



# HOW TO PREPARE YOUR SPOKESPEOPLE

A spokesperson is the public face and voice of a campaign. Whether giving media interviews, testifying before a policy making body or presenting at a community organization. Your spokespeople give the campaign a human touch that resonates with your target audience and creates credibility. This guide provides tips for recruiting and training spokespeople as well as a step-by-step process for conducting your own training with your campaign, coalition or organization.



## WHO SHOULD BE YOUR CAMPAIGN'S SPOKESPEOPLE?

Your campaign should have a variety of spokespeople available to choose from for different opportunities that arise, such as media interviews, public comment or testimony in front of city councils, meetings with elected officials, community events, press conferences, and social media. The people you recruit to be your campaign's spokespeople should:

- Be knowledgeable about the subject, personally impacted by tobacco, or demonstrate the breadth of impact tobacco has on your community. For example, a college student advocating for smoke-free campus policies because they are exposed to secondhand smoke as they cross campus to their next class.
- Be able to succinctly convey your campaign's message and talking points.
- Be prepared on how to redirect the opposition's questions.
- Be a strong ally.
- Have credibility on the issue.
- Be accessible and responsive to meet deadlines.

- Be confident, friendly, and calm.
- Be able to perform the speaking opportunity – example, Proposition 56 funded organizations cannot lobby, so they would not be able to give public testimony supporting or opposing a local ordinance. The ideal spokesperson can address this local ordinance should questions arise or an issue need to be addressed.
- Represent the diversity of your community.

Don't forget to be inclusive with who you recruit as spokespeople. Your spokesperson should be a representative of the heterogeneity of different genders, ethnicities, religions, sexual identities, and occupations. Have spokespeople who are considered leaders. They should be able to convey the issues of concern on behalf of the community or speak to the technical aspects of your campaign. Additionally, a good spokesperson is someone who has a compelling personal experience or story that is relevant to your campaign. Remember, you can always refine your spokespeople as your campaign progresses.



## HOW TO PREPARE YOUR CAMPAIGN'S SPOKESPEOPLE

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Once you have determined your campaign spokesperson, you will need to prepare them to deliver your campaign's messages. Training your spokesperson can be done in a formal training where you gather all of your spokesperson together to prepare as a group or it can be done informally as one-on-one conversations. Remember, the goal in preparing spokespersons is to empower them to deliver your key messages.

### **Goals of your spokesperson training:**

1. Have your spokesperson understand the importance of their role.
2. Empower your spokesperson and build their confidence to deliver the key messages.
3. Ensure your spokesperson have the tools to effectively deliver their testimony and handle any media questions.



Below are the key steps to for training your spokespeople and ensuring that they are ready to deliver the campaign’s key messages.

### **1. PREPARE MATERIALS AHEAD OF TIME.**

Put together your campaign’s talking points, key messages, frequently asked questions, fact sheets and other materials that will help your spokespeople prepare for their speaking opportunity. Have the materials ready to give out to your spokespeople before the training. Think about including public speaking tips about how to communicate effectively, such as speaking slowly, making eye contact, and avoiding fillers such as “um” and “uh.”

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### **2. INTRODUCTION**

Introduce everyone attending the spokesperson training. Have each person introduce themselves, identify their organization, areas of expertise, pronouns, and the issue area(s) they will be covering for the campaign. Make sure to have their contact information easily accessible so you can reach out with no delays.

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### **3. AUDIENCE OVERVIEW**

Explain who the audience(s) will be for the spokespeople and what they need to know. Will they be doing media interviews or public comment? If for media interviews provide an overview of the news outlets, what they cover,

key considerations such as issues they do/do not favor and what potential questions they may ask. If the spokesperson is providing public comment at a city council meeting, explain how the public comment process works such as amount of time to deliver message.

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### **4. KEY MESSAGE OVERVIEW**

Review your campaign’s key message(s) with your spokesperson and make sure they understand them. Spend time focusing on what their 30-second soundbite should be and how to best deliver that message. Your spokespeople should easily be able to convey the key message(s) so they can incorporate them into every answer.

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### **5. TEACH SPOKESPEOPLE HOW TO INCORPORATE THEIR PERSONAL STORY**

Using personal stories or testimonies is a powerful technique to draw attention to a perspective or issue. A personal story can teach people about an issue, inspire others to care, and motivate people to action. Have your spokespeople work on merging their personal story with the key campaign messages and have them practice delivering it.



**Example:**

**Key Message: California is currently in the midst of a youth vaping epidemic.**

Personal story helping to enforce your key message:

*"I've seen first-hand the severity of the youth vaping epidemic in our schools. Even as a middle schooler, I would see classmates vaping in the bathrooms. My own 12-year-old brother and his friends have easy access to e-cigarettes."*

## 6. TECHNIQUES TO GET SPOKESPEOPLE BACK ON MESSAGE

Bridging is a technique that helps your spokespeople answer difficult questions or address topics by refocusing the questions/topics back to your messaging. The key to bridging is quickly acknowledging the questions and then seamlessly moving back to your messaging and ending each response on a positive note. Have your participants practice bridging difficult questions back to your messages.

## 7. PRACTICE

Break your group into smaller groups and have them practice different formats. Have one person give a mock media interview to the other and then have them switch roles. Have another group determine their one- to two- minute public comment and give it in front of the other. Switch out groups to practice other spokesperson roles.

## 8. ANTICIPATE TOUGH QUESTIONS

Prepare your spokespeople for tough questions. Provide them with sample answers to these tough questions so they can learn how to deliver and practice. Make sure they know how to bridge the question into an answer leading back to a campaign key message.

## 9. CONCLUDE TRAINING AND IDENTIFY FUTURE ACTION STEPS

Let them know you will be providing periodic updates on what you are working and potential opportunities for them to do speaking engagements in the future.

# ENSURING YOUR SPOKESPEOPLE ARE EFFECTIVE IN DIFFERENT SITUATIONS

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## 1. MEDIA INTERVIEWS

A good interview can bring increased awareness to your campaign. Picking the right spokesperson is important. Are they credible? Can they get the point across under pressure? Do they have a compelling story? Remember – how a spokesperson feels about the interview will come across. If they are prepared and confident, they will perform better.

A reporter's job is to ask questions. The spokesperson's job is not necessarily to answer directly but to deliver the campaign's message. To do that requires the spokespeople to use techniques like pivoting or bridging to move from the reporter's question to the campaign's message.

Remember that the general public is the audience, and they are not as familiar with tobacco control as the spokespeople are - message needs to be delivered in a way the general public can understand.



**Make sure your spokesperson is well-prepared in order to:**

- Deliver a 30-second sound bite.
- Stay on message.
- Remain cool, calm, and collected, especially if provoked.
- Avoid mis-stating facts.



## 2. SPEAKING IN FRONT OF POLICYMAKING BODIES

Decision makers that comprise a city council or board of supervisors are generally more well-versed than the general public with public policy issues such as tobacco control. Therefore, the campaign spokespeople must display a level of knowledge and expertise about the issue and be prepared to answer potentially in-depth questions about it. In addition to expressing their knowledge of the issue, spokespeople will want to show their passion for the issue, including sharing a personal story about why they are involved.

Generally, there are two ways to speak about your campaign issue at a city council or board of supervisor meeting:

- **Prepared Comments or Testimony:** Under this format, a spokesperson is selected in advance of the meeting and will deliver their testimony during that point on the agenda when the body is considering the issue. The spokesperson may have up to three to five minutes to speak, but it will be up to the chair of the policymaking body to determine the speaking rules. With this time allotment, the spokesperson will explain why the issue is important, their personal story and to deliver the campaign's key message or messages. While the spokesperson may get technical with key information, they will still need to keep the testimony understandable for non-experts. If the policymaking body allows more than one speaker from the campaign, make sure to coordinate with that speaker to cover all the information the campaign needs communicated.

- **Public comment:** this format is less formal than giving testimony. Typically this opportunity happens after your issue has been presented and the policymaking body opens the floor to the public to provide comments. Sometimes, the city council or board of supervisors' meeting will have a spot at the end of their meeting agenda for the public to make comments on any item on the agenda or anything they want to communicate to the policymaking body.
- Speakers are usually allotted about one to three minutes to speak. Your spokespeople need to be able to deliver succinctly the following information:
  - Their name and the organization they represent, if that's their purpose;
  - Their view on the issue before the policy making body; and,
  - Why the issue is important to them. This is a good place to tell a personal story or cite a relevant fact or statistic.

### 3. COMMUNITY EVENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Speaking at an event or before a community-based organization is a great way to get your message out. Whether a town hall, a school PTA meeting or a tabling event at a health fair, your spokesperson has the opportunity to showcase their passion for the issue, share their personal story and deliver the campaign's message. These events are valuable because generally a spokesperson will have more time to present the issue, have the opportunity to stay and speak with audience members one-on-one afterwards. This will give your spokesperson time to really connect with the target audience and promote their campaign.

Lastly, remember that your spokespeople are the face and voice of your campaign. Deploy them effectively to promote the campaign and garner



the support you need. Let your spokespeople show their passion for the issue. More often than not people will be moved to act or support!

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