



*For people with intellectual
and developmental disabilities*

**YOUR
STORY
MAKES THE
DIFFERENCE**



TOOLS FOR YOU!

Use this QR code to access a digital version of all of the resources in [this toolkit](#).



Stories are POWERFUL.
**They can change people's hearts
and minds.**

Your life and experiences are powerful
and valuable.

This toolkit will help you create and share
your stories.

You can use your stories to:

- Encourage elected officials to change laws or policies.
- Raise awareness about an issue.
- Ask people to support changes you want to make in your life.
- Share about what your life is like.

WORDS TO KNOW

Advocacy: Support for a particular issue or policy

Policies: Rules the government uses to make decisions

Elected Official:
Someone who holds a government position because people voted for them

WHAT ARE ADVOCACY STORIES?

Advocacy stories:

- Share important moments from your life.
- Focus on a policy that impacts your life.
- Share what you want your audience to do.

Good stories:

- Are clear and short.
- Have a beginning, middle, and end.
- Use easy-to-understand and direct words.
- Spell out any acronyms you use.
- Share in ways others can relate to.

You can get started by asking two questions:

- What do you want to change?
- Why does this matter to you?

From there, ask **why is this so important?**

CREATE YOUR STORY!

Use the [PowerPoint](#) in our toolkit to learn how to create your advocacy story and see an example.

I HAVE MY STORY. WHAT'S NEXT?

1. Record your story. Write it down, put it on video, or make art about it.
2. Share your story with people you trust, local and state advocacy groups, chapters of The Arc, and your elected officials.
3. Make your story even stronger.
 - Use a photo or image if it adds value to your story.
 - Show your personality and be funny if it fits your story.
 - Practice until you feel confident telling your story.
 - Ask for feedback to make it better.



SEE REAL-LIFE ADVOCACY STORIES

Refer to the toolkit to see [examples](#) of how others have shared their stories.

YOUR STORYTELLER RIGHTS

1. To share only what you feel comfortable with.

Don't share anything you don't want to.

2. To know how your story will be used.

Know where it will be shared and why.

3. To understand the policy issues your story supports.

Ask people you trust to explain the issue to you.

4. To understand any consent forms you sign.

Consent forms give groups permission to use and share your story.

These forms can be difficult to understand.

Ask people to explain the form to you if it is confusing.

5. To ask someone for a stipend when they ask you to share your story.

Your time and experience have value—it's okay to ask.

People may not have money to pay you.
If they don't have money, decide whether to
share your story for free.

Many people start out volunteering to share
their story before they get paid.

But either way is okay.



TIPS FOR FAMILIES AND SUPPORTERS

There are more privacy issues to consider if
you are:

- sharing a story about a person with a
disability
- supporting a person with a disability to
share their story

Check out the [tip sheet](#) in the toolkit to
learn more!

KEEP GROWING YOUR LEADERSHIP

We need your leadership to advance the rights of people with disabilities!

Here are some ways to grow your leadership:

- Share your story with your [local and state chapter](#) of The Arc.
- Join local or state self-advocacy groups
- Look for leadership opportunities with your state [Developmental Disability Council](#).
- Seek out in-person leadership opportunities to share your story in your community.
- Share your story with stories@thearc.org.
- Advocate with your members of Congress through our [Action Center](#).
- Consider joining The Arc's [National Council of Self-Advocates](#).

Access these links and the [entire toolkit](#) online using this QR code.



**Thank you for your leadership,
advocacy, and support!**