



Toolkit Facilitation Guide

At the core of Colorado HealthStory is one central belief: everyone has a health story to tell. Our storytellers have told us that health care experiences can be confusing, frustrating, and scary, especially when someone is particularly vulnerable in a health crisis. We've also heard that health care can be empowering, exciting, and highly successful.

We know that your health is just too important to stay out of the conversation all together. That's why we're thrilled you've taken the important step to lead a conversation about health in your community. You'll find stories are a powerful way to engage participants and move the conversation to deeper levels. Whether you have 15 minutes or 2 hours, use and adapt the following facilitation techniques to guide participants through a new conversation about health.

Prepare an Agenda

Preparing a detailed agenda for your session is of the utmost importance, even if you throw the whole thing out the window during the actual discussion. Planning the session will help you develop a strong foundation from which to work on your feet. Here is an example of an agenda that's worked well for us:

- I. **Welcome:** Introduce yourself and Colorado HealthStory. Thank attendees for participating.
- II. **Introductions:** If the group isn't already familiar, a round of short introductions can help build community and deepen further conversations.

If you have a small group or at least 30 minutes, include an icebreaker. For example, ask participants to go around and tell the group their name, organization, and what they think the most pressing health issue is in their community. If you have a large group or less than 30 minutes, simply ask attendees to raise their hands if they agree with certain statements, like:

- I work in the health sector;
- Stories impact me;
- I'd rather look at the data; and/or
- Access to health is limited in my community

- III. **Set the Stage:** Explain why you decided to focus the session on your specific topic area (i.e. Access to health care). It can be useful to bring in data here either through the data

slides included in the PowerPoint presentation or by highlighting key sections of the fact sheet.

- IV. **Listening to Stories:** The fun part! We've found that sharing one or two stories at the most is best. Choose from the five we've included in the PowerPoint presentation and delete the rest.

There are many ways to present the stories, including back-to-back or with conversations in between stories; as a lead-in to a large group discussion, or to serve as the topic of a small group or partner break-out discussion; or in any combination. Choose what you're most comfortable with and what will be best for your setting.

- V. **Community Conversation:** The stories are powerful. Regardless of how you decided to present them, it's useful to allow for general reaction to the stories in a large group. We've found the ORID method of reflection to be particularly helpful in guiding participants through post-listening session discussions. Ask participants to reflect or react to the following series of questions:

- What were the highlights of these stories? (Objective: getting the facts)
- How did you feel as you were hearing these stories? (Reflective: addressing emotional responses)
- Why was it important for you to hear these stories? (Interpretation: considering the meaning or purpose of this experience)
- What will you tell your family and friends about these stories? (Decisional: next action)

- VI. **Call to Action:** After general reflection, participants will likely ask the question: What next? It's useful to be ready with some actionable options moving forward that participants can plug into. See the included "Call to Action Card" for an example of one way to engage participants. If you have time, you can also open it up to the group to see if participants have suggestions on how their peers can engage.

Create an Open Environment

Attendees are much more likely to participate actively in the conversation if you establish an open and safe environment. People feel comfortable communicating in different ways, so creating multiple ways to participate helps create an open space. Try written reflection time, small group or pair conversations, and/or large group conversations.

If you're planning to have a longer conversation (one hour or more) and anticipate a polarized group, you may want to establish ground rules. Example ground rules you can suggest to the group include:

- *Respect for others* – We're not here to come to a consensus or to debate or win your point. We know everybody has a personal experience with health, so it's

very emotional. Let's remember that it's okay to disagree with somebody today, but don't be disagreeable.

- *Share the conversation* – Some people naturally speak more than others. If you're one of these people, try to remember to let others speak, too.
- *Everyone has an equal voice* – Health care is confusing and some folks here might be so-called "experts." Today, it doesn't matter if you've been working on these issues for years, or if this is your first in-depth health care conversation, all opinions are of equal importance.
- *Focus conversation on local issues* – Health care is contentious and becoming more and more political. This discussion today isn't about things happening in Washington, it's about our community.

Incorporate Data

Stories are powerful to be sure, but they can often be cast aside as simply "personal experience." Coupled with larger data trends, however, stories paint vivid portraits of the real health experience of entire communities. Incorporate health data into your conversation through the data slides included in the PowerPoint presentation, the fact sheet, or by highlighting local health data you've researched yourself.

Urge Participants to go Deeper

Conversations can sometimes feel forced, especially with participants who don't know each other or if time is limited. A few well-timed questions posed by you, the facilitator, can make all the difference. Urge participants to open up and participate in a deeper way by using some of the following questions:

- Can I have a few volunteers to share something that was particularly interesting that you talked about?
- Was anyone surprised by the experiences you just heard about?
- Did hearing about these experiences sound familiar to what you experience in your community every day?
- What do you think you'll remember from the experience you just heard?
- What will you share with your family or friends about this experience when you get home tonight?
- How does it strike you that this is the experience of health here in this community?
- What have you learned about the health of this community that you didn't know before today?

Anticipate Push Back

Like we said before, health care can sometimes be polarizing. Anticipate participant push back by preparing beforehand. What specific push back might crop up at your event? Role play with a friend or colleague to help deal with the scenarios you've come up with. Here's a generic response list that may help:

- How would others in the group respond to this?
- I concede that the details of this story may be unique, but stories about the lack of access to care in our community are not unique at all. [Point the group to the profile or other data to demonstrate point]
- Details of the story may be unique, but being sick and scared about health issues is very common. This story illuminates not only these issues, but also the added challenges of not getting services.
- A true community has a diversity of opinions, so thank you for sharing, but we're going to have to move on now.
- We may not always agree about the solutions to our health care problems, but there's a lot of agreement that Colorado's health care system needs fixed.
- It's not about whether Democrats or Republicans are right. It's about getting beyond politics to make changes that work in Colorado.
- [Specific to navigating the system]: Everybody has had to deal with the frustration of calling numerous numbers to get an answer to a question about your care, whether it's insurance or medical records. This storyteller is not alone.
- [Specific to access]: The tricky thing about health in our current system is that you may have access to insurance or care today, but tomorrow you never know.
- [Specific to coverage]: Private markets provide health care for most Coloradans, but many of our neighbors are unable to get the care they need. We've got to do something about that.
- [Specific to health & wellness]: Individual choices are definitely important, but people also need opportunities to be able to make healthy choices.
- [Specific to state budget issues]: The state budget is important, but the Colorado families we talk with are most concerned with their own budgets and health care costs are a big part of that concern.