



Easy Read Edition

Sharing Your Story For A Political Purpose

**Part 1: Sharing your story for
policy advocacy**

Words to Know in Part 1



Elected

Chosen by everyday people like you and me



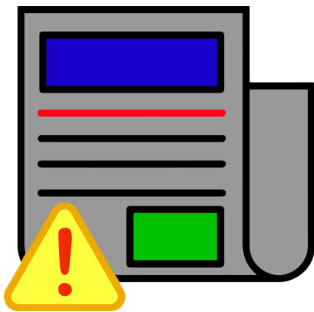
Elected Officials

People who get elected to work in the government



Policies

Rules and laws the government makes



Biased

Talking about the news in a sneaky way

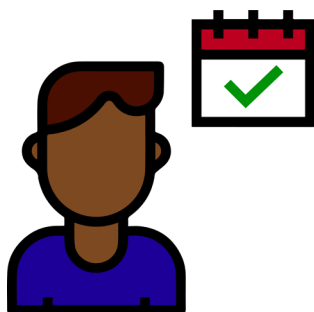
Sharing your story for policy advocacy

What is “my story”?



Your story is when you talk about your life.

Some things you might share in your story could be:



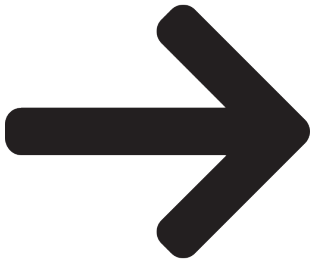
- What has happened in your life.



- What you think and feel about your life.



- What things could have made your life better.



- What you want to see happen next in your life.



- What you want to happen for other people who have lives like yours.



You can also talk about things that you have seen.



Or, if they say it is okay, you can talk about other people in your life.



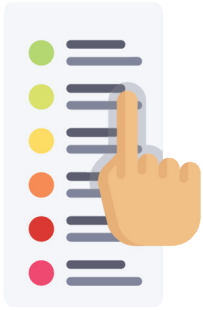
You can talk about things they have been through.



Your story doesn't have to share everything about your life.



You can keep some things private.

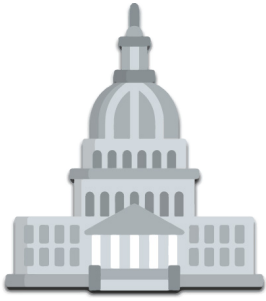


Only share the parts of your story that you want to share.

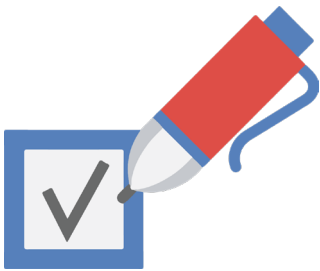


Other people shouldn't make you share things you don't want to share.

Why should people share their stories?



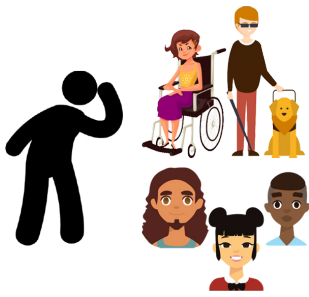
Many people who work in the government get elected.



Elected means chosen by everyday people like you and me.



People who get elected to work in the government are called **elected officials**.



Elected officials listen to the problems that everyday people have.



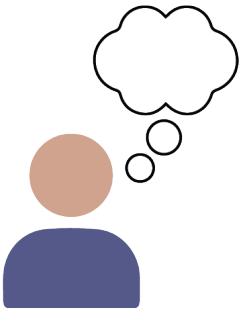
They make rules or laws to solve problems.



These rules and laws are called **policies**.



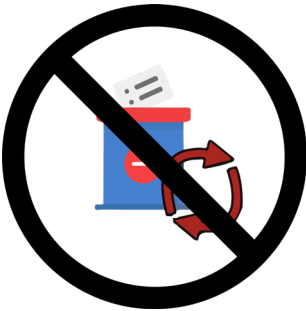
Policies are rules and laws that the government makes.



Elected officials need to think about what policies people want.



They have to help make those policies.



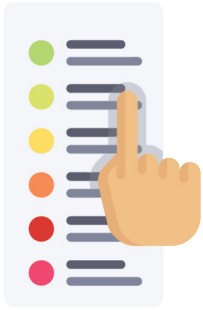
If they don't, they won't get elected again.



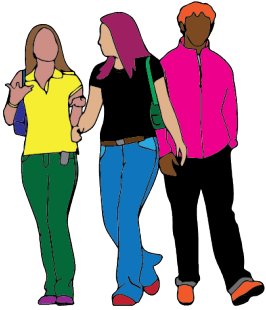
But making policies takes a lot of work.



Elected officials have to think about a lot of different problems.



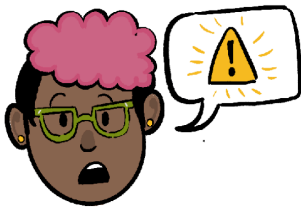
They have to choose which problems to work on.



So they need to learn how a problem affects people in real life.



When someone shares their story, it can make a big difference.



Hearing a real person talk about a problem is important.



It gives elected officials a name and face to remember.

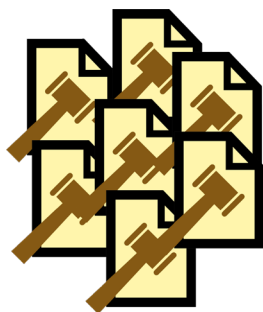


They will think of that person when they think of the problem.



That can make the elected official want to fix the problem.

Why do people with disabilities need to share our stories?



The government makes a lot of policies.



Lots of those policies affect people with disabilities.



Sometimes, the government makes policies without talking to people with disabilities.



When that happens, we don't get to share how we feel about the policies.



Because of this, some of the policies that get made to help us don't help at all.



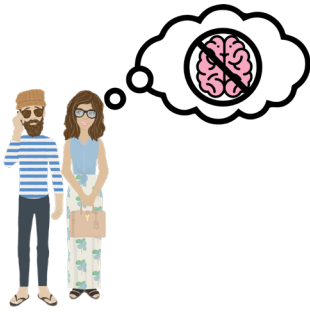
Some of the policies even hurt people with disabilities.



We need to make sure that policies help people with disabilities instead of hurt us.



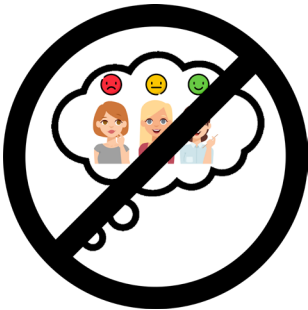
People with disabilities need to make policies ourselves.



But some people think that people with disabilities can't think for ourselves.



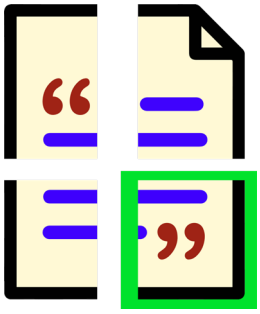
They think that we don't have opinions about our disability.



They think we don't care about how the world treats us.



So we don't get taught how to talk to our elected officials.



We only get taught how to share some of our stories.



People use our stories to teach people about our lives.



Or, they use our stories to “inspire” other people.



That isn't fair!



People with disabilities have powerful stories.



We should be in charge of what we want to share.



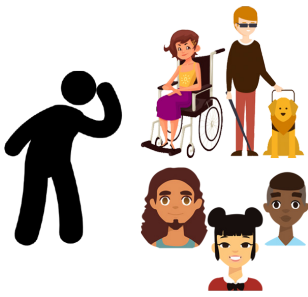
We should get to use our stories to help change the world.



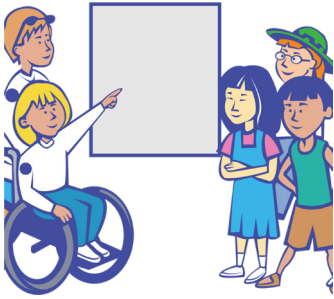
Our stories can help the government make good policies.



We need to let elected officials know about the problems that people with disabilities have.



Making sure elected officials hear from us makes a big difference.



Nothing about us, without us!

How do I tell my story?



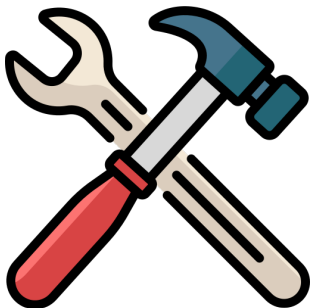
You shouldn't talk about your whole life every time you tell your story!



You should talk about the parts that will help make good policies.



You want your story to make people want to take action.



Then, they will help you fix the problems you talk about in your story.

1... 2...
3... 4...

Choosing how to tell your story takes a lot of steps.

Here are some things you should think about.



What problem or policy do you want to talk about?



Your story should focus on one problem that you want to fix.



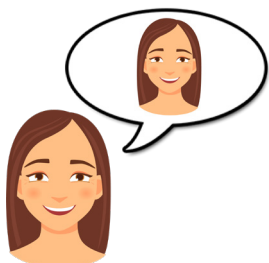
This can be a law you would like your elected officials to pass.



Or, you might want them not to pass it.



How does the problem or policy affect you?



Your story should be about your life.



Or, it can be about someone you care about.



But don't try and tell a story for someone else.



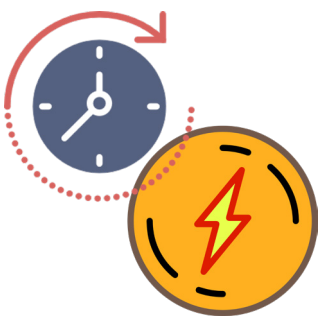
Why should your elected official care about your problem?



Elected officials are very busy.



They need to talk to lots of people and make policies that help people.



That takes a lot of time and energy.



Elected officials usually care most about problems that affect a lot of people.

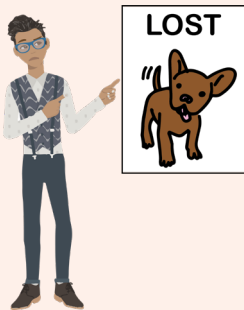


They won't care about a problem as much if it only affects you.



Use your story to show how a problem you faced hurts others, too.

For example:



Harold's dog ran away.



He went to talk to his city council about it.



Harold said how sad he was about losing his dog.



He asked the council to make a new policy.



The policy would give money to help people find their lost dogs.



But the city council wouldn't make a policy just to help Harold.



Harold didn't show that his problem affected other people, too.



Harold tried telling his story in a different way.



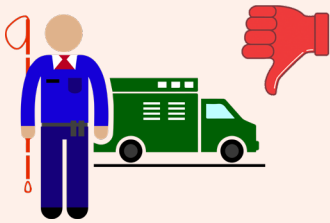
He still said he was sad about losing his dog.



But he told stories of other people losing their dogs.



He told stories of dogs getting hurt when they got lost.



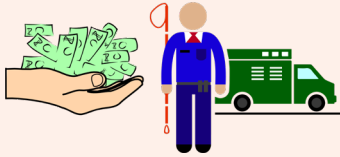
He said this happened because the city's dog catchers couldn't do a good job.



They didn't have trucks and other tools they needed to help.



Harold asked the council to make a new policy.



The policy would give money to buy what the dog catcher's needed.

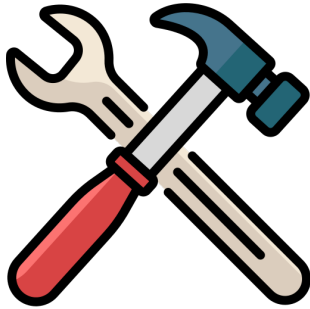


Harold showed how the policy would help the whole city.



So the city council passed Harold's policy!

What is the goal of sharing your story?



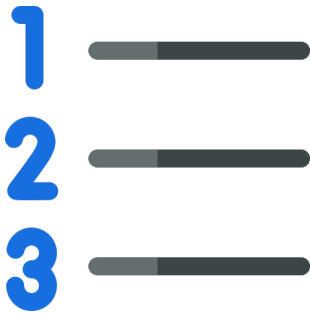
You want to fix the problem you talk about in your story.



You need to make sure the person you're talking to knows that.

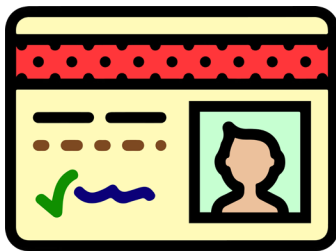


Be sure to tell them how you think the problem should get fixed.



Think about the order your story should go in.

Most stories have around the same order:



Start with your name and where you live.



Say what problem or policy you want to talk about.



Talk about why that problem or policy matters to you.



Show how that problem or policy affects your life.



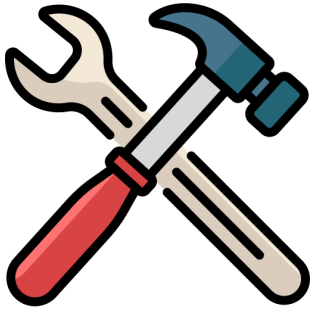
Use an example from your life.



Talk about how this problem or policy affects other people.



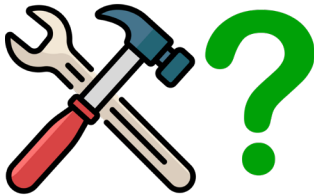
You can use examples here, too!



Talk about the ways the problem can be fixed.



Or, say or what you want to happen to the policy.



Ask a question about how the problem will get fixed.



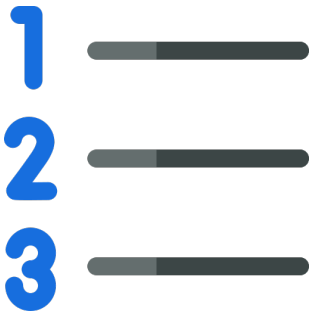
Talk about how you'd like the problem to get fixed.



Or, ask a question about what will happen with the policy.



Now you know what should go in your story!



You know what order your story should go in.



Now, work on making your story easy to remember.



Think about why what you have to say is important.

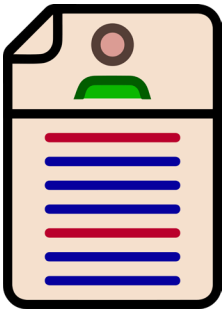


Think about how you can say it to make people pay attention.

Here are some things to think about:



Is my story short enough that people will listen to it all?



Does my story have enough details so that people will remember it?



Is my story about me or someone I care about?



Will people remember me when they think about a problem or policy?



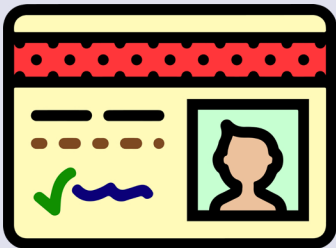
Does my story show that a problem or policy affects lots of people?



Do people know that it is a big problem?

Sample Story Script

Here is a script you can use to write your own story:



My name is **[full name]**, and I live at **[address]**.



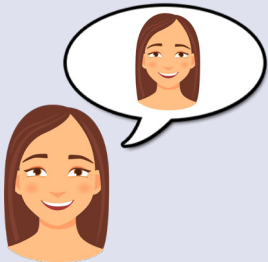
I would like to talk to you today about **[the problem or policy]**.



This affects me because **[reason]**.



[Here is where you can share your story.]



Show how the problem or policy affects your life.



Show how it affects the lives of other people.]



Please help people like me.



You can help by:



[Choose which one works for you:



Voting to pass a law that fixes the problem



Voting to not pass a law that causes a problem



Making a new policy to fix the problem]



This would help people like me
because:



**[Talk about how what you just
asked them for would help you.]**



**Why should they pass or not pass
the law?**

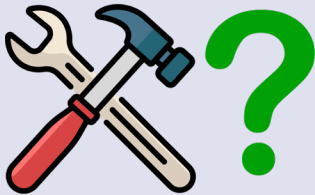


**Why should they make a new
policy?]**



(You could also end your story with a question.

You could ask something like:



What will you do to make sure this problem gets fixed?



What will you do to make sure this policy becomes the law?



What will you do to make sure this policy doesn't become the law?)



Thank you for listening to my story.

Scenario Script



Remember Sally Jones from Normaltown, California?



She is still working with the Stop the Bees Community Group.



Angry bees are still swarming the United States.



Sally wants to solve that problem.



(Remember, this is an imaginary example!)



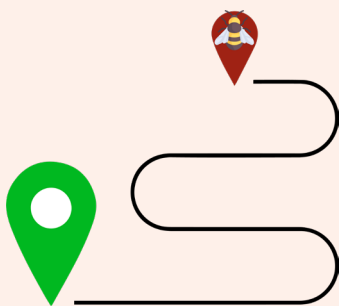
Sally helped come up with the Beekeeping Act.



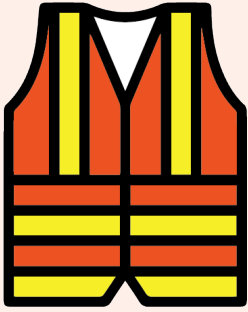
It is a new policy.



It would build new bee colonies.



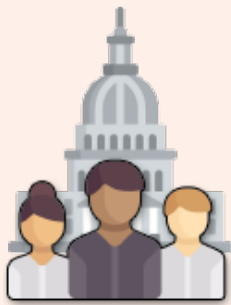
The colonies would get built far away from where people live.



So it would help make people safer.



The Beekeeping Act will get voted on soon.



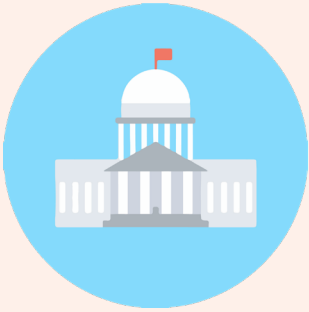
Elected officials will decide if it becomes the law.



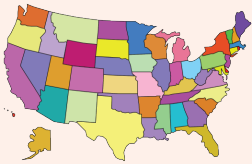
Sally wants to talk to her elected official.



Her elected official's name is Anne Smith.



Anne Smith is a representative.



She votes on laws that affect the whole United States.



Sally wants Representative Smith to vote "Yes" on the Beekeeping Act.



Here is a story that Sally might share with Representative Smith:



Hi, I'm Sally Jones.



I'm from Normaltown, California.



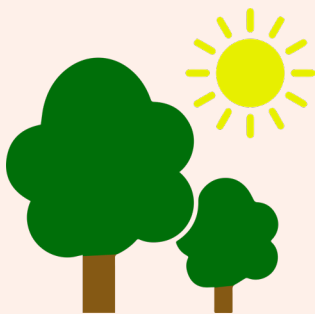
I'm a member of the Stop the Bees Community Group.



I'm here to talk to you today about the Beekeeping Act.



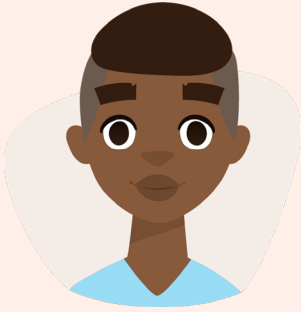
This affects me because bees keep attacking Normaltown.



The bees make it hard for people to go outside in Normaltown.



The bees sting people as soon as they go outside.



My nephew got stung by 57 bees when he went outside last week.



He is still in the hospital now.



Lots of my friends and family in Normaltown have been stung.



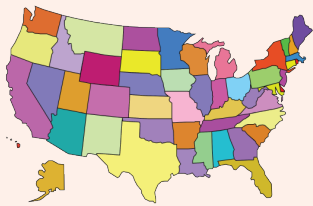
I got stung 5 times just coming here to see you!



Everyone in Normaltown is afraid to go outside.



But the bees aren't just in Normaltown.



Bees keep attacking lots of towns across the United States.



The Beekeeping Act will help fix the bee problem.



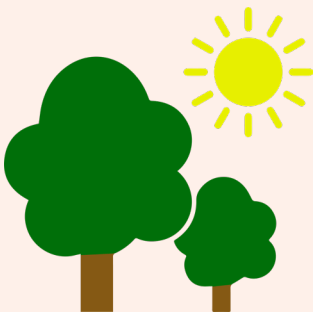
It will give money to build bee colonies away from towns.



It will make the bees leave places like Normaltown.



We won't have to be afraid to leave our houses anymore.



I want to feel safe going outside again.



Please help people like me by voting for the Beekeeping Act.

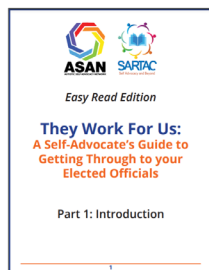


Thank you for listening to my story.

Where can I share my story?

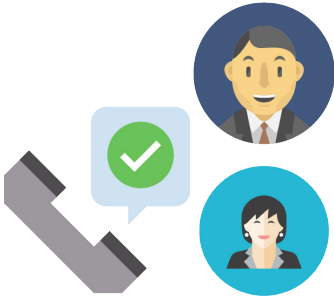


There are many places where you can share your story.



We talked about some of these places in the ["They Work For Us"](#) toolkit.

You can:



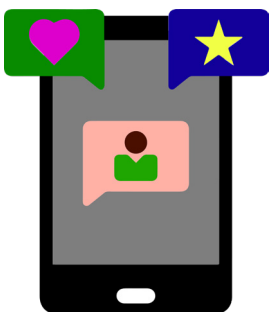
- Call your elected officials



- Meet in person with your elected officials



- Email or write letters to your elected officials

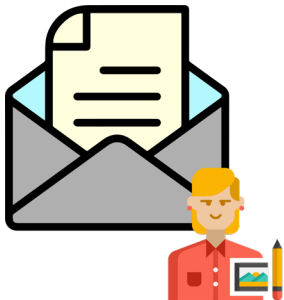


- Use social media to connect with your elected officials

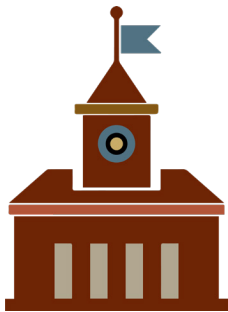
This toolkit will talk about using your story:



- In a Petition



- In a Letter to the Editor



- At a Town Hall meeting



- In Legislative Testimony



- During a Public Comment Period

How do I learn about the policies that affect me?



Before you share your story, it's important to learn about different policies.



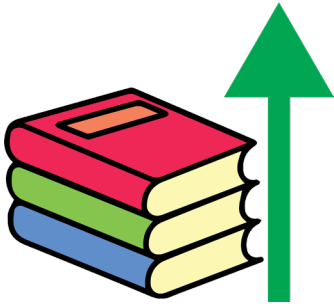
You need to know how they might affect you or people you care about.



Sometimes, it can be hard to find information about a policy.



Or, the information you find may be wrong.



We will talk about where you can go to learn more about policies.



We'll also show how to make sure what you're learning is correct and fair.

Here are some places you can learn about policies:



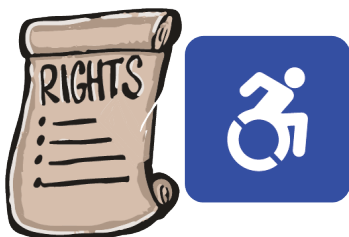
- Think about what problems matter to you.



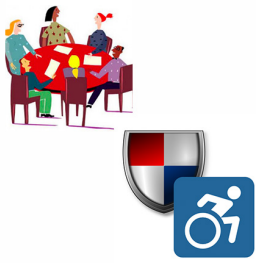
Then, think about policies that could fix those problems.



Think about who might know more about those policies.



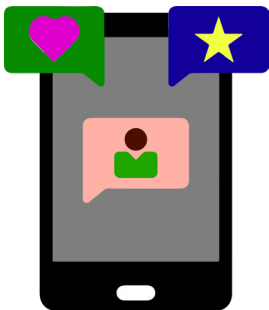
For example, you might care a lot about disability rights.



You can look online for advocacy groups that work on disability rights.



You can sign up for their email lists.



You can follow these groups on social media.



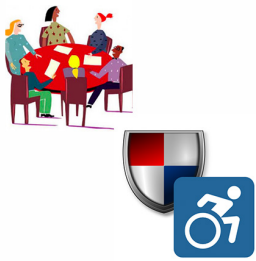
These groups usually send out information about policies.



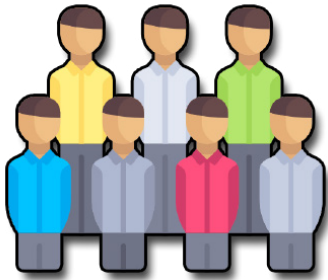
They will tell you how you can help a good policy become the law.



They will tell you how you can help keep bad policies from becoming the law.



- There are 2 groups that can tell you about disability policies in your state.



One group is called Developmental Disability Councils (DD Councils).



The other is called Protection and Advocacy Agencies (P&As).



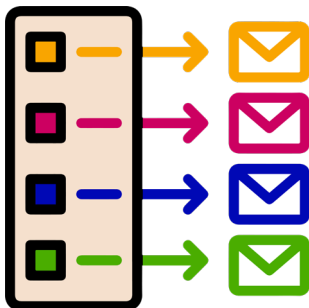
You can find your state's DD Council by searching online for “[**your State**] DD Council”. You can find your state's Protection and Advocacy Agency by going to <https://www.ndrn.org/about/ndrn-member-agencies/>



- It can be hard to find information about policies in your city or town.



You can look at the websites of elected officials in your city or town.



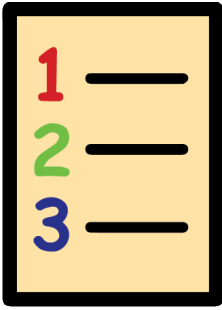
You can sign up for mailing lists in your city or town.



Some advocacy groups for the whole U.S. have smaller groups in cities.



You can check the website of the main group.



They should have a list of smaller groups.



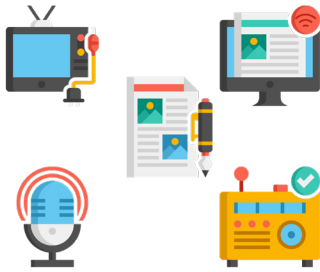
See if there is one in your city.



Then, you can ask the smaller group about policies in your city.



- The news is also a good place to learn about policies.



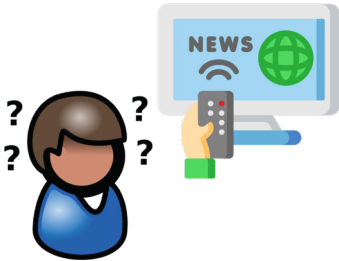
There are lots of different places to read and watch the news.



You can almost always find news about any kind of policy.



But it can be a bad thing that there are so many places to get news.



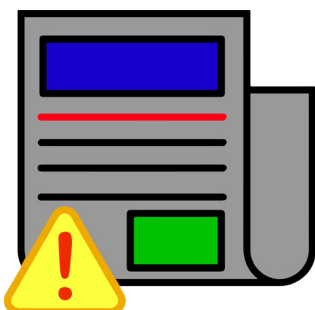
It can be hard to tell if the news actually knows a lot about a policy.



They might say a policy is good just because they like the policy.



Some places that report the news are biased.



Biased means that they talk about the news in sneaky ways.

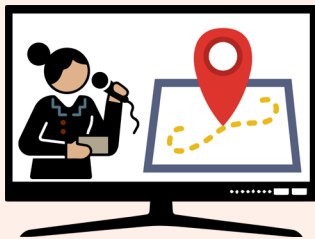


They try to make people believe things that are not true.



They try to make people agree with them.

For example:



Normaltown has a TV show called Normaltown News.



The TV show got made by people who also sell honey.



Because they sell honey, they don't want the bees to leave.



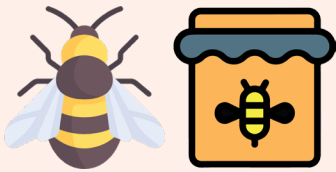
They get more money if the bees stay.



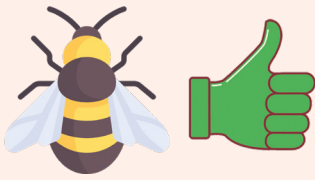
Normaltown News talks about the bees.



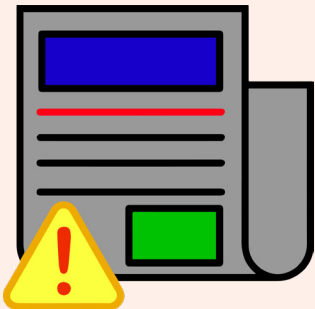
But they don't talk about how the bees sting people.



They only talk about how the bees help make more honey for Normaltown.



The news makes it seem like the bees are a good thing.



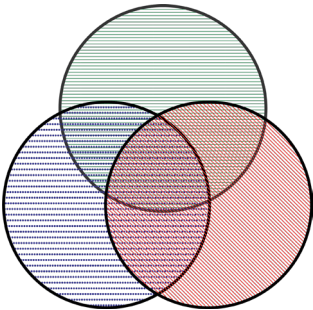
They are being biased.



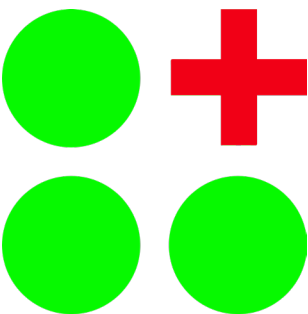
You should keep an eye out for biased news.



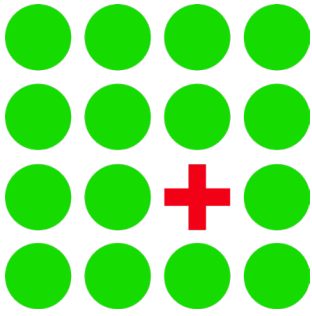
Try to read or watch a lot of different news about the same policy.



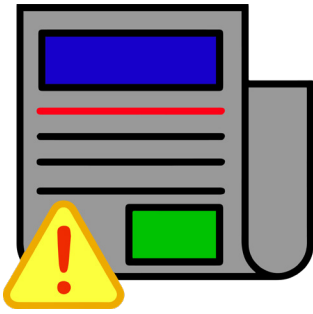
This way, you can see what each news report has in common.



You can see what is different in each report.



See if one news report is a lot different from the rest.



That news report might be biased.



Sometimes, people in government will lie about policies.



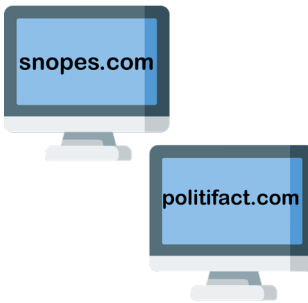
The news may also say things that aren't true.



Or, they may spread rumors that are only part-true.



There are websites that can tell you if a new story is true or not.



These websites are snopes.com and politifact.com.



These websites will say how true a story is.

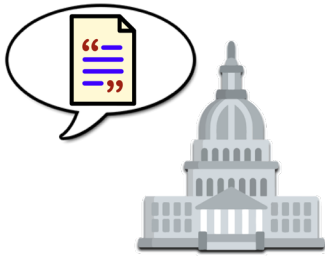


They explain about how rumors spread.



They show you what the signs are that a story is made up.

What ways can I share my story?

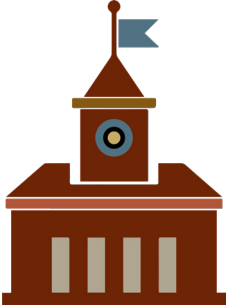


There are some ways you can share your story straight to the government.



They let you talk with elected officials and other people in government.

These ways are:



- Town Halls



- Legislative Testimony



- Public Comments



There are also other ways to share your story outside of the government.

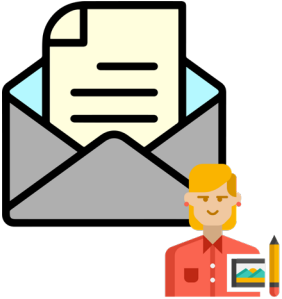


These ways focus more on sharing your story with everyday people.



But everyday people can help get the attention of elected officials.

These ways are:



- Letters to the Editor



- Petitions



We will talk more about each way to share your story in the next sections.