

STORYTELLING FOR ADVOCACY

Telling the stories that matter to support your health center

Storytelling is perhaps the oldest, most powerful tool to affect change in our society. Personal stories detailing obstacles overcome and challenges met connect with us at the core – they remind us of our humanity and bring out the best in our ability to empathize. In this way stories are powerful – they are able to influence individuals at the highest levels of power and create change where it's needed. In fact, a study by the Center for Social Impact Communication found that sharing a story only was the primary motivator for more than half of respondents for beginning to support a cause. Stories from health center staff, patients, board members, and others are an essential element of health center advocacy. In the words of a Congressional staffer, "It helps me to have one or two stories to humanize statistics." Remember – stories help you transmit emotions, and emotions are the most powerful human motivators.

Elements of an effective story

- **Authentic**

Always be truthful – the truth is powerful.

- **Relatable**

When framing your story, make sure it's relatable to the listener or target. Almost everyone can relate to stories where family is a central component, but think about other issues your listener is passionate about and see where you can tie in those issues.

- **Specific**

If you've gotten consent, include specific names and places in your story. It makes the story more real.

- **Short and sweet**

Remember that attention spans are short! Don't get bogged down in unnecessary details, but quickly set the scene and tell the story you want to tell.

- **To the point**

Think about your goal for telling the story. Are you trying to garner more support for health centers? Advocate for funding? Advocate for Medicaid? Make sure you select a story that speaks directly to the impact of the policy or program you are supporting.

- **Includes a call-to-action**

This is the golden rule of advocacy. Never leave your listener hanging, make sure they know how they can show their support whether it's by supporting a specific bill or simply signing up as an advocate on HCAadvocacy.org.

"As advocate, your goal is to get people to agree with you. As storyteller, your goal is different. You want the reader to become part of the world of your issues and thereby understand the world differently."

Getting your story out there

- **Social media**

Post your story on your website or blog and share it on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. Photos help the story truly come to life. If you can collect your story via video, even better! Post the video to YouTube and share it online.

- **Traditional media**

Consider sharing a story with a local newspaper or TV station. If you've invited the media to your National Health Center Week events, make sure you share a story with them that can serve as an effective hook for the piece. Or consider submitting an Op-Ed or letter to the editor that speaks briefly to a story coming out of your health center.

- **Print materials**

Include stories or quotes from stories in your annual report, and consider creating story one-pagers to take to meetings with elected officials and potential funders.

- **HCAAdvocacy**

Always share your story with the Health Center Advocacy Network at HCAAdvocacy.org/stories.

Storytelling Tip:

If you're collecting identifiable information about someone (for example, their name or a photo of that person), make sure you get him/her to sign a release form like these:

- [Release Form- English](#)
- [Release Form- Spanish](#)

Remember, the NACHC Advocacy team is here to help! Contact us for storytelling resources, webinars, templates, ideas, and more by emailing grassroots@nachc.org.

Sources:

- <http://lifehacker.com/5965703/the-science-of-storytelling-why-telling-a-story-is-the-most-powerful-way-to-activate-our-brains>
- <http://www.mobilisationlab.org/the-force-of-empathy-in-advocacy-storytelling/#.WCSvxiOrLIU>

Helpful resources:



[Pixar's 22 Rules to Phenomenal storytelling](#)



[Storytelling for Nonprofits](#)



[Capturing Stories, Capturing Lives: an Introduction to Digital Storytelling](#)



[Online advocacy video best practices](#)



[Read stories and learn how to tell good stories with StoryCorps](#)



[Using storytelling in advocacy](#)

Planning Out a Storyboard

FROM INTRO TO CONCLUSION, PLAN OUT YOUR NARRATIVE WITH CONCISE IDEAS

<p>Hook Grab your reader's attention</p>	<p>Health Center Introduction Include your health center's name and location</p>	<p>Provide Context Help readers understand the background information</p>	<p>Basics of Your Story Describe who, what, when, where, and how</p>
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Brainstorm different parts of your story here and place them into the boxes

<p>Details Provide descriptive sentences to invest the reader in the story</p>	<p>The Art of Storytelling Use imagery to help your reader visualize your story</p>	<p>Persuade Convince your readers the importance of advocating</p>	<p>Prompt Encourage people to learn from your story and act upon the message</p>
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