

**TELL THEM
YOUR STORY**

Telling your Story to Make a Change

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National Center for
Family  **Professional Partnerships**
a project of FAMILY  VOICES[®]

Identify your issue

- ▶ “This is wrong! Someone has to do something!”
 - *What is wrong* is the issue you want to focus on
 - The *someone* is you!
- ▶ Pick an issue that is:
 - Important to you and to others
 - Has a solution
 - Is ripe for action



Develop your story

- ▶ A good story:
 - Introduces you and your family.
 - Focuses on one thing.
 - Explains your situation.
 - Has enough details to make it interesting.
 - Includes only information that relates to the situation or your goal.
 - Reminds the policymaker that you are a constituent.
 - Captures your emotion and passion for an issue.
 - Asks for a specific action to correct the situation.

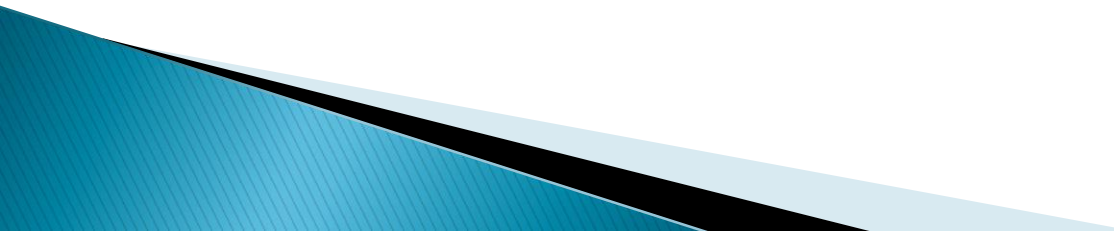


What makes a good story?

- ▶ What situations made you say "Enough!"?
- ▶ What do you think should have happened but didn't? What do you want to happen in the future?
- ▶ What really happens? How is it different from what policymakers think happens?
- ▶ What makes you say, "That doesn't sound right or legal?"



Keep in mind:

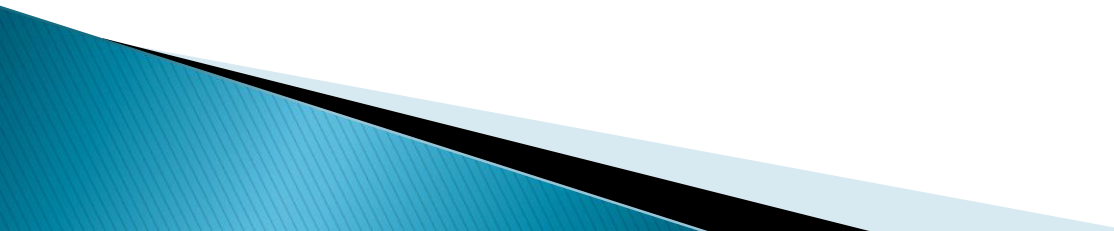
- ▶ **Think about emotions.** We remember stories that make us feel something – anger, joy, frustration, or sadness. That's because emotion generally stays with us longer than cold facts.
 - ▶ **Decide what you need a policymaker to know.** For example, if you need more support, think about how family support will help you live more productively. What difficulties and challenges do you face?
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Define your request

- ▶ Are you offering to help the policymaker understand firsthand how something does or doesn't work?
- ▶ Are you asking the policymaker to continue his or her work in an area important to your family?
- ▶ Are you asking the policymaker to sponsor, approve, amend or repeal a specific bill, regulation, policy?



Define your request

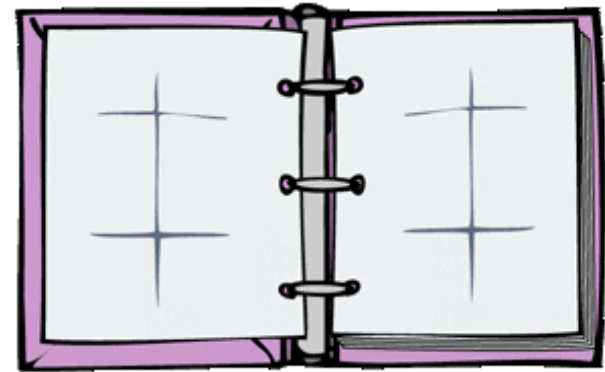
- ▶ **Timely.** Is the legislature preparing to vote? If so, when is the vote scheduled to take place? Is the legislature between sessions so the policymaker may have more time to learn about your situation?
 - ▶ **Realistic.** In many cases, your goal will be achieved through small, incremental steps that build momentum over time and lay the groundwork for the future. If this is the case, what do you want or need to happen now? What other changes need to occur before your future vision can be implemented?
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Define your request

- ▶ **Specific.** Your demand should be specific and clear. For example: I am asking you to support additional special education funding for transition services in this year's Education Bill.
- ▶ **Concise.** Boil down your request to as few words as possible. This will make it easier for you – and policymakers – to remember it. For example, “Parents must be given family time/visitation with their child who is in DCP&P custody in a comfortable, family friendly location.”

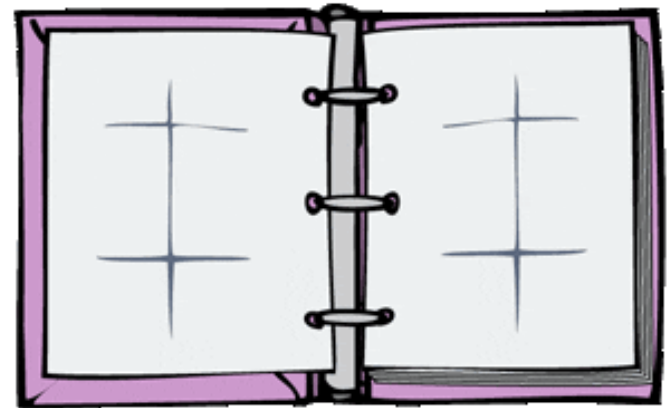
What makes a good story?

- ▶ A good story:
 - Is the one you love to tell
 - Captures a central idea
 - Has a main character that people want to help
 - Presents a struggle, conflict, or challenge
 - Has a high point



What makes a good story?

- ▶ A good story:
 - Contains vivid images
 - Includes details
 - Addresses “who, what, when, where, why, how?”
 - Has a beginning, middle, and end
 - Is short and to the point




My issue

- ▶ MY CHALLENGE
- ▶ What's my issue?
- ▶ What topic is it related to?
 - Health
 - Mental health
 - Child welfare
 - Family support
 - Education
 - Juvenile justice
 - Child care
 - Other



My personal story

- ▶ Describe who you are and where you are from. Include your name. If you're advocating on behalf another person, include his or her name as well.
 - ▶ Do you have a picture of yourself and your family that you are willing to share?
 - ▶ Describe the situation that you want changed. What is happening? What is working? What needs to change?
 - ▶ What could be done to improve the situation?
 - ▶ What makes this situation memorable for a policymaker
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How this would help me & others

- ▶ MY RESULT
- ▶ Tell how your result would benefit other families, the community, and the state.
- ▶ State your main message again.
- ▶ Tell them what you want them to do about it.
- ▶ Say thank you!



Let's try it!

what's
your
story?