

Storytelling Worksheet for Youth

Use this worksheet to start organizing and writing your story in such a way that will be useful in your advocacy work. Always remember that you do not have to share any parts of your life that you are not comfortable sharing. You can pick and choose what you think would be helpful for the audience to know and leave out the rest. Remember, you only need to tell a story that is **relevant to your policy goal**. If someone asks you a question you do not want to answer, you can just say “I’d rather not share,” or “I’m not comfortable sharing that.”

Remember, an effective story engages the listener’s mind , heart , and the political context .

Set the Stage

Who, what, where, when?

- My name is:
- My pronouns are:
- I am from/currently living in:
- Any other brief introductory information (where you work, YAB member, etc):
- I experienced homelessness as a result of:
 - *You can share some or all of the factors that contributed to your homelessness, but if there is a factor that specifically has to do with the policy goal you’re advocating for, then highlight that.*

Describe the Challenge

Be specific and aligned with your policy goal.

- Something that could have prevented my homelessness was:
 - *Share what is relevant with the policy goal you’re advocating for.*
- My experience of homelessness looked like:
 - *What type(s) of homelessness did you experience? Were you with others or on your own? Were you in school or a postsecondary program? etc.*

Convey the Struggle

Use strong adjectives and details.

- The most difficult part of my experience was:

- *Be specific and aligned with your goal. Was there a youth homelessness provider in your area? Were you considered ineligible for any supportive services? Did anyone know you were experiencing homelessness? etc.*

Highlight the Turning Point 🧡

What helped? What changed?

- What helped me exit homelessness was:
 - *Share what is relevant to the policy goal you're advocating for. Were you connected to an RHYA provider? Did someone help you become eligible for HUD services?*

Reach Closure 🇺🇸

Why did you share that story?

- Share data that is relevant to your policy goal.
- State the ask.
 - *What do you want your listener to do?*
 - *Be aware of what is considered advocacy vs lobbying, and what you are allowed to do in this setting.*
- Based on my experience:
 - *Restate your ask or policy goal. Clarify what the issue is and why you are speaking about it.*



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Storytelling Worksheet for Providers

Use this worksheet to start organizing and writing your experience in such a way that will be useful in your advocacy work. Pick and choose examples that you think would be helpful for the audience to know and that are relevant to your policy goal, and leave out the rest. Avoid using jargon or abbreviations that your audience might not understand.

Remember, an effective story engages the listener's mind 🧠, heart ❤️, and the political context 🇺🇸.

Tips for providers:

- Before sharing a story about a young person, first ask if they would like to tell it themselves. If they do, support them and ensure they are compensated.
- Get informed consent. Make sure the young person understands how and where their story will be used, and that they can change their mind later.
- Let youth choose what details are shared. They decide what is private, what is public, and how they want to be described.
- Respect their voice and language. Don't "polish" their experience to make it more dramatic or more digestible for an audience.
- Share strength and agency, not just trauma. Highlight resilience, leadership, creativity, and insight alongside challenges.
- Keep youth fully anonymous. Remove names, locations, dates, and any distinct details that could lead someone to identify them.
- Focus on your part of the story. Share what you saw, did, and learned.
- Focus on the systemic issue, not the personal details. Use the story only to highlight barriers, policy problems, or service gaps.

Set the Stage 🧠

Who, what, where, when?

- My name is:
- My pronouns are:
- My role/organization is:
- Brief introductory information about the work you do:

- *Avoid jargon/abbreviations/industry terminology.*
- The issue I'm here to talk about today is:
 - *What are you seeing in your work? Why are you sharing it?*

Describe the Challenge 👤

Be specific and aligned with your policy goal.

- This is how the issue affects our work:
 - *Be specific. For example, "Because of HUD's narrow definition of homelessness, we have to spend money putting families up for a few nights in hotels to qualify them for our HUD-funded housing."*
- Share the numbers:
 - *We serve this many young people in our community who are experiencing this issue. It costs us this much to work around this issue.*

Convey the Struggle 💛

Use strong adjectives and details.

- This issue creates these specific challenges in our community:
 - *Be specific and aligned with your goal. What is a real, concrete example of how this issue impacts your work and the young people you serve? Humanize the issue. Use names if possible (even pseudonyms are okay)---research shows this is persuasive.*
 - *Use unifying, [bridge-y language](#)—including "community," "we want all young people to succeed," "creates unnecessary challenges."*

Highlight the Turning Point 💛

What will help? What needs to be changed?

- In order to prevent more young people from experiencing this issue, we need to:
 - *State what you want to see changed. Be specific.*

Reach Closure 🇺🇸

Why did you share that story?

- **State the ask.**
 - *What do you want your listener to do?*
 - *Be aware of what is considered advocacy vs lobbying, and what you are allowed to do in this setting.*
- Based on my experience:
 - *Restate your ask or policy goal. Clarify what the issue is and why you are speaking about it.*