

Speaking Up! How to Tell Your Story

Sharing your story is one of the *most effective* ways to influence popular opinion and shape public policy. Every one of us has a story to tell. By talking about real and often personal experiences, we can help to humanize important policy issues and create personal connections and reactions for people to concepts that are often too abstract for the general public, the media, and especially politicians to be able to relate to.



If people don't speak out on important issues and challenge current thinking, politicians can end up supporting policies harmful to children!

How Can Stories Make a Difference?

- **They ground policy in real life.**
They can help ensure policy is based on real life needs of real people.
- **They help people understand the issues.**
It is easier for people to grasp complex technical concepts when policy changes are tied to real life experiences and things people can generally relate to.
- **They de-politicize the issues.**
It's not about a particular candidate or political party, it's about an issue and how people's lives will be impacted by a policy change.
- **They open doors for dialogue.**
At times when it is difficult to discuss certain policies, sharing a simple story is a way to open a dialogue.

How to Tell YOUR Story

When telling your story, it's important to include the following elements:

- **Introduce yourself in a way that helps your audience connect with you.** For example: *I am a local businesswoman and mother of two. I am the primary care-taker of Amanda, a straight-A student at Teakwood Elementary School; I am also her grandmother.*
- **Tell your story as if you were talking to just one person.** Don't just tell what happened but, also the financial, physical, and emotional impacts on you, your family, and/or your community.
- **Connect your story to the larger community.** For example: *Amanda is just one of 1.2 million children in Texas that is uninsured and cannot see a doctor when she gets sick.*
- **Always finish by telling how a particular policy change can fix the problem – show the light at the end of the tunnel.** Never leave your audience feeling like nothing can be done about a sad situation. Tell them how the problem can be fixed! For example: *Texas policy-makers can adopt best practices for Medicaid and CHIP which will allow 600,000 uninsured Texas children, including Amanda, to start getting the healthcare they need to grow up healthy.*

Be a Spokesperson for Children!

If you want to share your story publicly or become a spokesperson for children's issues, no prior experience is required! Just email cdftexas@childrensdefense.org with the subject line "SHARING MY STORY" and CDF will gladly guide and support you in amplifying your voice.