

Advocacy 101: Storytelling Worksheet

For Patients, Caregivers, and Advocates | Schizophrenia Policy Action Network (SPAN) | 2026

Develop your narrative for a policymaker audience

How to use this worksheet: Work through each question to shape your personal story. Your lived experience is your most powerful advocacy tool. Bring this completed sheet to SPAN advocacy days.

Q1. Who are you, and what is your connection to schizophrenia?

→ Briefly *introduce yourself*. Are you a person living with schizophrenia, a caregiver, a sibling, a parent, or a close friend?

Q2. When did schizophrenia first enter your life, and how did it change your daily reality?

→ Describe *the first signs or diagnosis*. How did this shift your routines, responsibilities, or expectations?

Q3. What are the biggest challenges you or your loved one has faced in getting care, support, or services?

→ Focus on *systemic barriers* — insurance denials, stigma, workforce shortages, poor care coordination, gaps in community services, etc.

Q4. Have you had any experiences with the mental health system (good or bad) that demonstrate what works or what needs to change?

→ Use a *specific moment* to highlight either a success or failure in the system.

Q5. How has schizophrenia affected your family's financial, emotional, or professional life?

→ Explain *the ripple effects of the illness* — job loss, caregiver burnout, housing precarity, or disruptions to siblings and relationships.

Q6. What keeps you hopeful or motivated to speak up?

→ This can be a personal goal, a vision for the future, or a recognition of your ability to advocate for others.

Q7. Based on your experience, what is one thing you would change if you had the power to fix the system?

→ Identify a key gap — whether it's access to treatment, housing, care coordination, parity enforcement, caregiver support, etc.

Q8. What specific policy would help make that change a reality?

→ Match your lived experience from Q7 to one of SPAN's policy asks from the SPAN Policy Priorities table. Which row above best matches your concerns or experience? Write the ask you could bring to your meeting:

Q9. How does your story help humanize the issue for policymakers? Why should they care?

→ Briefly articulate why your experience matters to the policymaker's constituents, values, or responsibilities.

