

# Brain Injury Awareness Activity Guide

Brain Injury Awareness Month  
Living With Brain Injury

Recruiting  
Speakers



Accessing  
the Media



Activity  
Guide

Organizing a  
Run or Walk



Run or Walk

Announcements



Public Service

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# Brain Injury Awareness Activity Guide

## Join Our Team in Raising Awareness About Brain Injury in America!

### Brain Injury Awareness Campaign

The Brain Injury Association of America (BIAA) is pleased to offer you some ideas and tools to conduct your: brain injury awareness month (BIAM) activities and events. As individuals, state affiliates, organizations, hospitals, agencies, centers and interested persons, we encourage you to not only raise awareness during BIAM, but to develop a year-round campaign and use the materials, ideas and tools in this kit to reach out in your communities and join us in raising awareness, educating, and communicating with the public about brain injury.

### Target Audiences and Materials

Who do you want to reach? Although your ultimate goal may be to reach all sectors of your community, identifying your priority target audiences can help focus your campaign and make it more manageable. Although you may have a general list, consider developing a special campaign each year for specific groups (e.g. schools, substance abuse programs, women's centers, emergency rooms, senior centers). Your approach and materials can then be tailored to these specialized groups. The following list includes potential target audiences/sites and relevant past and present BIAM materials you can use (see BIAA bookstore catalogue).

Target Audiences/Sites	Suggested BIAM Materials
♦ People with brain injury (PWBI); their family members/caregivers	♦ BIAM materials as appropriate to their needs ( <i>Living with Brain Injury</i> booklets, fact sheet, tip card, and posters)
♦ Hospitals, rehab centers and medial clinics	♦ Posters, All relevant materials
♦ Physician offices and medical societies	♦ Posters, All relevant materials
♦ Schools, nurses, teachers, counselors and coaches	♦ Booklets on life after high school, substance abuse, depression, loneliness and building lasting relationships after brain injury
♦ Attorneys	♦ Booklet on legal terms
♦ Employers, safety and risk managers	♦ Posters, Fact sheets
♦ Psychologists, psychiatrists, therapists and social workers	♦ Booklets on substance abuse, depression, legal terms, loneliness and building lasting relationships after brain injury; tip card on communication
♦ Career counselors	♦ Booklet on life after high school and employment
♦ Medical/health/education organizations	♦ Posters, All relevant materials
♦ Public libraries	♦ Posters, Fact sheets
♦ Support groups	♦ Booklets on loneliness and building lasting relationships after brain injury; tip card on communication
♦ Retail outlets, malls, drugstores	♦ Posters, Fact sheets
♦ Community, senior and youth centers	♦ Posters, Fact sheets
♦ Military offices, VA hospitals	♦ Poster, Substance Abuse Issues

## Activities

Activities may range from handing out materials to conducting programs and planning a campaign. Here are some recommendations for activities that you can do in your communities.

Organize or participate in **health fairs** in the workplace, malls, hospitals, schools, community centers, retail stores, athletic events and games, health clubs, libraries, places of worship, physician offices, and centers. Throughout the month or on a special day in March 2006, you can:

- Organize and set up a booth in a visible place at any of the sites listed above where you are likely to be seen by large crowds.
- Distribute brain injury materials (posters, fact sheets, etc) in your neighborhood or community.
- Put up signs announcing your event and posters displaying information about brain injury.
- Encourage people to purchase green wristbands and visit brain injury-related websites.
- Have a list of resources available that includes information on your state association, and other brain injury-related providers and agencies.

Conduct a **community education** class at any of the sites listed above. You can also make presentations to special groups during their regular or programmatic meetings. These may include civic groups, coaches, teachers, counselors, support groups and professional societies. Community groups are often looking for speakers. You can start by:

- Inviting an expert and/or a person with brain injury to speak
- Asking for a sponsor (e.g. local business) at these sites to support you by advertising in their newsletters and mailing announcements to their constituencies. (They can also post these announcements in their facilities.)
- Creating a PowerPoint presentation(s) that can be used multiple times at different places. (BIAA has developed a brain injury presentation that is available by contacting the national office.)
- Asking support groups to sponsor a talk with you and help advertise the event.

Develop a **school campaign** for 2006. Contact high schools in your area to schedule talks for teachers, parents, students and counselors. You can also raise awareness about brain injury by speaking at PTA and PTO meetings, writing articles for school publications, and encouraging students to study brain injury for a school project. Below are two ideas for topics for your school campaign:

- Use the *Preparing for Life After High School: The Next Steps* booklet, to educate and help students set goals and identify steps that will facilitate the transition following high school toward employment, further education, training or assuming new roles in their lives.
- Present to coaches and students on the prevention and management of brain injuries using the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) tool kit, *Heads Up: Concussion in High School Sports* (visit [www.cdc.gov/ncipc/tbi/Coaches Tool Kit.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/tbi/Coaches%20Tool%20Kit.htm) to order or download this kit for free). BIAA's "Management of Concussion in Sports Palm Cards" are available online at: [http://www.biausa.org/Pages/publications\\_page.html](http://www.biausa.org/Pages/publications_page.html).

Schedule **professional presentations** and/or meetings with healthcare providers including physicians, rehabilitation counselors, therapists, case managers, and social workers as well as insurance and legal staff. Prepare for your presentations by:

- Organizing and providing an overview of brain injury and focus on areas relevant to the audience.
- Distributing BIAM 2006 educational materials on building relationships, communication and legal glossary that can be used with their patients/clients. Other available brochures cover substance abuse, employment and depression.
- Asking physicians and others to place TBI fact sheets, posters and other materials in their offices or centers, especially in waiting rooms.

Develop a **worksite** campaign in 2006 for local or state agencies including transportation groups, retail outlets and industrial plants that focus on prevention of falls and motor vehicle crashes.

- Work with medical directors, occupational health nurses, risk management and safety staff to plan brown bag lunches.
- Become part of a wellness program or host a booth at a health fair.
- Insert information into paychecks, place articles in newsletters or display posters at the worksite.

Organize a **run, walk, bike(a-thon) or other sports/recreational event** for brain injury. Such events not only raise awareness, but can also be successful fundraisers. The Brain Injury Association of Michigan, Minnesota and New Hampshire have successfully conducted these types of events. Although these events take a considerable amount of resources (staff and volunteer effort and time) to plan and promote, they can draw much needed attention to brain injury and considerable revenue.

## SECTION 1: THE BASIC STEPS IN ORGANIZING AN EVENT

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### For BIAM 2006

**Select one activity and conduct it at one or two sites or select one or two activities and conduct each at a different site for 2006. If you document the steps and plan for your activity (e.g., develop a PowerPoint , prepare a plan and checklist and/or maintain all materials), you can repeat this activity throughout the year for different audiences and sites.**

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One of the best ways to promote awareness about brain injury is to hold community events such as public education forums with presenters who have expertise in brain injury and related topics. Having a person with a brain injury as part of the program enhances the experience of learning about brain injury and gives the audience a better understanding of what it is like to live with brain injury. Additionally, it adds a dimension that makes the program more interesting and effective.

Planning ahead is one of the keys to success. Starting early will allow you to reserve the space you want, get the best speakers, and allow time for publicity.



# Steps for Successful Events

Following are a list of steps to help you plan your brain injury awareness events. Copy and paste this into an electronic or hard copy document and use it as a **worksheet** as you prepare for your special event.

- **Setting Goals for the Event**

Goals give your event a purpose. They help you to identify your target audience and determine what you hope to accomplish, what type of program(s) will best meet the audience's needs and where you might want to hold the event. Make sure these goals are consistent with and contribute to your mission.

**Goals:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

- **Identifying your Audience**

Who do you want to reach? Who needs to hear your message? Estimate your attendance goals.

Audience: \_\_\_\_\_ Approximated Attendance: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- **Reserving Space**

Select a site that is familiar, convenient, accessible and attractive to your audience. Partner with the site in making your plans; possibly seek sponsorship from them or someone who wants to do business with them. Ask them to help publicize the event to their constituency and others. Consider costs, equipment, supplies, refreshments, parking, safety, the availability of the site and their hours of operation.

Possible Sites:

Contact Person(s):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Equipment Needs: \_\_\_\_\_

Supplies: \_\_\_\_\_

Hand-outs/Packets: \_\_\_\_\_

Refreshments: \_\_\_\_\_

- **Working with a Task Force**

Consider assembling a task force to brainstorm activities, topics and resources for the event. Task force members can both represent the audience and help you attract participants. They can also prepare, conduct and present at the event.

Task force members:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

- **Developing a Curriculum or Schedule of Events**

The topics and activities should be selected based on the goals and your target audience. Plan a program that is tailored to the group and create and present materials and a program that meets the needs of your audience.

Title of the Event: \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) of the Event: \_\_\_\_\_

Topics:

Events/Activities:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

- **Recruiting Speakers, Staff and Volunteers**

Speakers are selected for their expertise and for their ability to present effectively and to attract an audience. They need to be oriented to the goals, audience and messages.

Potential Speakers:

Staff/Volunteer Assignments:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Materials:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Confirm the attendance of speakers with a letter and identify their audio-visuals needs, obtain bios, and produce handouts as applicable. Arrange for assistance during the event (hosting, moderators, distributing materials and the evaluation form, technician, exhibitors, taking pictures, etc.), confirm hours and make assignments.

- **Publicity**

Publicize your event well in advance. Be persistent – use various ways to reach people and do it multiple times. Distributing brochures, posters, flyers, emails, mailings, newsletters and announcements at other events/meetings are all ways to reach people. Use the media (see Media section on page 8) and ask people such as providers, therapists and support groups to invite others.

Publicity Campaign includes:

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- **Day/Evening of the Event**

Arrive early. Bring contact information for speakers/staff. Bring a checklist for room set-up, materials, equipment and “to do” items. Take pictures or record event if applicable.

..... ***HAVE FUN!*** .....

- **Following the Event**

Did you meet your goals? What were the results? Collect and summarize the evaluations (see evaluation sample) received. Write thank-you notes and consider writing up a report or article for your newsletter.



# Evaluation Form/Questions

[SAMPLE]

<<Title of Program>>

<<Site>>

<<Date>>

<<Presenters/Instructors>>

**Please circle your response:**

4=Strongly Agree; 3=Agree

2=Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree

The program met its objectives	4	3	2	1
The information was easy to understand and follow.	4	3	2	1
New information was presented.	4	3	2	1
Information was relevant and appropriate to my needs.	4	3	2	1
Useful information was presented.	4	3	2	1
The audiovisual materials enhanced my understanding of the topic(s).	4	3	2	1
The speaker(s) presented the program effectively.	4	3	2	1
The program was well organized.	4	3	2	1
The program was the appropriate length.	4	3	2	1
I plan to use the materials distributed to me.	4	3	2	1
Attending the program was worth my time.	4	3	2	1
I would recommend this program to others.	4	3	2	1

I plan to use the information in the following way(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What was the most important thing you learned today: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Strengths/weaknesses of the program: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Suggestions for improving the program: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Suggestions for future topics: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Comments:**

## SECTION 2: TOOLS FOR WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

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### For BIAM 2006

Prepare a media plan, beginning with the identification of local media persons who write on relevant issues, and establish a relationship with a few editors and/or reporters (visit BIAA's website for media resources in your area).

- Send out a news release to announce BIAM 2006 and TBI public service announcements (PSAs) to local radio stations. (Use the sample PSAs listed in this guide.)

### WHY: Setting the Goals

Media outreach can help you *raise awareness* about brain injury to:

- Tell a story
- Deliver messages
- Generate interest in brain injury
- Motivate people to seek out information, care and services
- Publicize an event

### WHAT: The Basic Documents/Activities

- **Media (Press) Release:** Announces new information on a research study or issue, a new service or event in a timely way
- **Media Advisories (Alerts):** Announces and invites to an event such as a press conference, new legislation, fund raising event or presentation of a new study, and is sent out about two weeks prior to an event
- **Letters to Editors:** Often written in response to an article in the media on a timely topic or issue; often to gain support
- **Op-Eds:** Opinion or editorial articles (500-1,000 words) that are usually written by experts to comment on an issue and to inform the public
- **Public Service Announcements (PSAs):** Short print or broadcast spots or sound-bites that send a brief and creative message; used at no-charge to non-profits
- **Press Conferences and Editorial Board Meetings:** Events where new information or positions on issues are stated to the media in general or to editorials boards, respectively
- **Internet:** Many organizations establish a media section on their websites.

### HOW: The Steps

1. Access the media.
2. Establish relationships.
3. Formulate messages.
4. Develop press kits.



## GETTING THE MEDIA'S ATTENTION: Accessing the Media

Identify the reporters and editors in your area who cover medical/health, local and lifestyle and public service stories. Depending on the topic and population relevant to your news or event, you may also want to contact media persons who cover education, transportation, sports or other issues. These will include people who work in the following areas:

- Newspapers
- Television/Cable
- Radio
- Magazines
- Wire Service
- Internet

### Here's what you CAN do:

An important tool for your media campaign is to create or purchase a directory. You can find these directories, *Bacon's or Burrelle's Media Directory* in the library, or you can also search the yellow pages or contact your local chapter of the *Public Relation's Society of America*. The best lists include specific topics and contact information for individuals who cover these topics. Looking through newspapers or noting reporters on the radio or television can also be helpful in developing your lists. A key source is also the Internet.

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### To get started, visit [www.biausa.org](http://www.biausa.org).

1. Go to the Policy section and click on the Legislative Action Center's Media Guide.
2. Compose your message to the media.
3. Select the appropriate zip codes.
4. Identify the newspaper, television, radio and electronic and trade publications to whom you would like to send your message.

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## WHO'S WHO IN THE MEDIA: Building Relationships with the Media

Maintaining an on-going relationship with the media is vital to raising awareness about brain injury, and will help you to more effectively connect with the public who need and have an interest in the information and services you provide. People in the media can be important partners in getting the word out about your organization. Keeping them informed with "news they can use," providing them with "human interest" stories and alerting them to upcoming community events, will help build your relationship with the media and advance your goals.

### Here's what you CAN do:

Once you have identified the key reporters in your area, communicate with them on a regular and timely basis:

- \* Send them brain injury articles and media releases that keep them abreast of new research, publications, stories and events accompanied with a note saying, "I thought you might find this interesting." Include your business card or contact information.
- \* When you see a story relevant to brain injury, send them a note about your organization/agency and brain injury information. Many reporters gain expertise in various topics.
- \* Be a dependable and accurate resource for current brain injury information and experts who can be spokespersons on various brain injury topics.
- \* Add them to your list to regularly receive your newsletter and other mailings.

# MESSAGES (TALKING POINTS): The Key to Becoming an Effective Newsmaker

The focal point of a media campaign are the messages that you consistently and continually deliver. They represent the mission and image of your organization/agency and are repeated whenever possible. Messages can focus on prevention, awareness, detection, treatment and therapy, coping, and other issues.

## Messages should be:

\* Easily understood

\* Factual and meaningful

\* Persuasive

### Repeat Message as Often as Possible

*Traumatic brain injury (TBI) has reached epidemic proportions; yet, it is often undetected, and many Americans are not familiar with the term “brain injury.”*

*The incidence of TBI is higher than other serious conditions such as multiple sclerosis, breast cancer and spinal cord injuries; yet, public funding is far behind and needed.*

*A traumatic brain injury occurs every 23 seconds, and they lead to more than one million emergency department visits each year. Following appropriate and easy safety measures can prevent many such injuries.*

*High school students, 15-19 years of age, are a major group at risk for TBI. Students who sustain a TBI have the right in their school system to create an individualized education and transition plan.*

*1.4 million people sustain a TBI every year in the United States. The leading causes of TBI are falls, motor vehicle-traffic crashes, being struck by or against something/someone and assaults.*

*Traumatic brain injuries (TBI) can happen anytime, anywhere and to anyone.*

*Traumatic brain injury is a misunderstood, misdiagnosed, and underfunded public health problem of epidemic proportion.*

*Life is forever changed following a brain injury. A person with a brain injury may find learning harder, have difficulty with life skills, may lose his/her job, and be lonely, stressed or depressed. There are 5.3 million Americans who live with disabilities resulting from a TBI. Services are needed, but are often unavailable to them.*

**\*Keep it short**

**\*Keep it Simple**

**Keep it to no more than 2 sentences.**

**Use sound bites whenever possible.**

**Target these appropriately to the audience.**

# Media Releases

To alert the media about upcoming **news** or an **event** and/or to promote a **story**

## The 5 W's

### Who

is doing what  
for whom?

### When

are they doing it?

### Why

are they doing it?

### Where

are they doing it?

### What

will be the results?

## At top: **Media Release**

For Immediate Release: <<Date>>

Contact: <<Your Name>>

<<Contact Info>>

## **Title/Headline**

Capture the reporter's attention: create a hook  
that is news-worthy and interest-generating;  
use verbs

## **Lead paragraph**

Highlight the major points and summarize  
by incorporating the 5 W's.

## **Body**

Elaborate on the story using quotes,  
statistics and examples (cite sources);  
"sound bites" may be picked up; use compelling  
details for human-interest stories, details  
of events; localize; tell why this  
is important and relevant to the community

## **Closing paragraph**

End with the mission statement  
and relevant information about your organization.  
Include where to go and who to contact to  
get more information.

###

## **Most Important**

Short sentences

Short paragraphs

Simple, concise  
and persuasive  
language

Double-space

Limit it to 2 pages

## **Least Important**

# Media Release

[SAMPLE]

**For Immediate Release:** <<Date>>

**CONTACT:** <<Name of Media Point of Contact>>  
<<Contact information: phone, fax, email>>

## The Brain Injury Association of America Announces New Resources for Individuals Living with Brain Injury

<<City, State->> A brain injury occurs every 23 seconds. Approximately 5.3 million Americans currently have long-term or lifelong need for help to perform daily activities as a result of a traumatic brain injury. Yet given this nationwide problem, public awareness of brain injury is very low.

This March, the Brain Injury Association of America through its annual Brain Injury Awareness Month initiative is focusing on improving the lives of individuals living with brain injury and their family and caregivers and on educating the public about this silent epidemic. This is the third year of their three-year awareness campaign called “Living with Brain Injury” that offers free information and resources. This year’s Brain Injury Awareness Month materials include:

- Three booklets with important information for people with brain injury and their parents and caregivers;
- A new tip card titled “How to Communicate with an Adult after Brain Injury;” and
- An activity guide that contains helpful information on how to initiate and create brain injury awareness activities and events.

Living with a brain injury is a life long process. “I didn’t know that my life and my very self could be, in an instant, changed forever” said Lisa Keller, of the evening that her van was hit head on by a police car chasing a speeding vehicle. “I began to live with a disability no one could see. Some days I have the physical and emotional strength to maneuver through the day with ease, other times, handling the day’s details can feel overwhelming. After brain injury, even after years of recovery, some days will be okay and others will not. I think the education about what brain injury is like, and the education of friends and family is one of the most important things that can help the person who is experiencing life after brain injury. Getting information from the Brain Injury Association of America can really make a difference in one’s recovery.”

“Creating a better future through brain injury prevention, research, education, and advocacy” is the Brain Injury Association of America’s commitment to individuals and their families as they experience and recover from a brain injury. If more information about the Brain Injury Association of America or to download the Brain Injury Awareness Month materials, please visit the Brain Injury Association of America’s website at [www.biausa.org](http://www.biausa.org) or call the National Brain Injury Information Center at 1-800-444-6443.

The brain injury awareness materials are supported by Cooperative Agreement number U17CCU323329-03 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). For more information about CDC’s prevention efforts to reduce traumatic brain injuries, visit [www.cdc.gov/injury](http://www.cdc.gov/injury).

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# PUBLIC SERVICES ANNOUNCEMENTS (PSAs)

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) are ready-to-use, no-cost ads that can be used in a print format for newspapers, magazines, radio and TV formats. The intent of a PSA is to deliver a message and/or timely information that is of benefit to the public. A PSA is sent to an editor, advertising manager or public service director with a cover letter that presents the case and encourages its use. Most media will donate a portion of their space or airtime. Radio PSAs are timed for 15, 30 or 60 seconds in length. They need to be appropriately formatted (camera-ready for print media or timed for radio or video) and also include contacts for follow-up or more information.

## Sample Print PSA

Brain Injury Awareness Month - March 2006

My husband was hit by a drunk driver.

I fell off a ladder cleaning the gutters.

Living With Brain Injury

blast injury in Iraq.

My ex-boyfriend beat me up.

For information of brain injury call 1-800-444-6443 or visit [www.biausa.org](http://www.biausa.org).

8201 Greensboro Drive, Suite 611  
McLean, VA 22102  
1-800-444-6443  
[www.biausa.org](http://www.biausa.org)

Brain Injury Association of America

## Sample Scripts: PSAs\*

Every 23 seconds someone sustains a traumatic brain injury  
One million people are treated for brain injuries each year  
More than 50,000 people die each year as a result  
We're working to change that  
March is Brain Injury Awareness Month  
Get involved by calling....

It happens every 23 seconds  
Every 23 seconds a traumatic brain injury occurs  
It can happen to anyone:  
Young or old, rich or poor, man or woman.  
It is always unexpected.  
It is always unwanted.  
It is always life-changing.  
If it happens to you or someone you love:  
What do you do?  
Where do you turn?  
Where can you get help?  
Who will support you?  
What are your hopes for the future?

Here is your answer...  
Call the Brain Injury Association of (insert name of state affiliate)...at... (insert phone number).

\*BIAA, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, So You Wanna Be an Advocate...? Public Policy and Advocacy Training, 2001.

## SECTION 3: ADVOCACY INITIATIVES

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### For BIAM 2006

Select a bill or issue that is important to you. Identify your representatives. Review the topic by assembling data, information and legislation by visiting the Legislative Action Center on BIAA's website. Obtain materials such as fact sheets and talking points from BIAA. Draft a letter to your legislator(s). To learn more about current legislation, visit the Legislative Action Center on BIAA's website for samples that you can tailor for use in your community.

### Writing Letters to Congress

Letter writing is still one of the most effective means of advocating for a particular issue, policy or piece of legislation or to just voice your opinion to your representatives. You can also communicate via regular or email.

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#### Contacting Your Federal Representatives via Email

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**Congress:** [www.visi.com/juan/congress/](http://www.visi.com/juan/congress/)  
**Thomas:** <http://thomas.loc.gov/>  
**Project Vote Smart:** [www.vote-smart.org](http://www.vote-smart.org)

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**To get started, visit BIA's website, Legislative Action Center and enter your zip code:**  
<http://capwiz.com/bia/home/>

#### Identify your:

State Representative: \_\_\_\_\_  
State Senator: \_\_\_\_\_  
United States Representative: \_\_\_\_\_  
United States Senator: \_\_\_\_\_

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#### • Tips for Writing to Your Representative

When writing a letter, remember that letters should:

- Be short and address one issue.
- Be to the point and no longer than one page.
- Present the purpose at the beginning of the letter.
- Identify the legislation by name (e.g. TBI Act); if applicable: House bill=H.R. \_\_\_\_\_. or Senate bill=S. \_\_\_\_\_.
- Personalized by stating how the issue or brain injury impacts you, your family members, patients/clients and your/their lives.
- Present the basic facts.
- Be relevant to your community. (If possible, include statistics about the population represented in your state or district). If this information is not available, use national information such as overall incidence of brain injuries, fatalities, falls, motor vehicles crashes, emergency visits, hospitalizations, etc. (See CDC fact sheet.)
- Be typed or handwritten.

- State who you are and your purpose.
- Be brief, clear and specific.
- Speak from personal experience, but also support your cause with facts.
- State the advantages and relevancy of your cause.
- Provide a fact sheet highlighting the major facts.

Address your letter using the appropriate title. Elected officials are addressed as “The Honorable” before their title and full name.

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### **State Representative or Assembly**

The Honorable <<Full name>>  
<<Your state>> House of Representatives or <<Your state>>Assembly  
<<Your state capital city,>>  
<<State, zip code>>

Dear Representative or Assembly <<man/woman>> <<Last name>>:

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### **State Senator**

The Honorable <<Full name>>  
<<Your state>> State Senate  
<<Your state capital city,>>  
<<State, zip code>>

Dear Senator <<last name>>:

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### **United State Representative**

The Honorable <<Full name>>  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative <<Last name>>:

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### **United States Senator**

The Honorable <<Full name>>  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator <<Last name>>:

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### **President of the United States**

The Honorable <<Full name>>  
President of the United States  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

# Letter to your Legislator

[SAMPLE]

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
United States House of Representatives  
\_\_\_\_ House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative \_\_\_\_\_:

I am your constituent and one of millions of Americans whose life has been impacted by a traumatic brain injury (TBI). I am writing to urge your support for H.R. \_\_\_\_ [state the bill or other measure you are asking the representative to support]. Specifically, I respectfully request that you consider becoming a co-sponsor of this important legislation.

The statistics surrounding TBI are overwhelming. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), at least 1.4 million Americans sustain a TBI annually and at least 5.3 million Americans are living with a disability resulting from a TBI. In addition, each year 80,000 Americans experience the onset of long-term disabilities as a result of TBI and, 50,000 Americans die from a TBI. The cost of TBI in the U.S. is estimated to be \$56.3 billion annually. Studies show that the annual incidence and prevalence of TBI is higher than Breast Cancer, Multiple Sclerosis, Spinal Cord Injury and HIV/AIDS combined. Despite these staggering statistics, TBI remains the “silent epidemic” in this country.

In our state, [if available, present statistics regarding the impact of TBI in your state or congressional district].

My family [tell the story, in a clear and concise way, of how you or your loved one has been impacted by TBI].

H.R. \_\_\_\_ would go a long way toward improving the lives of people impacted by TBI, like me, by...[describe what the legislation proposes to do and the purpose in a clear and concise manner].

Thank you for considering becoming a co-sponsor of H.R. \_\_\_\_\_. If you would like to discuss this or any other issue, please do not hesitate to contact me. I will follow-up shortly with your staff to see if there is any additional information I can provide about this important legislation.

Sincerely,

## Telephoning Your Representative

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Use the websites listed on page 14 or call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121 and ask for your Representative or Senator's office.

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When calling, first be sure you are connected to the appropriate office and then identify yourself, noting that you are a constituent. State and local officials may answer the phone, however, when calling federal officials, you will want to ask for the aid responsible for the issue you would like to discuss. If the purpose of your call is to state your position, identify the bill, and indicate if you support or oppose it. Be prepared to support your position with accurate, current and comprehensive information. Be concise and use understandable language. Be persistent. You may request a written response to your call, and be sure to follow-up with a letter or visit.

## Making Visits to Government Officials

When visiting your representative, you can be most effective if you prepare for the visit. Learn as much as you can about the issue prior to the meeting and take all supporting materials with you. Practice a short presentation, highlighting the important points, and have a fact sheet prepared that you may leave with your representative that summarizes the information. When you are well informed, your representative will more likely take note of your position and may even consider you as a resource and expert when studying or presenting an issue or bill.

It is possible to visit representatives during sessions in their offices; however, you may be more likely to get their attention at other times when they are back in their states/districts. Be aware that an appointment will be necessary. This can be done with the appointment secretary or administrative assistant. Be clear about the purpose of your visit, and be sure to arrive on time. Most visits will be scheduled for 5-10 minutes.

Make the connection between your issue and/or position and the interests of the representative's constituency. State the relevancy and advantage of supporting your cause. "Please support this bill because it will help persons/constituents... recover from brain injury."

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Be persistent and be sure to:

- Follow-up all letters, calls, and visits with thank-you notes and more calls, letters and visits!
  - Make a commitment to your cause.
  - Include your public officials on your mailing list. Continue to send information, articles, newsletters and letters of support.
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**Public officials respond to people, particularly their constituents. Your vote counts!**



**Brain Injury Association of America**  
8201 Greensboro Drive, Suite 611  
McLean, VA 22102

**[www.biausa.org](http://www.biausa.org)**  
**1-800-444-6443**

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