

## **Telling Your Story** **Advocate in your own words**

Story telling is a powerful advocacy tool!

Whether you are homeless or have been homeless, you are a service provider or represent local government, telling your story makes homelessness and solutions to homelessness real. Stories leave lasting impressions and provide a perspective frequently not heard by elected officials.

Policy makers are impressed by real-life examples of how federal policy impacts real people and individual and organizational successes.

### **Tips for Effective Storytelling:**

- **Who should tell stories?** Homeless or formerly homeless people, homeless service providers and local government officials should all tell stories of success in ending homelessness.
- **Keep it personal!** You do not need to be a policy expert to impact public policy. Tell your own story of success and how a specific program or policy can help more people like you or people in your community.
- **Match the story with the policy issue.** For example, if your policy issue involves supportive housing, tell a story about how permanent supportive housing works and why supportive housing resources should be expanded.
- **Know your audience.** Stories should emphasize different things depending on what the person you are talking to cares about. For example, if they have a history of supporting children's issues then tell a story about how the policy impacted a family or a child.
- **Focus on success!** People are attracted to people and programs that succeed. Describe how you or a client moved beyond homelessness with the help of a local program. If you focus on difficulties or what you are unable to do this often sounds like whining.
- **Describe your emotions.** Describe the impact this program or policy issue has had on your life.
- **Keep it Local.** Relate your story to how the issue impacts your city and what your program would specifically do with additional resources (e.g. create 50 new units of permanent supportive housing).
- **Keep it short!**