

Guide to Sharing Your Story

Why is it important to share my story with elected officials?

One of the best ways to influence change in our communities is to share personal stories with elected officials, and this is especially important for members of the disability community.

Elected officials – including state senators, state representatives, and city council members, to name a few – make important decisions about funding for programs and supports, as well as changes to policies, that affect persons with disabilities.

By sharing a story about personal successes and challenges, people with disabilities and their families can help elected officials understand how their decisions about policy and funding affect our community.

It may seem scary and overwhelming to connect with your elected officials but it is so important because YOU are the expert on issues affecting your life, and your voice needs to be heard!

What should I share in my story?

There are five key things to include in your personal story for an elected officials:

- Introduction
- Issue or Problem
- Solution and “Ask”
- Closing and “Thank You”

Introduction

When writing or sharing an introduction to your personal story, include information about yourself that you might share when meeting someone for the first time – your name, where you live (city or legislative district), and a little bit about yourself or your family.

Issue or Problem

If you or a family member with a disability is experiencing a challenge, problem, or concern, it is important for elected officials to know. Help them understand how the issue impacts your quality of life, the supports you depend upon, your health or financial stability, or inclusion in the community.

Solution and “Ask”

People that serve as elected officials – whether in Washington, D.C., at our State Capitol, or City Council – want to know how they can help address the issues or problems impacting your life. That’s why your story should always include an “ask” – an idea or solutions that can help overcome a challenge, meet a specific need, or make sure other bad things don’t happen.

Sometimes you might ask for an elected officials’ support (or opposition) on a specific legislative proposal; other times, you might ask them to meet with you during a home visit, a site visit, or at the Capitol.

Closing and “Thank You”

Whenever you share your story with an elected official, be sure to thank them for taking the time to read your letter or meet with you, and for their service on behalf of the community. It is important for them to know that we appreciate the work they do!

If you are writing your story, also include your name again, where you live (city or legislative district), and your contact information so your elected official can follow up to ask questions, get more information, or talk it through.

Other Tips

Here are some other things to keep in mind when telling your personal story:

- Keep your story to one page, or two-three minutes.
- You don’t have to include all of the policy details!
- Provide resources where your elected officials can get more information – like The Arc Minnesota’s legislative agenda, position statements, or Arc Guides.
- Including information about where you live is key, so that elected officials know that you’re a constituent – someone who lives in their district and votes for them in elections.

With questions or for more information about sharing your personal story with elected officials, contact Public Policy Director Alicia Munson at aliciamunson@arcminnesota.org.