AACN's State Grassroots Liaisons

Advocacy & Action

UPDATED: OCTOBER 2018
STATE GRASSROOTS LIAISON

OVERVIEW OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

**HISTORY OF SGL'S**

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 from each state volunteered for this important role and agreed to serve as an SGL for two years. As an SGL, the Dean/Director assisted the Government Affairs Committee (GAC) and Government Affairs (GA) 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.

**SGL SERVICE AND SUPPORT**

AACN's GAC strongly believes that the SGL role is essential in the organization's ability to advance academic nursing on Capitol Hill. Deans/Directors, 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 education and health care through a nursing lens.

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 one, two-year term and are welcome to serve multiple terms. During their terms, SGLs have support from the GAC and GA team. The decision to continue at any time during the two-year period is at the discretion of the SGL.

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<th><strong>SGL'S ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES</strong></th>
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<td><strong>1</strong> Serve as an Advocacy Leader for your State</td>
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<td><strong>2</strong> Participate in Quarterly Conference Calls</td>
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<td><strong>3</strong> Coordinate Hill Visits for Fall and Spring Meetings</td>
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PARTICIPATE IN QUARTERLY CALLS
Quarterly conference calls are held in January, March, July, and October. These calls provide an opportunity to discuss current AACN policy and advocacy initiatives.

ENCOURAGE AND RESPOND 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 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.

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 advocacy effort. It is important SGLs communicate these observations to the GAC and GA team so AACN's advocacy methods and procedures can be enhanced and continue to yield effective results.

COORDINATE HILL VISITS FOR FALL AND SPRING MEETINGS
SGLs are responsible for scheduling and coordinating Hill visits for their state delegation at AACN's Spring and Fall meetings. The GA team will have held a quarterly SGL conference call in advance to review the process for scheduling visits and for disseminating information about these Hill visits with their state delegation. The GA staff will also send out reminders regarding this responsibility. SGLs should refer to AACN's Guide to Scheduling Hill Visits document for general direction on how to initiate contact with Congressional office and scheduling a visit.

When an SGL retires or decides to step down, it is the responsibility of the SGL to notify the GA team. The GA team will then inform the GAC Chair of the SGL opening. The GA team will work with the GAC Chair and remaining co-liaison (if applicable) to select a new SGL based on the criteria outlined above. Once a decision is made, the GAC Chair will contact the potential SGL. If the individual declines, a new candidate will be selected. If there is only one liaison for the entire state or both liaisons leave the program, the GAC Chair, in consultation with the GA team, will work to fill the position(s). Suggested names of potential replacement SGLs are considered.
1) Schedule and Coordinate Senate Visits during Spring and Fall Meetings
- One month prior to the AACN Spring and Fall Meetings, the SGL contacts the offices of their Senators and arrange for the Deans/Directors of their state to meet with the Health Legislative Assistants (LAs). The SGL collects the names of the Deans/Directors who will be attending the visit so this information can be passed along to the Senate Health LAs.
- SGLs who do not plan to attend a Spring/Fall Meeting should still make every effort to schedule Senate visits for any members of their delegation who will be in Washington, DC, or coordinate with another AACN member in their state to schedule them.
- Please Note: The GA team will only consider requests for assistance in scheduling Senate office visits that directly come from SGLs. This is to help ensure that duplicate meetings are not made with a single office, for it may be the case that an SGL has already secured a meeting. However, if an individual AACN member’s SGL(s) is/are not present at the Spring or Fall Meetings, the GA team will assist in scheduling a Senate office visit for that state delegation.

2) Encourage State Colleagues to Schedule House Visits
- The SGL also encourages state colleagues to make House visits during the Spring and Fall Meetings. It is at the discretion of the SGL, but this can either be done by sending an email to their AACN colleagues in the state or by making personal phone calls.
- It is the role of the SGL to answer questions regarding Hill visits and refer to AACN’s GA team for specific support or guidance. If an individual AACN member is experiencing difficulty with securing a House office visit, they should first confer with their SGL(s). However, if further assistance is needed, the GA team will facilitate scheduling a meeting with a House office for that individual AACN member.

3) Communicate Congressional Visits with GA Staff
- SGLs will notify the GA team of scheduled Senate and House visits at least five business days prior to the commencement of the Spring/Fall Meeting. If an SGL does not anticipate being present at the upcoming Spring/Fall Meeting, the SGL will notify the GA team, and should also alert members of their state delegation.

4) Coordinate the Message to Capitol Hill
- The day of the Senate visits the SGL gathers the AACN advocacy packets from the GA team. It is the responsibility of the SGL to ask the GA team if there are any messages that should be communicated to either of their Senators or Representatives.
- The SGL coordinates the message that will be delivered to the Senators’ staff by referring to the AACN talking points. SGLs should ensure that members of the group contribute to the discussion by addressing a specific point and/or provide examples of how their schools of nursing have benefited from specific federal programs (e.g. Title VIII or NINR programs). A session will be scheduled at Spring and Fall Meetings to provide an opportunity for state delegations to convene and discuss strategy for Hill visits.

5) Ensure Follow-ups and Evaluations are Completed
- After the Senate visits, the SGL completes the online Advocacy Activity Form. It is their responsibility to submit this form within one week after completing their visit. Additionally, SGLs are asked to encourage their state colleagues to complete the online form if they made House visits during the Spring and Fall Meetings.
PROCEDURES FOR AACN'S STATE ENGAGEMENT

The GAC has approved standard procedures on how AACN members, SGLs, and the GA 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:

1) 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 GA team if a request is brought forth and to provide additional insight and guidance on the issue.

2) NATIONAL SCAN

The GA 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 GA team may incorporate the insights of these organizations, or choose to proceed, based on their input.

3) REVIEW AND SUBMISSION

If no objections are raised to AACN's engagement, the GA 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.