

Advocacy Training Resource

Trainer's Script for Role Play

SLIDE: Role Playing

20 Minutes

- Now we will practice!
- **Pick an issue that is relevant to your community.** Below is a sample script for a visit about abortion access. Adapt as needed.
- Decide who will be the elected official/staff and who will be the advocate. Then, act out the visits, soliciting feedback after each scenario.
- *Note: You may want to predetermine these roles and give volunteers time to look over the script and make it their own.*

Bad Visit Scenario

- Role Playing
 - **Advocate:** Hi Senator _____, thank you so much for agreeing to meet with me. Are we meeting in your office?
 - **Senator:** Yes, sure. Thank you _____. I love meeting with folks in the community. We're actually going to be meeting in the hallway, due to space. I hope standing is okay, but also we don't really have a choice.
 - **Advocate:** *flustered* Oh, um, okay, yeah. I'll follow you, but how will I take notes? I mean I guess it's okay, but I want to meet you.
 - **Senator:** I don't have a lot of time today, so let's move on. I'm assuming you're here today to talk about Israel. What about it?
 - **Advocate:** Oh, I emailed...
 - **Senator:** *interrupt* Y'all are doing good stuff on Israel.
 - **Advocate:** Actually, I emailed in my meeting request, while Israel is an important issue... *flustered*, I am actually here to talk about the 20-week abortion ban. But if you want to talk about Israel I can try.
 - **Senator:** I mean no, if you want to talk about abortion we can talk about it, it's pretty public how I feel about it. So what do you want to know?
 - **Advocate:** First, I want to say thank you for your time. I know as you say, you have a public opinion on this and it is...I disagree with it, but I appreciate how you voted a couple months ago on a bill in support of homeless shelters. So thank you, but getting back to why I'm here...

- **Senator:** *interrupts again* Oh yeah of course, you know that I really care about the community.
 - **Advocate:** I'm glad you say that, because I am here to talk to you because you support legislation in the state senate that would ban abortion after 20-weeks and I just really think that is a bad idea. I don't want you to support that bill.
 - **Senator:** *annoyed* I'm sorry that you feel that way, but a lot of our community really supports it. We know that fetal pain is a thing, and babies are babies. It is wrong to kill them. That is a value of our community and I think it's abhorrent that you don't think that too. That you don't think abortion should be banned at 20 weeks. I guess we disagree on that. I'm curious, as someone who believes in this, how many people in our community even need abortions after 20 weeks?
 - **Advocate:** 100, 100 need them right now.
 - **Senator:** 100 people, oh. Alright, if you say so.
 - **Advocate:** And I think you're abhorrent for holding your view. Don't call me, abhorrent, you're abhorrent. 100 people need things.
 - **Senator:** Well, I think that is all the time I have today. I am not going to vote the way you want but keep being a community advocate.
 - **Advocate:** I'm leaving.
- ASK: *What goes well?*
 - Advocate stays on topic
 - Started with a thank you
 - Found something in the Senator's record to compliment
 - ASK: *What goes wrong?*
 - Advocate gets visibly flustered.
 - Advocate makes up the answer about number of people who need abortions after 20 weeks instead of saying I don't know, but I will get back to you with that information
 - Advocate does not say thank you
 - ASK: *What could have gone better?*
 - Can say "we just have to agree to disagree"
 - Advocate can be more flexible
 - Advocate should embrace civility. Don't call the senator "abhorrent"

Good Visit Scenario

- Role Playing

- **Advocate:** Hi, I am here to meet with _____. It is so great to get a chance to meet with you. Thank you so much for taking time out of your day to chat with me about 20 week abortion ban.
- **Staff:** Sure, and tell me your name again.
- **Advocate:** I am so sorry, my name is _____, and I am with the National Council of Jewish Women. I am a constituent of the representative and my pronouns are _____. We are a 125 year old, national advocacy organization of Jewish women that represents 90,000 members and supporters. And it is really a pleasure to meet with you.
- **Staff:** I am so glad you are here today; I have been looking forward to meeting with you. They put you with the right staffer, I work on this issue. What exactly about abortion do you want to talk about? You know the Senator is absolutely pro-choice.
- **Advocate:** Yes, and we are so grateful for all the senator does for our community. I am here to specifically talk about the 20 week ban that is coming up for a vote because I know that the senator is thinking about voting for it. I want to talk about why I oppose the ban. Abortions after 20 weeks impact our community and there are so many reasons why people need access to abortion after 20 weeks. So I am curious, does that senator plan on voting on this bill that would be really harmful to our community?
- **Staff:** This is another reason why I am glad you came in, the senator is on the fence with this one. The senator is pro-choice, but you are the first constituent who has come in to speak out against this. We are hearing from so many constituents who are saying that the senator should vote for this. Is this a big deal? We just have not been hearing about it.
- **Advocate:** I think the reason you are not hearing from many people is because abortion is so stigmatized. People who need access to abortion after 20 weeks often don't feel like they can share their stories and be powerful advocates, but I am more than happy to connect you with people who are comfortable talking about their experiences. There are many people in the community who feel very passionately against 20-week abortion bans because we know how harmful they are. I have met people who obtained abortions after 20 weeks and their stories are so varied, with lots of different reasons for their decisions. For example, sometimes before 20 weeks they did not have the money for an abortion, they didn't know they were pregnant, they did not know there were fetal anomalies, or simply their circumstances changed. There are so many reasons why people need access to abortion past 20 weeks. A piece of legislation that bans them out right will really be harmful.

- **Staff:** I am definitely going to take you up on your offer. I was not aware of those reasons, so I think hearing from more people in the community would be helpful. I understand what you said about it being stigmatized, so if there were a way that we could gather more stories without making people uncomfortable, it would be great. The other question I have for you is, don't the babies feel pain at that point? I know this is a concern for the senator.
 - **Advocate:** I understand you're concerned with that, and but the majority of research shows that fetal pain is undetectable at that point in time. I think we need to focus on ensuring people can continue to access needed medical services. I personally do not think this issue matters that much but I am happy to get you some literature on that. If you would like me to send you some of that research, I can follow up in an email.
 - **Staff:** That would be great. I will talk to the senator about it, and if you could set up a meeting with people who have had this procedure so they can share their stories, I am sure it would be helpful for the senator.
 - **Advocate:** Absolutely, I am going to leave this folder here, and it has more reading materials in it. It also includes some personal stories from the community. I will also follow up with an email about a separate meeting with members of our community who have had a post 20 week abortion as well as information about the science behind fetal pain. Thank you so much.
- ASK: *What goes well?*
 - The advocate is flexible and calm
 - The advocate pivots when asked tough or misleading questions
 - The advocate offers to get back to the staffer with information when they have it
 - The advocate has materials to leave behind and says thank you
 - ASK: *What could have been better?*
 - Did not introduce themselves right away at the beginning
 - Strayed from talking points/messaging and inserted personal opinion about fetal pain concerns
 - Include specific thank you to the legislator