

How To - Get Testimonies

Overall Things to Remember

-Bring a laptop and transcribe the person's testimony in the moment, so that you can help him or her craft their story. During the interview, feel free to ask the person to slow down (if they are speaking too fast for you to transcribe), explain something more in-depth, etc.

-This is their story, so transcribe the way the person tells his or her story using the language he or she uses (I.E. don't shorten sentences, abbreviate, or just use the overall themes).

-When revising the testimony, engage the interviewee in deciding what to add, what to cut, and how to edit.

-If person is nervous, you can lead with an easy question that is unrelated to the campaign (Do you have any kids? What do you like to do? Tell us a little about yourself? Or how long have you lived here? What is your favorite food and why). This can also be nice to build a deeper connection with this person.

Interviewing

- Begin by simply asking them to tell their story as it relates to the campaign and fair development. Transcribe. Ask Follow-up questions.
- When they are done, look through the testimony, and try to define areas that need more details and specifics. Ask the person to explain these areas. Keep asking for more details and specifics, as necessary—this is what brings testimonies to life.
- Work to cut out areas that are off topic or distract from the major focus of the story: their struggle without paid sick leave.
- Ask them if they have ever had to make any difficult choices because of Failed Development. The actual question will depend on the person's story and the campaign. But some general questions are: Did they have to decide between work and their family? Between buying food and paying a bill? Did they have to put off getting healthcare, because they couldn't take the time off to recover?
- Ask them if they have anything else to add.
- Have the person read through the testimony again.
 - Does it answer the questions: Who, What, When, Where, Why?
 - Does it have a beginning (which introduces the person), a body (which tells their story), and then a close (with a call to action).
 - Make sure the testimony closes with this call to action. "I am standing up for paid sick leave, because", "I believe that everyone deserves paid sick leave, because", etc.

Some Points to Remember

1. The more details the better (emotions, thoughts, feelings, reactions, go beyond the "logistical" details)
2. Don't rush the conversation (it is about building trust)
3. The most interesting part of the story sometimes comes out after you are done interviewing.
4. Ask follow-up questions.
5. Ask if you can come back later or give or call to follow up if there are any questions (make sure you have the person's up-to-date information and find out the best way and time to contact them).
6. Build trust (take your time before you ask questions)
7. The story has to include the problem (incinerator, housing, healthcare, paid sick leave, etc), but the most important thing is the human cost of those problems.