

State Grassroots Liaisons Roles and Responsibilities

Advocacy in Action



Updated: January 2025

State Grassroots Liaisons

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History of State Grassroots Liaisons (SGLs)

In 2004, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) created the State Grassroots Liaison (SGL) program. This program was initiated to build a stronger grassroots network for the AACN membership. In its first year, a single Dean/Director/Chair from each state volunteered for this important role and agreed to serve as an SGL for at least two years. As an SGL, the Dean/Director/Chair assisted AACN's Government Affairs Committee (GAC) and AACN's Government Affairs and Policy (GAP) team by bridging connections between the national association and their members of Congress. The program has since expanded and many states currently have at least two SGLs who help meet the advocacy needs of the organization.

Continuing the Strong Tradition: Serving as an SGL

AACN strongly believes that the SGL role is essential to the organization's ability to advance academic nursing on Capitol Hill and within the Administration. Deans/Directors/Chairs, who have committed their time as an SGL, understand the importance of strengthening relationships between their members of Congress and AACN. Personal connections to congressional districts and states are paramount in AACN's ability to have members of Congress support policies that align with AACN's Federal Policy Agenda and advance issues impacting academic nursing.

SGLs are Deans/Directors/Chairs who are eligible to attend the Annual Dean's Meeting and Academic Nursing Leaders Conference (ANLC) in Washington D.C. SGLs are selected with one or more of the following criteria to ensure diversity among SGLs within each state: size of school, geographic distribution, past participation in Capitol Hill visits, and past participation in AACN Action Alerts. SGLs are asked to serve at least one, two-year term and are welcome to serve multiple terms. During their terms, SGLs have support from the GAC and AACN GAP staff. The decision to continue at any time during the two-year period is at the discretion of the SGL.

SGL Roles and Responsibilities



Serve as a
State
Advocacy
Leader



Participate
in Quarterly
Meetings



Eligible to
Lead State
During
Conference
Hill Visits



Bring State
Issues to
AACN Staff



Encourage
Response
to Action
Alerts

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General Responsibilities

Encourage Responses to Action Alerts

AACN Action Alerts are sent when an immediate response from AACN members to federal legislators is necessary to help advance a moving policy issue. SGLs must be vigilant to the time sensitive nature of AACN Action Alerts. When AACN Action Alerts are received, SGLs should follow-up with state colleagues by sharing the action alert, sending an email, or making a personal phone call. SGLs should also respond to all AACN Action Alerts by contacting their own Senators and Representative depending on the specific request.

Participate in Quarterly Meetings

Quarterly meetings are held in January, March, July, and October. These calls are either held virtually, in-person, or through a hybrid approach. These conversations provide an opportunity to discuss current AACN policy and advocacy initiatives.

Advise on Advocacy Needs of Membership

SGLs are on the frontlines of AACN advocacy. SGLs maintain regular communication with their state colleagues and know what support is essential to assist AACN with its federal advocacy effort. It is important SGLs communicate these observations to AACN GAP staff so AACN's advocacy methods and procedures can be enhanced and continue to yield effective results.

Procedure for Retiring & New SGLs

When an SGL retires or decides to step down, it is the responsibility of the SGL to notify AACN GAP staff. Your AACN team will then inform the GAC Chair of the SGL opening. AACN GAP staff will work with the GAC Chair and remaining co-liaison (if applicable) to select a new SGL based on the criteria outlined above. GAP staff will communicate with prospective SGL to determine interest in this position. Once interest is confirmed by the prospective SGL, the GAC Chair will make a final decision and work with GAP staff to send a welcome letter. If there is only one liaison for the entire state or both liaisons leave the program, the GAC Chair, in consultation with the GAP team, will work to fill the position(s). Suggested names of potential replacement SGLs are considered.

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Capitol Hill Visits

SGLs will work with GAP staff and our scheduling consultants to help prepare their state delegation for Capitol Hill Visits, which occur during AACN's Annual Dean's Meeting and at the ANLC (during non-election years). The GAP team will communicate and review the process with SGLs prior to Hill Day so SGLs are able to effectively communicate logistics and answer any questions from their state delegation. Below is an outline of what to expect leading up to Hill Day.

HILL VISIT

Timeline

SIX-WEEKS OUT

Scheduling for Hill visits (in both House and Senate) will begin by AACN GAP staff and scheduling consultants. AACN will work with scheduling consultants to schedule all Hill visits.

FOUR-WEEKS OUT

SGLs will receive draft list of Hill day participants from your state. Please note students will join the Spring Hill Day and their Deans are asked to participate in Hill Day too.

ONE-WEEK OUT

All AACN Hill Day attendees, including SGLs, will receive an email with information on the Mobile Tool, where you will find key materials for the Hill Day. Final documents, including a final schedule, will be provided at the morning prep session on AACN's Hill Day.

MORNING BEFORE HILL DAY

SGLs will have a final review session and pick up any materials at the SGL Breakfast the morning before Hill Day.

ON HILL DAY

All Hill Day attendees will receive a final printed schedule during the Hill Day prep session the morning of Hill Day. SGLs will attend this session to answer any questions from their state delegation. Should SGLs have any feedback from Hill visits, you can enter it in the Mobile Tool provided.

State Grassroots Liaisons

State Legislative Issues

The GAC has approved standard procedures on how AACN members, SGLs, and the GAP team should proceed if a request for AACN to weigh in on a state-level legislative issue comes forth. The procedure for AACN's state engagement is as follows:



Request for Engagement

When a member requests AACN's engagement on a state issue, the requesting member must certify they have already discussed the issue with other AACN members in the state and that there is agreement among them. SGLs should expect to be notified by GAP team if a request is brought forth and to provide additional insight and guidance on the issue.



Taking a National Scan

The GAP team will consult with colleagues at other national organizations, with state government affairs staff, or university lobbyist (if applicable), and necessary and appropriate coalitions, as appropriate. The GAP team may incorporate the insights of these organizations, or choose how best to proceed, based on their input.



Review and Submission

If no objections are raised to AACN's engagement, the GAP team will draft the statement. It will be sent back to the requestor to ensure it meets the original intent. If approved, the statement will be submitted to AACN's Chair of the Board for review. If process is finalized with the Chair's signature, it will be submitted to the recipient or other state entity with jurisdiction and the GAC will be notified.

Contact:
Rachel Minahan
Director of Government Affairs
Phone: 202-463-6930 ext. 271
Email: rminahan@aacnnursing.org

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