

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:** 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 because 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. I want to meet you.
 - **Senator:** I don't have a lot of time today, so let's get started. I'm assuming you're here today to talk about Israel. Tell me 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, I am actually here to talk about the 20-week abortion ban. If you want to talk about Israel, I can try to do that now or I can get back to you later with more information.
 - **Senator:** I mean no, we can talk about abortion if that's important to you. I think it's pretty public how I feel about the issue, but I always like to hear more from constituents.
 - **Advocate:** First, I want to say thank you for your time. I know as you say, you have a public opinion on this and 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 about your support for legislation in the state senate that would ban abortion after 20-weeks. I really think that is a bad idea and I don't want you to approve that bill.
 - **Senator:** *annoyed* I'm sorry that you feel that way, but a lot my constituents really support it. We know that infants feel pain at 20 weeks and babies are precious members of our community that must be protected. It is simply wrong to kill them and I know that the community agrees with me on this. I think it's abhorrent that you don't think that too and that you would allow babies to be executed moments before birth. 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 this procedure right now.
 - **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?*
 - The advocate stays on topic
 - The advocate started with a thank you
 - The advocate found something in the Senator's record to compliment
 - ASK: *What goes wrong?*
 - The advocate gets visibly flustered.
 - The 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
 - The advocate does not say thank you
 - ASK: *What could have gone better?*
 - The advocate could say "we just have to agree to disagree"
 - The advocate can be more flexible
 - The advocate should embrace civility; don't call the senator "abhorrent"

Good Visit Scenario

○ Role Playing

- **Advocate:** Hi, my name is _____, and I'm here to meet with _____ on behalf of the National Council of Jewish Women.
- **Staff:** It's a pleasure to meet you. Do you mind if we chat in the reception area? My office is a bit crazy at the moment.
- **Advocate:** That's perfectly fine! I'll pull up a chair.
- **Staff:** Thanks for being flexible. While we get situated, why don't you tell me about yourself and why you're here today?
- **Advocate:** Sure. As I mentioned in my email, I am a constituent of the Congresswoman and a member of NCJW, a 125-year-old, national advocacy organization of Jewish women that represents 90,000 members and supporters. Today, I hoped to talk about why I oppose the 20-week abortion ban. Abortions after 20 weeks impact our community and there are so many reasons why people need access to abortion later in pregnancy. I'm curious, how does the Congresswoman plan on voting on this harmful bill?
- **Staff:** Well, this is a really tricky topic so I'm glad you came in to express your opinion. The Congresswoman is personally pro-life but strives to represent the views of her constituents. We are hearing from so many people in our district urging the Congresswoman to vote for this. A lot of people are concerned about late-term abortion, especially after the President said that babies can be ripped from the womb moments before birth. You are actually the first to speak out *against* the 20-week ban.
- **Advocate:** I know that we might disagree on this bill, but please let me explain how my faith values inform my opposition to this burdensome ban. Jewish tradition teaches that a woman's health is paramount at any and all stages of pregnancy. For that reason, NCJW has resolved to work for policies that protect every woman's right and ability to make childbearing decisions throughout her pregnancy and to eliminate obstacles limiting reproductive freedom. Many factors influence the decision to have an abortion after the first trimester including difficulties accessing abortion, delays in arranging travel and funds, discovery of health risks to the fetus or the mother, and changes in life circumstances. Ultimately, there are so many varied reasons why people need access to abortion after 20 weeks. A piece of legislation that bans them out right will be very harmful.
- **Staff:** I wasn't aware of those reasons or NCJW's stance on this issue, so that is definitely helpful. Why aren't we hearing more voices like yours? It actually seems that the faith community is leading the charge in the opposite direction and champions the 20-week ban.

- **Advocate:** I think the reason you're not hearing from many people is because abortion is so stigmatized. For NCJW and myself, protecting an individual's ability to make their own health care decisions in accordance with their personal beliefs is tied to religious freedom. Frankly, conservative groups using "religious liberty" as a weapon against patients seeking basic medical care like abortion do not speak for all people of faith. I strongly oppose attempts to enshrine one religious view into law in order to restrict abortion access as this directly interferes with a woman's ability to make her own faith-informed choices.
 - **Staff:** Your points about religious liberty are well taken. However, I'm having a hard time understanding how someone who claims to be a "person of faith" would allow babies to endure the pain associated with late-term abortion? I mean, the President said that doctors execute babies!
 - **Advocate:** The majority of research actually shows that fetal pain is undetectable at that point in time so I'm not sure that your concern is valid. It's also important to remember that abortions later in pregnancy are very rare. My personal connection to this issue is rooted in the Jewish commitment to pursuing justice for all. While I have not personally experienced later abortion, I refuse to stand by while barriers to health care place any individual's autonomy or health at risk and abortion bans do precisely that. If it would help you to hear directly from those most impacted by these bans and the hurtful rhetoric surrounding them, I am also more than happy to connect you with people comfortable talking about their first-hand experiences.
 - **Staff:** I might take you up on your offer. You have certainly given me a lot to think about and I will definitely relay your thoughts to the Congresswoman. Thank you for your time.
 - **Advocate:** Absolutely. I am going to leave you this folder with more reading materials. It also includes some personal stories from the community. If you're interested, I will follow up with an email about meeting with members of our community who had a post 20 week abortion. Thank you so much.
- ASK: *What goes well?*
 - The advocate is flexible and calm
 - The advocate pivots by highlighting her personal connection to the issue when asked tough or misleading questions
 - The advocate connects her opinion to NCJW's mission and Jewish values
 - The advocate offers to get back to the staffer with information when they have it, has materials to leave behind, and says thank you
 - ASK: *What could have been better?*

- The advocate did not include pronouns in introduction
- The advocate strayed from talking points/messaging and dismissed staffer concern about fetal pain
- The advocate should include specific thank you to the legislator