more jobs, and by participating in this campaign, you get to show your skills and talents to your lawmaker. The Utah Developmental Disabilities Council (UDDC) and the Division of Services for People with Disabilities (DSPD) want to show the employability of individuals with disabilities. We want to show everyone how you contribute to Utah's workforce. You can help educate your legislator and help them make good decisions about spending public money and help support their goal to create more opportunities for integrated community employment.

Thank you!

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Getting Started

In this program, we will focus on educating and advocating for the things that matter to us through written and spoken communication tools, like letter writing, phone calls, and virtual meetings. Staff will be available to help you every step of the way!

When you participate, you will:

- Create an outline to write a letter
- Create a final version and mail it back to staff
- Decide if you want to do a phone call with your lawmaker to talk about your job
- Staff will mail the letter to the lawmaker and will help you set up a visit if you want it!

What's a Legislator?

Before you get started, you'll want to decide who to invite. When we use the term "legislator," that could mean many things. State lawmakers often focus on increasing the number of jobs or supporting employers who hire people with disabilities, through spending money and creating state programs. Or, a city council member or your mayor might be a good person to invite, and there many county officials who are disability advocates. There are a lot of legislators to consider!

You can schedule your visit for any time of the year. Doing it when lawmakers are deciding about employment policy is a great time. Utah's legislative session occurs between January and March, but lawmakers are often busy during this time; meeting right before the start of session is often easier. October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month, which makes autumn perfect for a visit. Anytime of the year can work for you!

Take it Step by Step

Step 1: Fill out the Participant Information Form online here: <https://forms.gle/igweBcvCUfX6oxNg6>

Step 2: Tell your employer that you are participating. Invite them to support you with your letter and ask if they would like to join you on a video call or virtual job visit. (There is a letter at the end of this packet that you can give to your employer if you'd like help explaining the program.) Plan for a 15-30 minute call or virtual job visit with the lawmaker.

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Step 3: Find your legislator. Remember, you can choose any type of legislator that represents you. If you are not sure who your state legislators are, visit www.le.utah.gov. For a step-by-step guide to finding your lawmaker, you can visit <https://bit.ly/3dNlkEr> For your city and county officials, you can google or call your city or county offices to find out who represents you there and find out how to contact them. (You can ask Council staff for help with this if you get stuck!) Write their information at the bottom of this page.

Step 4: Let others know that you are participating. If someone is helping you, give them the Support Packet. If possible, we will arrange for them to also come along for the visit. Encourage your employer, your job coach, and other people who are supporting you to write a letter of their own, and invite them to join the virtual visit. Staff can help you share the information so everyone is included!

Step 5: Prepare for your virtual visit! The next few pages in this packet include ideas to make this visit memorable.

Name: Senator

Phone:

Email:

Name: Representative

Phone:

Email:

Planning Your Letter: Write an Draft

Before you get started, here are a few things to consider:

Can I talk about my job in a positive way? Do I need to learn a little bit more about how to share my story in a letter? What kind of support will you need?

What Do I Write About?

Your legislator is a regular person just like you, your family, and friends. They want to get to know you. Many people think they have to be “experts” to talk to their legislators. Not so! Take your Legislator to Work is an awareness campaign. It’s about real jobs for a living wage - something you are already an expert on!

Prepare questions and practice what you want to share in your letter. You can write:

- “I like my job at _____” or “my job is_____”
- “I work _____days and _____hours”
- “I like my job because _____”
- “I want to work here because _____”
- “Working is important for people with disabilities because we _____”
- “People with disabilities want to contribute to the community. We want to _____”
- “My dreams for the future are _____”
- “Some of my friends with disabilities work at _____”
- Write an explanation about your employer, your boss, your friends at work, and your co-workers.

The next page is a “sloppy copy.” You can write the first version of your letter here. Cross things out, add other things, make changes. This is not the final version! You will use this to write the final version once you have all your thoughts down.

Sloppy Copy

A series of horizontal lines for handwriting practice.



Final Copy

Use the next 3 pages to write your final version of your letter. Be sure to include your personal information at the end so your lawmaker knows you are his or her constituent (the person they represent) and so they can follow up with you later!

Mail your final letter to:
5296 S Commerce Drive Ste. 305
Murray, UT 84107

Example:

Dear [write the lawmaker's name here]

[WRITE YOUR LETTER HERE!!]

Sincerely,

[your name]
 [Your address]
 [your phone]

Dear _____,





utah department of
human services
SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Sincerely,

Planning Your Virtual Visit

Work with program staff to find a time that works for you and for your lawmaker, and follow the steps below to have an impactful visit! You should decide what you are comfortable with and what technology you have access to before you or staff contacts your lawmaker. Of course, the easiest option is a video call or phone call with your lawmaker, but virtual tours are highly impactful and show your job in action! In both cases, have a copy or draft of your letter so you know what information to share. Be prepared to talk about your job and your coach or other support.

If your conversation is a phone call:

You can use your regular house, cell, or smartphone to join. If you have access to a computer or tablet or smartphone with video capabilities and are comfortable with it, consider doing a video call so you can meet your lawmaker face to face. Remember, they are a person just like you and they want to hear from their constituents!

During the call:

- Introduce yourself, introduce or tell about your employer, and how long you have worked there
- Share some of the items from your letter, such as your future goals or what you love about your job
- Share your feelings about how having a good job has helped you

If you are giving your legislator a virtual tour of your job:

You'll need to have a video-capable phone, tablet, or computer for this option. Staff will help you set up the call and can provide extra instruction for how to use Google Meet. At the time of your appointment, join the call and invite others to participate with you. Remember, you will want your employer's permission before you begin.

During the call:

- Introduce your employer, job coach, and co-workers to the legislator
- If possible, give your legislator a "tour" of your workplace
- If you are able, show him or her you do at work on camera.

No matter what kind of call you have with your lawmaker, you are doing really important advocacy for our community! Thank you for your efforts!

After the Visit

Tell Your Lawmaker Thank You!

After the event, please send a thank you note to your legislator after your visit. A heart-felt “Thank You” will make the visit memorable for your legislator, so please send a note that reminds them of the visit. Please provide your contact information to keep the doors of communication open. We hope that you will get to know your legislator and stay in contact after the Take your Legislator to Work visits!

Dear _____,

I really enjoyed meeting you and talking my workplace, _____. Thank you for learning about my job and sharing my love of my work and my community. I look forward to staying in touch with you.

Thank you,

Dear _____,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me. I hope our conversation about the importance of community employment will help you with the difficult decisions you are facing in the legislature. If I could be of further assistance in the future, please call me at (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

Sincerely,

Don't forget your employer!

Here is an idea for a sample note to thank your employer. You can also create your own.

Dear _____,

Thank you for allowing me to invite my legislator to attend a virtual visit/for joining me on a phone call with my legislator. I wanted to show how much I enjoy my work. I wanted them to see how important my work is. I appreciate working for you and with my co-workers.

Sincerely,

After the event, the UDDC will create a report of stories about people with disabilities working in the community to give to all the legislators, the governor, and you!

The UDDC and DSPD look forward to sharing your experiences!



Thank you! The Utah Developmental Disabilities Council and the Utah Division of Services for People with Disabilities would like to take this opportunity to thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to participate in this campaign and for sharing part of your day with your legislator. Your participation will help shine a positive light on the valuable work citizens with disabilities contribute to Utah.

Continue to work hard!