**Public speaking and advocacy**

Public speaking can be an outlet to advocate for issues and engage with the public and community stakeholders. When advocating for an issue, you may have an opportunity to speak with a person or group who can help address your issue and create change. While public speaking can be nerve-wracking for some, the more prepared you are, the more confident you will feel.

# **Preparing your advocacy message**

* Know your audience. Do some background research to identify their interests, concerns, biases, personal experience or sphere of influence.
* Develop your key messages. Key messages are the main points you want your audience to hear, understand, and remember. Effective key messages are concise, relevant, simple and memorable. Clearly explain the issue, why it matters and the change you'd like to see/positive outcome you want.
* Decide on supporting messages. Make sure they are relevant to the audience and clearly explained. Start from the most important reason to less important ones. Supporting messages may include principles, legislation, causes and effects, statistics, anecdotes, quotes from authorities, comparisons or examples.
* Be prepared to address common questions or objections, such as costs, expertise, legality, capacity, and myths. If needed, offer to provide answers at a later date with 'I don't know the answer, but will look into it and get back to you.'
* End with a call to action or clear request.

# **Tips for speaking at a meeting**

* Use proper titles and correct pronunciation of names.
* Be polite, respectful, and confident.
* Try to have open and approachable body language.
* Create contact by facing the person you are speaking to; if more than one person is present, ask where everyone is seated and turn to look at them all.
* If speaking as part of a team, decide who will say what and when.
* Use simple, straightforward language. Avoid long anecdotes and potentially controversial words.
* Have a clear message and call to action. Tell your audience why your message is important and what exactly you want them to do.
* Let your audience see and feel your enthusiasm and passion. Speak from your heart and experience. Sharing your personal story or lived experiences shows audiences the personal side of your call to action.
* Be aware of time limitations and remember to leave time for questions.
* Thank the audience for listening, the opportunity to speak, and for their support.
* Be prepared to answer common questions or objections; answer the best you can or offer to provide the answers at a later date. Prepare for a range of possible responses, whether positive or negative.
* Leave a written copy of your key messages and your contact details for any follow-up information.
* For in-depth information on presentation skills, please check out our [Educate to Advocate Public Speaking Handout](https://www.cnib.ca/sites/default/files/2023-01/Educate%20to%20Advocate%20Public%20Speaking%20Handout_EN.docx).

# **Tips for speaking at networking events**

* Consider having a sighted guide to assist with getting around a large venue or identifying people to talk to.
* Circulate the room, talking with as many 'key' contacts as possible. Remember, people are there to network, so don't be afraid to approach someone!
* Join groups talking together, interjecting with a comment or self-introduction.
* Be aware of the politicians and decision-makers circulating the room.
* You may need to politely extract yourself from a long-winded conversation with another person. If you are there for a reason, you don't want to miss your chance to speak to the right person.
* Ask for the person's title, department or organization and name (spelling) and get their business card for follow-up.
* Follow up with an email thanking the person, reiterating your key messages or presenting your request.