

# Telling Your Story



## Your Story Matters

Elected officials are often bombarded with graphs, data, and charts. However, what really resonates is a personal story. Stories are remembered over time and continue to influence policy long after you tell them. As a grassroots advocacy organization, The Arc of Northern Virginia is dedicated to helping you share your story and working with you to change our disability service system for the better.

## What to Share

Having a personal touch in a story is critical, but only include what you feel comfortable letting someone else know. Think of your story as a meeting on paper, so tell all of the things you would in an in person meeting, like your name and who you are. Since the person reading your story cannot see you, always be sure to add at least one photo. It is the first thing they'll see and seeing your face will help them connect to what you're sharing. Here are some other things you'll want to include. Try to keep it under 2 pages (front/back of one sheet of paper).



Always include at least one photo

- ✓ Name
- ✓ Age
- ✓ Disability
- ✓ What you love to do for fun, things you do well
- ✓ The supports that make you successful
- ✓ Challenges you have and any crises you've experience
- ✓ An example of a time when things went well or poorly for you, and how you managed
- ✓ If you're on a waiting list, which one(s) and for how long have you waited?
- ✓ Ask for what you need (e.g. a Medicaid Waiver, case management, crisis help, etc.)

## Finishing Your Story

Your story should be the start of a conversation with whoever is reading it. At the end, ask for someone to follow up with you, and provide your contact information. Say thank you for their time and that you look forward to talking more. Remember that people are more likely to follow up with you if your story is clear, asks for a follow up, and you're their constituent.

## Sending Your Story

You can drop off your story in person along with a speech, or when you meet with elected officials. It is a great way to leave something behind for them to remember and review later. You can attach something to your story, like a legislative agenda, a list of bills you support/oppose, or a copy of a speech you just gave.

If you are emailing your story, remember to put a subject line in the email that describes what you are sending (e.g., Personal Story from Your Constituent), and a little note in the email that reminds the legislator if you have met before, and when.

## Finding the Right Legislator

Legislators receive lots of mail, email, and paperwork, so they focus most on what comes from people who can vote for them. They also respond more if it is an issue they can change. See the chart below for ideas on who to contact.

Who is in Charge?	County/City Officials (e.g. CSB, County Board, City Council)	State Officials (e.g, Senator/Delegate, DMAS, DBHDS, DARS)	Federal Groups (e.g., congressional representatives, CMS, DOJ)
Waivers	Putting people on the waiting list for Waiver, allocating Waiver slots, managing the Waiver waiting list, case management	Funding new Waiver slots and directing the Dept. of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services on some issues	Funding Medicaid, writing contacts with Virginia on how our Waivers must be run
Employment	Possible local funding for people who need job/day supports, case management to find a job	State job coaching, Waiver funding/services for employment supports, issuing employment policies and priorities	Setting federal employment standards and guidelines, DOJ settlement agreement on employment first
Housing	Providing case managers and helping people navigate housing options	Funding housing vouchers with state dollars or federal partnerships, implementing DOJ agreement	Federal housing guidelines and protections, matching funds and priorities for housing vouchers
Early Intervention	Early intervention screening, case management, and services	Funding for early intervention services	Early intervention policies and mandates

To find your federal and state legislators, visit: [www.commoncause.org/take-action/find-elected-officials](http://www.commoncause.org/take-action/find-elected-officials)

To find your local legislators, visit:

Alexandria City- <https://www.alexandriava.gov/Council>

Arlington- <https://countyboard.arlingtonva.us/county-board-members/>

Fairfax County- <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/myneighborhood/>

Fairfax City- <http://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/mayor-city-council>

## Getting Help

The Arc of Northern Virginia is always here to help you tell your story. Email Lucy at [Lucy.Beadnell@TheArcofNOVA.org](mailto:Lucy.Beadnell@TheArcofNOVA.org) for help and join the main listserv for The Arc of Northern Virginia, visit:

<https://thearcfnova.org/programs/waivers/newsletter-archive/>