

Advocacy 101

A practical guide to making your voice heard



Welcome to Advocacy!

Advocacy enables us to protect access to care, strengthen the HME Industry, & ensure policymakers understand the real-world impact of their decisions.

We're glad you're here and that you have an interest in protecting your business and the communities you serve. Your voice helps shape decisions being made at the state & federal levels.

Grassroots advocacy can feel intimidating at first, but you don't have to navigate it alone. AAHomecare is here to help you along the way & created this guide to provide practical tools & guidance to help you take action confidently & effectively. No policy background required – just your experience, passion, & voice.

In today's environment, this work is not optional. From reimbursement pressures to complex policy decisions, the future of HME and home-based care is actively being shaped. Policymakers need to hear from you so they can make informed decisions that protect access to care, strengthen the HME benefit, & support businesses that make care at home possible. **Advocacy starts with you.**

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Stronger Together

Join AAHomecare, a leading voice in HME advocacy, to sharpen your skills and amplify your impact.



Learn More

Chapter 1: Laying the Foundation

The Durable Medical Equipment (DME) landscape is shaped by policies, payment structures, and terminology that can often feel overwhelming or overly technical. This section breaks down the basics so that you can educate others on how our industry fits into the broader health care system.

DME 101 – Understanding Our Industry

If you are meeting with someone who is unfamiliar with the DME Industry, this is a great resource to educate them about:

- Who DME Industry professionals are and the role they play
- The variety of people who use DME
- Types of DME (overview of major product categories)

Access the digital brochure [here](#).

Glossary of Key DME Industry Terms & Definitions

Our Industry terminology is filled with acronyms and abbreviations that may sound like a foreign language to many. AAHomecare developed a resource of common Industry terms/acronyms that explain what these shorthand references mean as well as a definition of HME to explain the supportive services suppliers provide.

Access the definition of HME [here](#).

Access the Industry terms and acronyms [here](#).

Additional Resources

AAHomecare has a variety of resources to assist your conversations about specific policy initiatives, educate stakeholders on products/activities, and communicate the value of our industry.

Access our Competitive Bidding suite of resources and latest information [here](#).

Access our federal legislation policy topics, issue briefs, talking points, and more [here](#).

Access our payer relations topics and supportive resources [here](#).

Access our "Value of HME" advocacy resources, including a mini-documentary & more [here](#).

Access our Resource Library for white papers, infographics, regulation summaries, & more [here](#).



Whether it's federal, state, or payer advocacy, AAHomecare white papers and information really help us articulate the value of homecare to those stakeholders."

— Bryce Schaffner, Bellevue Healthcare



Chapter 2: Getting Started

This section helps you take the first steps in taking action and building advocacy momentum.

10 Steps to be Effective in the Political Process

- 1** Attend town hall meetings your legislators hold in your district. Raise your issues during or after the meeting. Introduce yourself, and thank them for their support of homecare.
- 2** Have a meeting or open house at your facility. Invite consumers, caregivers, and employees who can talk about the type of care provided and the value of homecare. Ask your legislator to speak to the group. If the legislator (or their staff) agrees, invite the media to attend and take photos. *(See [page 7](#) for details.)*
- 3** Put a face on homecare. Show your legislator the faces of homecare — your patients and their constituents — through videos, photographs, & testimonials about what homecare means to them.
- 4** Write letters to the editor of your local newspaper about the value of homecare. Describe how your legislator has supported consumer-preferred, cost-effective homecare services. *(See [page 12](#) for details.)*
- 5** Contribute to the Political Action Committee (PAC) of AAHomecare and support other professional organizations you belong to.
- 6** Attend fundraisers for candidates or host a fundraiser yourself. *(See [page 8](#) for details.)*
- 7** Volunteer to work for congressional campaigns including activities such as manning phone banks, transporting voters to the polls, and distributing campaign literature.
- 8** Encourage your employees, family members, neighbors, and others to register to vote. Be informed on the issues, participate in the process, and vote.
- 9** Before the next election, organize a candidates' forum focused on health care and homecare issues. Or participate with other groups in your community in sponsoring a survey of the candidates on their positions on your key issues. Publicize the results.
- 10** Be a knowledgeable resource to your legislator on health care policy and homecare issues.



Grassroots Accountability Project

The Grassroots Accountability Project is a collaborative effort of AAHomecare, VGM, and our state association partners. Its purpose is to assign a grassroots volunteer to each of the 535 federal legislative offices & equip GAP volunteers with guidance, turnkey resources, & specific calls to action.

To learn more about the GAP, contact our staff liaison [here](#).

How to Request a Office or District Meeting

You are welcome to use the template below when reaching out to your elected officials to request a meeting. For federal legislators, reach out to the staff scheduler, and CC the District Director if requesting a visit in your state vs DC. For state legislators, contact the legislator directly.

[Legislator or Staff Scheduler's Name],

As a constituent of [legislator's name] and [title] of [your company name], I would like to set up a meeting with [legislator's name or you] to discuss health care issues pertaining to the Home Medical Equipment benefit.

These issues impact the ability of companies like ours to serve [legislator's or your] constituents who rely on home medical equipment, supplies, and services to live safely at home. [Your company name] serves [number] of patients and employs [number] of people.

I am flexible on the date and time of this meeting and invite [legislator or you] to meet at our office located at [address]. If a site visit is not available at this time, I would love to schedule a meeting at the district office with [legislator or you] or a member of the staff.

[If other DME companies are joining you for the meeting, let the legislator/staff scheduler know that "the following companies will also be joining us for this important discussion" and list the company names.]

I may be reached via phone at [phone number] in addition to this e-mail to schedule the meeting. In the meantime, please let me know if you have any questions or need additional information.

Thank you for your assistance; I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

[Your name]
[Your company]
[Address]

Chapter 3: Engaging Policymakers

Speaking with policymakers and their staff is one of the most effective ways to shape understanding and influence decision-making. These conversations offer valuable perspective as policymakers rely on real-world experiences to understand how policies affect their constituents. Your role is to bring that perspective in a clear, honest, and grounded way.

10 Steps to be Effective Meetings with Elected Officials

- 1 Request a personal meeting with your legislator. *(See page 5 for details.)*
- 2 At your meeting, briefly and succinctly 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 patients, your company, and your employees. Always come with a proposed solution for every problem you present.
- 3 Ask for a commitment or action from your legislator, such as co-sponsor specific legislation. Check the AAHomecare website for specific requests.
- 4 Describe the role your organization plays in the community. Describe the population you serve, the types of services you provide, number of patients, number of employees served, areas in which you provide services, the cost-effectiveness of homecare, and the difference that your services make in your patients' lives.
- 5 Put a face on homecare consumers. Include end users/family members in your meeting, if possible. Provide testimonials. Explain their situations and how homecare affects their lives.
- 6 Stick to the facts. Tell a compelling story and provide good information, but do not exaggerate. If you don't know the answer, thank them for the question, and let them know you'll get back to them. (Contact AAHomecare for assistance.)
- 7 Be firm, be polite. Lobbying is a First Amendment right. Effective lobbying requires diplomacy.
- 8 Bring written materials to leave behind with your legislator. Include a brief summary with attachments expanding on your key points. For your own use, develop simple talking points and stick with your message.
- 9 Ask how you can help your legislator. Establish a good relationship with your legislator and their staff, and be available as a resource on healthcare issues.
- 10 Follow up. Within a few days of your visit, send a letter thanking the legislator for their 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.

10 Steps for a Great Site Visit or Facility Tour

A tour of your facility is an important way to put a face on homecare issues and highlight the critical role you play in serving an elected official's constituents. Here are a few guidelines to consider when arranging a tour for your federal, state, and local officials.

- 1** E-mail a polite, professional invitation to the legislator in care of the staff person who schedules meetings. For federal elected officials, you might want to CC the Legislative Assistant (LA) for health issues as well as the District Director who manages the Member's offices in the state. Mention the number of patients served by your facility, your service area, and the number of employees.
- 2** Be as flexible as you can about the timing which would likely occur. For federal legislators, this will likely be during one of the district work periods when Congress is not in session. Allow for adequate time for the legislator and their staff to get a sense of your operation, and leave some time for questions.
- 3** In conversations with staff about a potential tour, offer to invite the local media or photographer to accompany the legislator on the tour. If a tour is scheduled, alert the press beforehand about the tour and how **[Medicare/Medicaid]** policy affects your organization's ability to serve your community.
- 4** During the tour, involve employees — and end users/family caregivers if possible — to let the legislator meet some of the people involved in your enterprise. The legislator represents employees, end users, and their families. You may also want to invite area suppliers to strengthen the message about how policies impact the HME community.
- 5** Share key facts, such as the types of end users your organization serves, what types of services and equipment are provided, how many employees work at the facility, the economic impact of facility in the region, and other information about the role that your organization plays in the community and in the individual lives of end users and their families.
- 6** In the tour, show all the components that go into providing homecare such as key services, after-hours responsibilities, medical equipment, regulatory compliance, billing, deliveries, and maintenance. Some homecare providers have spread out on large tables all the paper-work required for a single Medicare or Medicaid beneficiary.
- 7** Make a connection between your organization's work and the critical homecare issues before Congress. Connect the dots for the legislator and staff.
- 8** Ask for the legislator's help with specific legislative or regulatory issues affecting homecare.
- 9** Also offer to help the legislator in whatever way you can.
- 10** Follow up with thank-you e-mails to the legislator, and everyone who helped with the tour.

Joining Community Events & Fundraisers

Attending community events and local fundraisers is an effective and approachable way to connect with your legislators. These settings are less formal than scheduled meetings, making it easier to introduce yourself, share a quick perspective, and begin building a relationship over time. Showing up consistently helps put a face to your name and reinforces that you are a trusted, local resource on issues impacting home-based care and the HME community.

You don't need a long conversation to make an impact. A brief introduction, clear connection to your work, and simple offer to be a resource can go a long way. Over time, these small touchpoints build familiarity and trust, so when key policy decisions arise, you've already built the foundation as a recognizable and credible presence they've met before.

Attending the AAHomecare Washington Legislative Conference

When Congress hears consistent, unified messages from HME stakeholders across the country, they gain clarity on what is important to constituents, understand the stakes, and see the impact behind the current programs and policies.

AAHomecare hosts the annual Washington Legislative Conference, the Industry's largest HME advocacy event of the year, in Washington DC. Before the conference, attendees are invited to a special virtual briefing with an overview of the policy priorities and specific "Asks" for Hill visits. AAHomecare's appointment concierge schedules all Hill visits, and AAHomecare provides leave behind packets that attendees can take to their meetings. This is a great opportunity to meet with Members of Congress and staff and raise the profile on policy priorities!

Join fellow HME leaders at this year's conference; learn more [here](#).



Chapter 4: Telling Your Story

In addition to meeting directly with your elected officials, you can bring greater awareness and exposure to the topic by leveraging media for storytelling. By providing a personal narrative of what's happening with access to HME and home-based care, you can help connect policy decisions to real-world impacts. These human-centered stories may be of interest to media, providing a platform for you to extend your reach and influence.

10 Steps to Effective Media Relations

- 1 Cultivate your local media, including newspapers, radio, television, and TV. Become an expert resource on whom they can rely for information on health care issues.
- 2 Write letters to the editor, op-ed pieces, and human-interest articles for your local and community papers. Please borrow talking points from AAHomecare's website.
- 3 Issue press releases about innovative programs and unique aspects of your services. Details about trends in your area are important to local media. Put a human face on key issues by talking about the services, care, and equipment your organization provides. Also, produce public service announcements about homecare, its value, and the role it plays in your community. (See our Value of HME Talking Points Guide for info, [here](#).)
- 4 Offer to be a guest on talk show programs on radio and television in your community.
- 5 Work with AAHomecare and your state association to request and schedule a meeting with your local newspaper's editorial staff and board. Stress the importance of homecare to the local community, and back it up with information and stories. The goal is a getting the newspaper to write an editorial that is favorable to your issue.
- 6 Make a video in which your patients, their caregivers, and your staff talk about what homecare means to them. Show this video when you meet with local reporters.
- 7 Ask your legislator to accompany your staff on a visit to a patient's home. Invite the press to also participate, with permission of the patient and legislator.
- 8 If you meet with your legislator or their staff, mention the meeting and the issue to the press. AAHomecare can work with you on this.
- 9 Sponsor a meeting with your legislator and press at your facility featuring employees, consumers, and caregivers addressing the value of homecare and other current issues that will affect access to home-based care.
- 10 Before the next election, organize a candidates' forum or work with other groups in your community to survey candidates on their positions on key homecare and healthcare issues. Invite the press to attend the forum and publicize the results of the survey to the media.

How to Write a Press Release

A press release is a statement prepared for distribution to the media. The purpose of a press release is to give journalists information that is useful, accurate, and interesting. They are ways to share important information about critical, newsworthy topics such as:

- The impact of [topic, such as the Competitive Bidding Program] on end users
- The impact of [topic] on specific suppliers
- Sharing the position of a state organization on a specific topic.

State associations and individual providers can use press releases to raise public awareness of specific problems surrounding the key issues impacting the HME community and those we serve. Press releases are an effective and inexpensive way to reach a broad public audience. Using a distribution service is easy and inexpensive, often only \$100-\$200 for each release.

Accuracy: Be sure your facts are correct. Credibility is lost with bad information.

Structure: Use a standard press release format:

- Type it on company letterhead. If this isn't possible, adding the company logo is essential.
- Include the company's name, website, address, and phone number.
- "PRESS RELEASE" should be below the company's information in capital letters, bolded.
- The contact person's name, e-mail, and phone number should be included at the top section with "Press Release" information.
- Specify the release date, such as "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE" or "EMBARGOED UNTIL [Date]"; in capital letters at the left margin directly above the title.

Title: Write the title for impact. Attention-grabbing, short, and snappy titles are more likely to be read. It should be centered and bolded. Make it at least one font size larger than the following text so that it stands out.

Content: Share your useful, accurate, and interesting information in the body of the release.

- The body begins with the city where the press release originates and the date. This text should be bolded.
- The text, beginning with the date and city of origin, should be typed in a clear, basic font (Times New Roman, Arial, Aptos, etc.).
- Put the main point of your release in the first paragraph, even the first sentence if possible, and then expand the story in following paragraphs with facts.
- Include the five "w"s of good writing: who, what, where, when and why. The first paragraph of the press release should discuss in brief detail what the press release is about. Subsequent paragraphs explain: who cares; why the reader should also care; where can the reader find it; when it will happen.
- Put the main point of your release in the first paragraph, even the first sentence if possible, and then expand the story in following paragraphs with facts.

- Next comes a quote to give the release a personal touch. This lets the media know that they have a reliable source to talk to if they're interested in following up, and it provides that human interest angle that can draw both media and readers' interest.
- The last paragraph(s) should summarize your news.
- Journalists look for the following to define the end of the press release: ###. (three # symbols, centered directly underneath the last line of the release)
- Finish up with information on your company, a paragraph known as the "boilerplate," which describes what your company does and includes your website address.

Access a press release example [here](#).

Distribution

- If you want your news release to become news, an effective distribution plan is a must.
- If the release topic is local, share the release with your local media.
- If the topic is broader in scope or you want broad distribution, using a press release service such as PRNewswire, PRWeb, PRLog, or 24-7PressRelease can get your release out to a broader audience.
- Put together a file of appropriate contact people at newspapers, radio stations, TV stations and other organizations that would be a good fit.
- Share your release with AAHomecare and HME industry trade publications to gain more exposure. AAHomecare members can request news releases be posted under the Member News page on the AAHomecare website.
- Websites and blogs also give your news the chance to go viral. E-mail your news release to specialty bloggers who cover your subject, post a video link on YouTube, and use free news release distribution sites online, too. Cover your bases.



Because of our AAHomecare membership, our small company is able to add our voice to the advocacy efforts to ensure that our patients remain having a choice of suppliers & access to quality products that truly make a difference in their lives."

— **Micheline Stephens, PCG Medical**



How to Write a Newspaper Op-Ed

An "op-ed" is a section in which writers can express viewpoints and/or respond to particular news events. They are found in nearly every newspaper and can be particularly effective in raising awareness about issues and asking for public response. The op-ed and "Letters to the Editor" sections are among the most widely read sections of a newspaper. Publication of an op-ed or letter assure that your views will reach many people.

Educate and mobilize the public about key issues impacting HME by writing op-ed stories that evoke emotion and share personal stories about how the topic will impact the community.

Tips for getting an op-ed piece or letter published:

- *The perfect news hook.* Editors need a reason why your viewpoint should be given attention right now. You <10 seconds to hook the readers, so put your main point on top.
- *The word limit.* Newspapers have limited space, and editors don't have the time to cut your piece down to size. In general, 600-750 words will do for an op-ed; a letter to the editor may be limited to 250 words. Check the paper's online opinion page for its submission guidelines.
- *Hook them, but get to the point.* Your first paragraph, and even the first sentence, should draw the reader in by using a dramatic vignette or a well-stated argument.
- *Make a single point—well.* Make one point clearly and persuasively. If you cannot explain your message in a sentence or two, you're trying to cover too much.
- *Use short sentences and paragraphs.* Make sure there's a space between each paragraph. Avoid complex sentences.
- *Avoid jargon and acronyms.* Simple language ensures that all readers, even nonexperts, can understand your point. Don't use acronyms or "policy wonk" language.
- *Tell readers why they should care.* Put yourself in the place of the busy person reading your story and ask yourself, "So what? Who cares?"
- *Use the active voice.* Active voice is always better than passive and is easier to read. Leave no doubt as to who is speaking.
- *Make it personal.* Illustrations, anecdotes, and personal stories help explain and bring complicated issues to life. Share how the topic affects your patients, and your company.
- *Offer specific recommendations.* Op-eds are opinion pieces, not news stories. State your opinion on how to improve matters.
- *End with a bang.* Your final paragraph is as important as your opening paragraph. Be sure to summarize your argument in one strong final paragraph. If there is an "ask," make it here.

Provide your contact information. List your name, address, phone, and e-mail contact information at the bottom of the piece.

Submit your op-ed via e-mail, as a rule. Copy/paste the text of your op-ed into the body of an e-mail message. Don't send it as an attachment. Instructions for submitting an op-ed are usually on the opinion page of the paper's website. If you haven't heard back in a week, or if your piece is particularly time-sensitive, you can follow up with an e-mail or phone call to ask if it was received and ask about its status.

Using Social Media for Advocacy

Social media is one of the most accessible and powerful tools to connect people today. It allows you to engage with policymakers, raise awareness, and amplify your message beyond meetings and e-mails, all in real time.

Many legislators actively use platforms like X, Facebook, and Instagram to communicate with constituents and monitor public sentiment, making social media a modern-day public forum for policy conversations. Short-form content and authentic storytelling are driving engagement and reach across these platforms.

Using X for Direct Policymaker Engagement

- This is the most widely used platform by legislators and their staff. Nearly all Members of Congress maintain active accounts as a channel for public engagement.
- It is ideal for tagging elected officials, responding to policy posts, and joining real-time conversations.

Using Facebook for Local Community & Constituent Visibility

- Focus on local engagement and community groups. Legislators often monitor comments and tagged posts.
- This is best for storytelling, community impact posts, and longer-form updates.
- Access & share our mini-documentary, [here](#).

Suggestions for Posts

- Tag your legislators directly.
- Join the conversation instead of just broadcasting. Reply, engage, and interact. Engagement drives visibility more than just posting alone.
- Authenticity is more important than perfection; real experiences resonate more than polished messaging. Videos under 60 seconds perform well, even when recorded from your phone.
- Short-form content generally performs better.
- Share photos from facility tours and community events. Thank the legislators for attending.
- Use clear, respectful messaging. Avoid being overly partisan or inflammatory.



“Our mission is clear: protect access to care in the home and support the HME community that makes it possible.”

Home-based care delivers what matters most — better outcomes, lower costs, and care where end users want to be. When we show up and speak with one voice, we shape the future of care at home. Your advocacy matters, and together, we are making a difference.”

— Tom Ryan
AAHomecare President/CEO

Your Voice Matters.

Show up. Speak Out. Shape the Future of Home-Based Care.

