



## Tips for Effective Storytelling

- **Be Authentic:** Share your true self and experiences. Authenticity resonates with audiences.
- **Keep It Concise:** Aim for clarity and brevity. Focus on the essential parts of your story to maintain engagement.
- **Use Emotion:** Don't be afraid to express your feelings. Emotional connections can inspire action and empathy.
- **Practice:** Rehearse your story to build confidence in sharing it, whether in writing, through video, or in public speaking.
- **Platforms for Sharing Your Story**
- **Social Media:** Use platforms like Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter to share your story, tagging local officials and using relevant hashtags.
- **Videos:** Create short videos that capture your narrative and share them on social media or through community events.
- **Public Events:** Consider opportunities to share your story at town halls, advocacy events, or community gatherings.



## **I/DD Storytelling Guide: Sharing Your Journey**

### Purpose of Storytelling

Sharing personal stories about experiences with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) can be a powerful way to raise awareness, foster understanding, and advocate for change. Your story can inspire others, highlight challenges, and showcase the importance of support and services for individuals with I/DD.

### Steps to Crafting Your Story

1. Identify Your Message
  - What do you want people to learn from your story?
  - Consider the key points you want to emphasize, such as the importance of inclusion, support, or advocacy.
2. Start with a Hook
  - Begin with a captivating opening to draw your audience in.
  - This could be a personal anecdote, a surprising fact, or a poignant question.
3. Share Your Experience
  - Describe your journey, focusing on key moments that shaped your experiences.
  - Include challenges you faced and how you overcame them. Use vivid details to paint a picture for your audience.
4. Highlight Support
  - Talk about the support systems that have made a difference in your life—family, friends, community organizations, or specific programs.
  - This can illustrate the importance of advocacy and resources for the I/DD community.
5. Call to Action
  - Conclude with a clear message or call to action, encouraging others to get involved, advocate for change, or support the I/DD community.



## Step-by-Step Guide to Running Advocacy Campaigns for I/DD Nonprofits

Advocacy campaigns are powerful tools for influencing policy, raising awareness, and gathering community support for the rights and needs of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Here's a comprehensive guide to running an effective advocacy campaign, from building community support to engaging decision-makers and using social media to amplify your message.

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### 1. Define Your Advocacy Goal

- **Clear, Specific Objective:** The first step is identifying the issue or policy change your campaign will address. Your goal should be specific, measurable, and achievable.
  - **Example:** Increase state funding for I/DD services, advocate for inclusive education policies, or expand employment opportunities for individuals with I/DD.
  - **Understand the Policy Landscape:** Research current policies, proposals, and decision-makers involved. Identify key government bodies, legislators, or committees with influence over the issue.
  - **Set a Timeline:** Define the campaign's duration and align it with key legislative dates, such as hearings, comment periods, or elections.
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### 2. Build a Coalition and Gather Community Support

- **Identify Partners:** Partner with other nonprofits, advocacy groups, schools, and parent groups. A coalition can provide more resources and amplify your message.
  - **Example:** Collaborate with disability rights organizations, healthcare providers, and schools with special education programs.
  - **Engage the I/DD Community:** Involve individuals with I/DD and their families in your campaign. Their stories are compelling and bring authenticity to your advocacy.
  - **Host meetings or listening sessions** to gather input and personal stories that highlight the importance of the issue.
  - **Create Volunteer Roles:** Mobilize supporters to help with tasks like event organizing, outreach, and social media management. Create leadership roles to maintain momentum.
  - **Petitions and Pledges:** Launch a petition to collect signatures or encourage supporters to sign a pledge. This demonstrates widespread support and can be presented to decision-makers.
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### 3. Develop Key Messages and Storytelling

- **Craft a Clear, Consistent Message:** Your message should resonate with different audiences—policy makers, the public, and media. Focus on how the issue impacts individuals with I/DD and why action is needed now.
- **Example:** "Increasing state funding for I/DD services will ensure individuals with disabilities can access the care and support they need to thrive in our community."
- **Leverage Personal Stories:** Highlight real-life examples of how your nonprofit's work has made a difference in the lives of individuals with I/DD. Personal stories create emotional connections and motivate action.



- Record video testimonials from individuals with I/DD and their families, or write blog posts featuring their stories.
  - Data and Facts: Supplement personal stories with data and statistics that strengthen your case. Use research, studies, or reports that demonstrate the need for policy changes or funding increases.
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#### 4. Use Social Media for Advocacy

Social media is a cost-effective way to reach a broad audience, build awareness, and mobilize action quickly. Here's how to use social platforms effectively:

- A. Create a Social Media Strategy
    - a. Platforms: Choose the right platforms based on your audience. Facebook is great for community engagement, Twitter for real-time updates and outreach to decision-makers, Instagram for visual storytelling, and LinkedIn for professional advocacy.
    - b. Hashtags: Use relevant hashtags to increase the visibility of your campaign (e.g., #DisabilityRights, #SupportIDD, #InclusionMatters).
    - c. Call to Action: Make sure every post includes a clear call to action—sign a petition, attend a rally, submit public comments, or share content with their networks.
  - B. Content Ideas
    - a. Infographics: Share infographics that simplify key statistics or policy demands.
    - b. Videos: Post videos of personal stories from individuals with I/DD, volunteers, and advocates.
    - c. Live Events: Use Facebook or Instagram Live to broadcast events, Q&A sessions, or public hearings. Live content is engaging and allows for real-time interaction.
    - d. Advocacy Alerts: Use Twitter or Facebook to post urgent action alerts during critical moments like public hearings or committee votes, encouraging supporters to take immediate action (e.g., email or call legislators).
  - C. Engage Influencers and Decision-Makers
    - a. Tag and Mention: Tag local politicians, influencers, and journalists in relevant posts to draw attention to your campaign.
    - b. Share Supporters' Posts: Engage your community by resharing their posts, photos, or stories about your cause. User-generated content helps expand your reach.
    - c. Social Media Advocacy Days: Organize a specific day or week of action where supporters flood social media with posts about the campaign. Encourage them to use campaign hashtags and tag relevant officials.
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#### 5. Organize Events and Actions

Events are an excellent way to generate media attention, bring your supporters together, and make a public statement about the importance of your cause.

- A. Host Community Events
  - a. Town Halls: Hold public town halls or forums where individuals with I/DD and their families can share their experiences and discuss the need for policy change with elected officials.



- b. Rallies or Marches: Organize rallies or marches to raise visibility for your cause. Include speakers, such as advocates, nonprofit leaders, and individuals with I/DD, to engage participants.
  - c. Workshops: Host educational workshops to inform community members about how they can advocate for I/DD issues (e.g., how to write letters to lawmakers or testify at hearings).
- B. Engage in Legislative Advocacy
- a. Lobby Days: Coordinate advocacy days where supporters visit lawmakers to discuss the issue face-to-face. Prepare talking points and leave behind materials.
  - b. Public Testimony: Encourage individuals from the I/DD community to provide testimony at public hearings. Train them on how to effectively communicate their stories and concerns.
- C. Digital Advocacy Events
- a. Webinars: Host webinars on policy issues affecting the I/DD community, featuring expert panelists or nonprofit leaders.
  - b. Virtual Rallies: If in-person events are not possible, organize virtual rallies where speakers can share messages of support through video conferencing platforms.
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## 6. Create Advocacy Materials

- Equip your supporters with clear, concise advocacy materials they can use to participate in the campaign.
  - Fact Sheets: Create easy-to-read fact sheets that summarize the key issues, the importance of policy change, and specific actions needed. These should be shareable online and in person.
  - Action Toolkits: Provide toolkits that outline how people can get involved, including sample email templates, phone scripts, and social media posts.
  - Letter-Writing Campaigns: Organize letter-writing drives where community members write letters to legislators or decision-makers. Provide sample letters, talking points, and contact information.
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## 7. Engage Decision-Makers Directly

Effective advocacy includes direct communication with policymakers. Whether through meetings, public testimony, or written correspondence, engaging decision-makers is key to influencing policy.

- A. Schedule Meetings with Legislators
- a. Prepare an Agenda: Plan for a brief, focused meeting where you present your issue, tell personal stories, and provide data. Leave time for questions.
  - b. Bring Constituents: Bring individuals from your nonprofit who are directly impacted by the issue to share their personal stories during the meeting.
  - c. Follow Up: After the meeting, send a thank-you note to the legislator, restating your ask and offering any additional information they may need.
- B. Provide Public Testimony
- a. Train Advocates: Train your supporters to provide public testimony at local council meetings or legislative hearings. Ensure they practice delivering clear, concise messages.



- b. **Submit Written Testimony:** If in-person testimony isn't possible, submit written testimony that includes personal stories, data, and a clear call to action.
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## 8. Present a United Front

- **Align Messaging:** Ensure that all partners, advocates, and organizations involved in the campaign are delivering the same core message. Consistency is key to avoiding mixed signals.
  - **Coordinate Public Actions:** Work with coalition partners to coordinate activities, such as petitions, events, or social media pushes, to amplify your collective voice.
  - **Show Broad Support:** Present decision-makers with petitions, signed letters of support, or endorsements from community leaders and organizations to demonstrate the breadth of your support.
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## 9. Measure and Celebrate Success

- **Track Progress:** Use metrics to measure the success of your campaign. This could include tracking petition signatures, social media engagement, event attendance, media coverage, and meetings with legislators.
  - **Celebrate Wins:** Whether it's a small legislative victory or significant media attention, celebrate each win with your supporters. Acknowledge their contributions and thank them for their support.
  - **Adjust and Continue:** Advocacy is an ongoing process. If your campaign doesn't achieve its ultimate goal immediately, adjust your strategy, learn from the experience, and continue pushing for change.
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## 10. Continue Engaging After the Campaign

- **Keep Supporters Informed:** Provide updates on any progress made with legislation or policy changes, even after the main advocacy push has ended.
- **Stay Connected with Legislators:** Maintain relationships with legislators by updating them on the impact of their actions, especially if they supported your campaign. Regular communication helps ensure future collaboration.
- **Plan for Future Campaigns:** Advocacy is an ongoing effort. Build on the momentum of a successful campaign by planning future initiatives that advance the rights and services for individuals with IDD.