



**West Virginia  
Early Intervention  
Interagency  
Coordinating Council**



**Preparing to Share Your  
Family's Story**

# Preparing to Share Your Family's Story

## I'm Special

I'm special. In all the world, there's nobody like me.

Since the beginning of time, there has never been another person like me. Nobody has my smile. Nobody has my eyes, my nose, my hair, my hands, my voice.

I'm special.

No one can be found who has my handwriting. Nobody anywhere has my taste—for food, or music or art. No one sees things just as I do.

In all of time, there's been no one who laughs like me, no one who cries like me. And what makes me laugh and cry will never provoke identical laughter and tears from anybody else, ever. No one reacts to any situation just as I would react.

I'm special.

I'm the only one in all of creation who has my abilities. Oh, there will always be somebody who is better at one of the things that I'm good at, but no one in the universe can reach the quality of my combination of talents, ideas, abilities and feelings.

Like a room full of musical instruments, some may excel alone, but none can match the symphony sound when all played together.

I'm a symphony.

Through all of eternity no one will ever look, talk, walk, think, or do like me. I'm special. I'm rare. And in all rarity there is great value. Because of my great rare value, I need not attempt to imitate others. I will accept—yes, celebrate—my differences.

I'm special. And I'm beginning to realize it's no accident that I'm special. I'm beginning to see that God made me special for a very special purpose. He must have a job for me to do that no one else can do as well as I. Out of all the billions of applicants, only one is qualified, only one has the right combination of what it takes.

That one is me. Because . . . I'm special.

Anonymous

### Inside:

Preparing Your Story	3
Organizing Your Story	3
Presenting Your Story	4
ICC Presentation Guidelines	4
Sample Story Board	5
ICC Information & References	6



## Preparing Your Story



Parents tell their stories in many situations, sometimes when they are invited, others when they discover the opportunity informally. Regardless of how the occasion arose, the importance of sharing one's own experience is to bring about change and broaden the experience of yourself and others.

### Tips to Consider

- Who will you be speaking to? A little ground work can help make the story more powerful and help in telling it. The ICC is made up of parents, practitioners, doctors, teachers, child care professionals and other individuals who are dedicated to making sure families and children are receiving the best supports and services possible.
- Why are you telling your story? This can change based upon who you are speaking with. The ICC is interested in learning about your experiences with WV Birth to Three—the successes and the challenges—to be able to make recommendations to ensure the continued quality or to recommend changes.
- How long do they want me to speak? This again will vary depending on your audience. The ICC is looking for a presentation of about 10-15 minutes with 5-10 minutes for questions.
- Where will I be speaking? The location of your speaking engagement should be confirmed by the group making arrangements. If you don't hear any specifics ask!
- What should I include in my story? Include information such as this:
  1. Tell some of the unique strengths and difficulties of your family.
  2. What were the concerns that brought you to WV Birth to Three?
  3. How did you learn about WV Birth to Three?
  4. How has WV Birth to Three made a difference?
    - A—What did you want or need from your team
    - B—What went well or specifically helped
    - C—What did not go well or do you wish would have happened

## Organizing Your Story

Stories have a beginning, middle and an end.

### The Beginning:

- Sets the stage
- Introduces the characters.
- Grabs the attention of the listener and draws them in.

### The Middle:

- Pick 2 or 3 main points to focus on in your story it helps build connections and connections build power
- Adds details, examples and interesting information
- Builds the understanding of the listener

### The End:

- Ties up the story
- Review and summarize important points to the story
- Leave time for questions

Once you have an idea for your story, you will want to make sure that it flows well as that makes it easier to understand. Another way to help people understand is to be creative.

You may want to include: handouts, pictures, photo albums, video's, communication notebooks, your child's

baby book, birthday cards, premie clothing, your child's first lunchbox or backpack.

Other "props" or things that you might want to bring along: your child's art work, a favorite toy, a piece of equipment that is or was a big part of your and your child's experience.

You might even consider bringing along a family member, friend or team member as a co-presenter or for support.

It is important that you practice telling your story before your big day. Create an audience of your family, friends, or children and tell you story. It might help to write notes to yourself on note cards or a piece of paper so you remember what you want to share. Practicing will help you with understanding your time limits and what you want to share. When practicing you can ask yourself or your audience:

- I like the way I \_\_\_\_\_
- Next time I will \_\_\_\_\_
- I need to remember to say \_\_\_\_\_

### What if I cry?

Crying is an emotional outlet that cannot be controlled and **that's ok**. Even

the most experienced speakers can become emotional when telling a personal story about a life changing experience. In preparing your story, it is important for you to consider what you are willing to share and what you are not willing to share and stick to it.

If you begin to cry take a few seconds and 3 or 4 deep breaths before you go on. The listeners will understand and appreciate your taking the time so they can hear the rest of your story. Emotions can sneak up and out, so don't be surprised if you become emotional even if you do not think you will. You may even find audience members reacting emotionally to your story. Things to help with the emotions:

- Have a mental image or even a picture that makes you smile or laugh.
- Have a fidget, like a stress ball, that you can squeeze when you feel yourself becoming tense or upset.



## Presenting Your Story



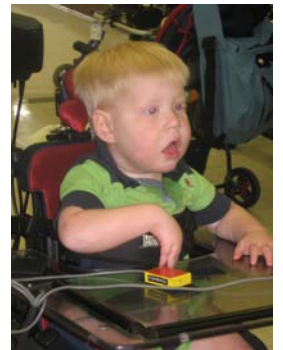
Now that you have prepared your story, it's time to enjoy the experience. Here are some tips to keep in mind as you tell your story.

- Bring along a friend, family member or team member for support
- Use your own style—some people use humor, others props, some bring their child along. Do what feels right to you.
- Find your voice—speak loudly and clearly, if you would like a microphone or other assistance (tv/vcr, computer, etc), let the group organizer know. Speak a little slower than you normally would. Try not to use “um”, “a”, “like” and “you know”.
- Relax—take a few deep breaths before you start and look to your support person for a friendly face.
- Eye Contact—look around the room as you are speaking. In making eye contact you will find those who are interested and you may even see some smiles and nodding. Looking around also helps listeners to connect with you.
- Movement and gestures—help you get rid of some nervous energy and can make the presentation feel more like you are talking to friends.
- Time for questions—let your audience know at the end of your presentation there will be time for questions. That gives you the ability to tell the story and then focus on questions. If you are not comfortable with a question say “I prefer not to answer that question right now” or if you don't know the answer just say so.
- Technology—if you will be using tv/vcr, computer or props try them out prior to your presentation, find someone who is familiar with how to use the equipment.

## Procedures for the ICC Presentation

To assist families in planning for their experience of telling their story, the following procedures are in place.

1. ICC members will be contacted to help in identifying potential family stories.
2. When a family is identified, the person who helped to identify the family will provide the family's contact information to the ICC Director.
3. The ICC Director will contact the family, sending information and discussing the process with the family. The ICC Director will also contact the family shortly before the presentation to answer any questions. If the family needs more assistance, they will be referred to someone to provide them more individual assistance in preparing their story.
4. On the day of the presentation the family will be encouraged to attend the full day meeting, including lunch.
5. The ICC Director will communicate with the family and make arrangements for any equipment needs for the presentation (i.e., microphone, computer/projector, overhead projector, TV/VCR).



# My Story Builder

## Purpose

Why are you telling your story?

## Audience

Who will you be telling your story to?

## Location

Where will you be telling your story?

## Beginning: Introduction

Introduce yourself and share child/family information that you want the audience to keep in mind. Briefly explain what you'll be talking about. Let them know that you appreciate their opportunity to speak with them.

## Middle: Body of Your Story

Choose two or three main points for your story. Write these in boxes 1, 2, and 3.

Think of more specific details or examples that would help the audience understand (boxes 1a, 2a, and 3a)

Add more details that would give a clear picture of each point you are trying to make (1b, 2b, and 3b). This might include your props.

### Main Point 1

### 1a details

### 1b details

### Main Point 2

### 2a details

### 2b details

### Main Point 3

### 3a details

### 3b details

## End: Conclusion

Wrap up your story. Take this time to restate your main points and repeat what you want folks to leave with or remember about your story. You may also want to answer questions from the audience. Remember to thank the audience.

## West Virginia Early Intervention Interagency Coordinating Council



99 Edmiston Way, STE 201  
Buckhannon, WV 26201  
Phone: 304-471-3443  
Fax: 304-471-3441  
Email: sheilaz@verizon.net

We're on the web!  
[www.wvdhhr.org/wvicc](http://www.wvdhhr.org/wvicc)

The WVEIICC is committed to the ongoing advancement of those methods and practices that enhance the health and development of West Virginia's young children aged birth through 5. The Council believes that early intervention services should:

Be family-centered;

Support and enhance the capacity of families to fully participate in their communities;

Support and enhance the capacity of communities to include families;

Have adequate and flexible resources and funding;

Be accountable, responsive and meaningful for families;

Ensure an individualized, integrated and coordinated team approach to service planning and delivery;

Ensure the development and retention of sufficient, qualified staff; and

Be collaborative, seamless and comprehensive in order to provide service options for children with special needs ages birth through five and their families in settings and activities which are available for their typical age peers in natural environments within their community.

**The Department Of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Public Health, Office of Maternal, Child and Family Health administers the WV Birth To Three System in cooperation with the West Virginia Early Intervention Interagency Coordinating Council, as required under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.**

## References

Chellew, C. (n.d.). *The power of story*. Retrieved October 22, 2009, from <http://www.whosoever.org/v4i2/power.html>

Gabbard, G. (Spring 1998). *Family experiences: Ways to lead change through telling your story*. Retrieved October 22, 2009, from <http://www.nectac.org/~pdfs/pubs/famexp.pdf>

Iowa State University Extension (July 2003). *Sharing a family's story: A tool for family advocacy*. Retrieved October 22, 2009, from <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/publications/sp215.pdf>

Mosher, K. (September 2008). *Family stories*. Retrieved October 22, 2009, from <http://kbhmaine.blogspot.com>

Natural Allies of Oklahoma (n.d.). *Telling your story: Families with children with disabilities tell their story*. Retrieved October 22, 2009, from [http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~scpp/pdfs/Telling\\_Your\\_Story.pdf](http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~scpp/pdfs/Telling_Your_Story.pdf)

Nebraska Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council (May, 2005). *The power of family stories*. Retrieved October 14, 2009, from <http://www.nde.state.ne.us/ecicc/>

PACER Center (2006). *From experience to influence: the power of a parent's story*. Retrieved October 22, 2009, from <http://www.pacer.org/parent/php/php-c121.pdf>

Parents Reaching Out (Spring 2008). *Telling your story: Ideas and tips for preparing to share your experiences*. Retrieved October 22, 2009, from <http://www.parentsreachingout.org/resources/publications/communications/comtyts.pdf>

Pinner, J. (Fall 2006). *Telling your story: What's the point?* Retrieved October 22, 2009, from <http://www.tsbvi.edu/outreach/seehear/fall06/telling.html>