**Tips for Telling Your Story with News Media**

**Why is this important?**

Telling our stories as people with disabilities and allies is a key part of how we get things done. It’s how we advocate for change. It’s how we get accommodations for ourselves and those we care for. It’s how we promote greater understanding of our disabilities and what we need to have our best lives.

But sharing our stories is challenging. We may not know where to begin.

Consider why we need to share a story and consider the challenges we face when sharing our stories through traditional news media. Journalists are bombarded with information.

Newsrooms get hundreds if not thousands of emails each week. Many are not germane to what a news outlet does, yet they must be sorted through.

Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and other social media sources are nonstop. It is difficult to make a story stand out. But there is help.

**Advocacy groups**

Many advocacy groups offer training on how to tell a story. Connect with them on upcoming workshops, podcast and web pages for information.  
Materials for legislative advocacy and rally days typically contain tips on telling one’s story.

**Writing**

Lots of resources are out there for writers. Community education programs can be very helpful. Podcasts are also a great help. The Minnesota Newspaper Association has even offered a “citizen journalism u” for people wishing to be trained to write for newspapers in a short course.

Numerous websites offer useful advice for letters to the editor and commentaries. Here are our top three:

<https://indivisible.org/resource/write-letters-editor-really-get-attention>

<https://www.thoughtco.com/how-to-write-a-letter-to-the-editor-1857300>

<https://freespeechforpeople.org/tips-on-writing-effective-letters-to-the-editor/>

A letter to the editor is typically shorter in length than a guest commentary.

A letter might be a quick response to a legislative issue.

Learn about a paper’s letter’s policy before writing a letter. Some papers won’t print “form letters” or letters that are sent out to multiple papers. If many people send letters about the same issue, make them unique.

A commentary or guest column is longer in length than a letter to the editor. Like a letter, it can be more personal in nature, and gives the writer a chance to tell a story

Contact an editor before writing a commentary.

Letters and commentary can be more “from the heart.” Don’t make them read like news stories,. These are the writer’s chance to make a key point on an issue.

**Find your media outlet**

For Minnesota newspapers, start with the Minnesota Newspaper Association:

<https://mna.org/newspaper-directory/>

For regional community and BIPOC papers:

<https://mnnews.com/>

Another Minnesota media list:

<https://www.einpresswire.com/world-media-directory/4/minnesota>

A broadcast media resource:

<https://minnesotabroadcasters.com/>

Local news media may appreciate having someone from their community who can be seen as an expert and/or person with lived experience with a disability issue. Those relationships can start as simply as “If you need someone to talk about autism, let me know.”