

February 2011

Certification Corner

Q: Some of us in our IAHCSSM chapter are eager to get started on certification efforts in our state; others, though, are afraid to embark on a process that they believe will take years and offers no guarantees. How can we get them to see that, despite the hard work and time commitment, it's a worthwhile endeavor?

A: On average, it will take three to five years to pass a bill in a state. Some states may take longer than five years and other states may take less than three years. It depends on a number of factors, which include pure politics, the budget process, other issues pending before the legislature, and how long it takes to educate the legislators on the issue.

Ask yourself if you think that certification will make your profession better. Then ask yourself if certification will make your patients safer. If the answer to both of these questions is 'Yes,' then certification is a worthwhile endeavor. The hard work and time commitment required will help take your profession to the next level.

There will be times when you will become extremely frustrated with this endeavor. Please know that I am here to assist you in this journey and will help to elevate some of the time commitment.

Q: We are preparing for our first meeting with some elected state officials and want to make the very best first impression. I'd like to send some loose guidelines out in advance regarding etiquette. What should we wear? How much is too much information to leave behind? How much time should we expect to have with these officials during our meeting? Should we send a follow-up letter or email to recap our discussion and thank them for their time? Please help us get off on the right foot!

- Attire: If you set up a meeting with an elected official or testify before a committee hearing, wear a suit. If you go to the state legislature to lobby a bill, wear scrubs. The scrubs can be effective when you spend a day at the legislature trying to grab legislators off the House and Senate floor to ask them to support or oppose a bill.
- Information: When meeting with a legislator, bring the Certification Policy Brochure and one or two articles that discuss infection rates in hospitals. This will allow you the opportunity to discuss how certification can help decrease hospital-acquired infections.
- Time: You should be prepared to speak with the legislator for three minutes or 15 minutes (and there is always a chance that you may end up having 30 minutes with the legislator). Do not be disappointed if you show up and end up meeting with the legislator's staff. The legislator's staff is just as important as the legislator. Many times, the staff member can be the advocate for your issue to the legislator.



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- Follow-up: You may send either a handwritten or emailed 'Thank You' note; however, I believe that the handwritten note is better. Legislators' offices are being bombarded with emails and a handwritten note will set you apart. But keep it brief (no more than two to three sentences). Also, if you met with the legislator and he/she requested that you send follow-up information, be sure to include the follow-up information with your 'Thank You' note.