



Advocacy and Storytelling

Sharing your story makes a difference.

Stories are a powerful advocacy tool. They can change people's hearts and minds. Every individual in the disability community has a unique story to tell- whether a parent, sibling, professional, extended family member or supporter. Storytelling has always been a big part of society, dating back tens of thousands of years, to pass history and culture from one generation to the next. Ever listened to someone talk about life and thought, 'I thought I was the only one who's gone through that'? Every story shared is a chance to make someone feel less alone, and help educate and inform those who are unaware of the challenges faced by people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families and caregivers.

In many cases, storytelling is necessary to help give lawmakers an accurate picture of the reality of intellectual and developmental disabilities. It allows them to truly understand the challenges you and your family face so they can see how their decisions have a direct impact on people's lives. When you share your story with your representatives, it helps them remember that when policy decisions are being made about people who have intellectual and developmental disabilities, it's affecting the lives of real people. Your story can help forge relationships with elected officials so that when decisions about health care policy cross their desks, they think of you, their constituent. By helping your legislator see what life looks like where you stand, you can help improve the conditions for everyone who has a disability, their families, and caregivers.

Your story cannot be wrong; it is your own, personal experience, and your experience has value and meaning. Remember, you never have to share anything you feel uncomfortable sharing. Your story will be shared in a way that respects the best interest, wishes, and the privacy of the individuals the stories are about.

Questions and issues to consider when telling your story:

People with disabilities and their families want access to a life in the community, no matter the level of supports necessary to make that happen. But when they try to find what they need, too often the system leaves them waiting.

Why do home and community-based services (HCBS) matter to YOU? How have they impacted you or your family? How do they support you to live in the community? If you are on a waiting list for services, how long has it been and how does that impact your daily life?

What are some of the biggest issues or challenges facing your family right now? What supports do you depend on for health, financial stability, or inclusion in the community?

What do you want your elected officials to know about how they can help address the issues or problems affecting your life? What solutions do you need?

Storytelling tips:

Keep it brief

Stick to the highlights

Emotion should move, not overwhelm

Passion is important, but don't give the listener an opportunity to stop listening

Motivate with hope and recovery



Visit SCPDO.org to learn more about Disability Advocacy Day and how you can get involved!