



Volunteer stories can be one of the most powerful tools of your campaign, bringing the facts to life for lawmakers, advocates, and the media. Use the tips below to help support your story collection efforts:



What story does your campaign need to tell?

Consider who will benefit from the changes you are working toward. People of different ages, races, ethnicities, and abilities who represent families, employees, business owners, school administrators, farmers, medical professionals, and members of the military (just to name a few) will have different perspectives to share. Additionally, think about the key decision-makers you need to influence and aim to collect stories from some of their constituents.

Use all your channels for story collection:

A story collection drive can seem daunting at first, but you likely already have a wealth of advocates to tap, such as:

- **Grassroots Database:** Send an email alert to advocates directing them to an online story collection form, or asking them to contact a member of your staff.
- **Volunteer Leadership:** Your board likely has deep connections into the community, which can prove fruitful in collecting stories. Provide members with copies of your SYS form or link, so they can help scout out great stories through their networks.
- **Coalition Partners:** Likely and unlikely partners can help add advocates with fresh perspectives to your story collection efforts. Perhaps your organization is looking at an issue from a health perspective, but a partner can add the insights from the business community. Coordinate for a well-rounded story drive.
- **Events:** The conversations your staff and volunteers have at community events and meetings can help lead to new stories. Making an easy story collection tool available at these events will be important for your efforts.
- **Social Media:** Build calls for stories into your social media messaging- and share quotes from advocates who have already shared their stories as a prompt for others to join too.



What story collection tools do you need?

- **Online:** Create a simple webform that collects basic information and includes a free-form box for story entry. Consider including a QR code or text keyword that links to your online form that can be added to posters and fliers to engage people in mobile story collection at events.
- **Offline:** Sometimes simply making a hard-copy form available at events and meetings is the most effective way to capture stories from your audience while you have their attention.



- **Think Outside the Box:** Video and photos can tell a story just as well as text can, providing valuable content for your campaign to use in outreach to lawmakers, advocates, and the media. Some ideas: Send advocates on a 'photo safari' to document the way a given issue affects their neighborhood, or develop one of the great stories you collected at an event into a short video interview with the advocate. (Note: These do not need to be professionally produced pieces. Most mobile phones have cameras to capture good quality images and videos).

Legal Considerations: Ensure you've covered your bases legally by having all participating advocates sign a release form that gives your organization/coalition the right to share their story and/or picture. Your legal counsel should be able to provide guidance on your organization's policy and supply you with the language you need for both online and offline story collection.

You've collected some great stories. Now what? Use them to strengthen your campaign!

- **Lawmaker delivery:** In addition to your fact sheet, consider delivering a story book to lawmakers to put faces to the facts. While you may have one or two advocates attend the meeting, they can share the stories of numerous other advocates who support the change you are working toward. Aim to collect stories from advocates who live in the districts/wards of the key decision-makers you need to influence.
- **Identify advocates to testify/rally:** Your story bank can be a valuable resource to pull from when you have opportunities to have an advocate testify before a committee or speak at a rally.
- **Media advocacy:** Journalists are always looking for stories to help humanize the issues they write about. As you develop those relationships, let reporters know you have stories to share. Additionally, proactively share advocate quotes, pictures, and videos by tweeting them at reporters.
- **Grassroots alerts:** For your grassroots alerts, consider having some of your messages come "from" a fellow advocate. These peer to peer messages help make a personal connection to the issue and motivate people to act.
- **Social media profiles:** Share quotes and pictures from the stories you collect on social media to help bring the issue to life and demonstrate the people behind the campaign.
- **Guest Bloggers:** Invite advocates to write a guest blog or vlog to share on your site.
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For more information and tips on writing and the power of sharing your story:

<https://www.yourethecure.org/shareyourstorytips>