



Care and Choice at the End of Life

Volunteer Action Network Toolkit:

PUBLIC SPEAKING

Table of Contents

Section I: Volunteer Action Network	2
Section II: About Public Speaking and Storytelling	3
Section III: Becoming a Public Speaker	5
Section IV: Messaging Basics	9
Section V: Using Technology Wisely	10
Section VI: Public Speaking Best Practices	11
Section V: Training and Resources for Volunteers	14
Section X: Frequently Asked Questions	15
Appendix	17

This toolkit provides background information for volunteers about public speaking on behalf of Compassion & Choices and the end-of-life options movement. This handbook can prepare you for basic presentations at the community level. Volunteers interested in approved formal speaking and storytelling opportunities will need to complete additional training and other requirements with Compassion & Choices. Please review the details about different levels of involvement for volunteers and the corresponding requirements for each on pages 3–7. This handbook is designed to accompany the Volunteer Action Network Webinar Training: Public Speaking and Storytelling video; please use them together.

Section I: Volunteer Action Network

Compassion & Choices (C&C) is the nation's oldest, largest and most active organization working to improve care and expand options for the end of life. Our progress is powered by the critical efforts of thousands of volunteers like you across the country.

About the Volunteer Action Network

Compassion & Choices created the Volunteer Action Network (VAN) to provide a one-stop shop for information and resources so supporters have the tools they need to be successful as Compassion & Choices volunteers. This guide is one of the Volunteer Action Network training tools, designed to provide information, resources and best practices to support volunteers who would like to speak publicly on behalf of Compassion & Choices.

Responsibilities and Expectations

Compassion & Choices volunteers are ambassadors for the organization; in this role, we ask that your advocacy efforts align with our stated positions about medical aid in dying and end-of-life care. This ensures organizational consistency and accurate communication of fundamental concepts. Compassion & Choices volunteers like you are also encouraged to stay informed about topics relevant to our shared work, especially as they pertain to the area where you live. The more informed you are as a presenter, the more effective your presentations will be.

Section II: About Public Speaking and Storytelling

In our work to improve care and expand end-of-life options for people nationwide, we have seen time and again that the most effective ways to engage individuals, families and communities in our work is through face-to-face interactions where individuals share personal experiences. That's why in-person presentations like the ones outlined here are so important to furthering our shared goals.

Goals for Volunteer Public Speaking and Storytelling

While a good video, a great website or strong print pieces like our magazine are excellent vehicles to tell our story, there is simply no substitute for a personal presentation by a passionate and knowledgeable supporter like you! This guide offers tips and best practices for public speaking so that you can help Compassion & Choices achieve the following:

- » Raise awareness and educate communities and individuals about end-of-life issues including the practice of medical aid in dying
- » Encourage people to begin thinking about and discussing with their families their end-of-life wishes and priorities
- » Build support for medical aid in dying in states where it is not currently authorized
- » Expand and protect access to medical aid in dying in states where it is currently authorized

Public Speaking and Storytelling represent two different volunteer opportunities at Compassion & Choices.

Public speaking involves delivering remarks to an in-person audience and serving as a local spokesperson for issues related to medical aid in dying and end-of-life care.

Storytelling, while similar, involves sharing your personal story about an end-of-life experience in partnership with C&C's communications team, developing in-depth content using a variety of media including writing, videos, photos and more. These pieces could be shared in newspapers, on social media, on the C&C website and many other places where they could potentially reach countless people considering the issue. Storytellers are also crucial to advancing medical aid-in-dying legislation and other end-of-life care options by offering testimony in legislative hearings and acting as a face for the issue in their state or jurisdiction.

If you would like to learn more, go to CompassionAndChoices.org/stories for information on storytellers and how you can get involved.

Do you have experience with medical aid in dying or would like to access it but are in an unauthorized state? If you have a story about your own end-of-life care experience or that of a loved one, please visit our website to share it today: CompassionAndChoices.org/submit-your-story.

Section III: Becoming a Public Speaker

Compassion & Choices' public speakers raise visibility and awareness around end-of-life issues, including medical aid in dying. Our work happens at the federal, state and local levels, often driven by the leadership of our vast network of committed volunteers. Together we SUPPORT, EMPOWER, ADVOCATE and DEFEND.

What We Need You to Do in Your Community on Behalf of the Movement:

- » Plan and deliver presentations on end-of-life issues and medical aid in dying to local community organizations.
- » Get some practice giving your presentation to a friendly audience by hosting a house party in support of Compassion & Choices.
- » Share news and information on social media.
- » Share stories for use in legislative testimony.
- » Stay up-to-date on developments in end-of-life care and medical aid in dying — especially in your state or jurisdiction.

Volunteer Community Speakers vs. Approved Formal Speakers

For those volunteers interested in speaking on behalf of Compassion & Choices and the end-of-life options movement, we invite you to begin as a volunteer community speaker as detailed below. Over time, and with mastery of the issues, community speakers may be invited to become approved formal speakers for Compassion & Choices.

Volunteer Community Speakers

- » Volunteer community speakers are invited to familiarize themselves with Compassion & Choices' materials and resources, and give straightforward presentations about medical aid in dying and other end-of-life issues at appropriate local community venues (public library, Rotary Club, elder care facility, place of worship, etc.). These presentations should include your personal story or the story of one of our well-known storytellers, such as Brittany Maynard.
- » Community speakers are asked to generate their own speaking opportunities through local outreach and are required to review the training materials on pages 9-11 of this handbook before reaching out to identify potential speaking opportunities.

- » We ask that community speakers consult with their Action Team leader or their Compassion & Choices point of contact should they identify an opportunity to present to a larger group (major conference, medical school, media outlet).

The end-of-life options movement is continually growing and changing, and our materials are updated regularly. It is critical that all speakers stay up-to-date on the latest developments in end-of-life care and options — review the Compassion & Choices’ website before any speaking engagements to make sure your information is accurate and current. Additionally, all speakers are expected to be compliant with Compassion & Choices policies, positions, confidentiality and media forms.

Community Speaking Settings

- » Community and senior centers
- » Local public library
- » Workplace events (e.g., brown bag lunch)
- » Rotary/Lions/Elks/Kiwanis/city clubs
- » Senior independent housing, elder-care facilities and retirement homes
- » Churches and places of fellowship
- » House parties
- » Local action groups
- » Community radio or television panel discussion/hosted segment

Approved Formal Speakers

- » Approved formal speakers are invited to pursue local speaking opportunities on their own, but they will also be considered by Compassion & Choices as an available speaker for any opportunities that come through our staff and offices.
- » In addition to reviewing the best practices in section VIII of this toolkit, approved formal speakers must complete additional training, including a webinar, and sign an online [confidentiality agreement](#) and [media policy](#) with Compassion & Choices. Specific state campaigns will have further training and state-specific talking points.
- » Approved formal speakers will be provided with additional presentation materials, including an enhanced slideshow with talking points, upon completion of the additional requirements.

Formal Speaking Settings*

- » State government sites
- » Universities
- » Professional conferences
- » Medical schools and engagements intended for medical professionals
- » City council meetings
- » Media interviews (even local)
- » Union meetings

If you are interested in becoming an approved formal speaker, please contact your Action Team leader to assess the need in your area. If you do not have an Action Team leader, please contact a National Volunteer Program representative at volunteer@CompassionAndChoices.org.

Considering an Invitation

Whether Compassion & Choices has asked you to fill a speaking request we have received or you are pursuing a speaking opportunity on behalf of the organization, always review the specifics of the event and verify that you are the right person for the job. If you have any doubts or concerns, discuss them with Compassion & Choices staff.

Here are some good questions to ask yourself:

- » Do you feel you have the knowledge and expertise necessary for this particular presentation?
- » Do you feel you have sufficient time in your schedule to travel to and from the event AND to adequately prepare for the presentation beforehand?
- » Is there someone who seems a more natural fit for this presentation?
- » Are you comfortable doing the presentation? (Don't feel obligated to do something that isn't a good fit for you.)
- » Is there anything about the event, the organization, or other presenters that could be damaging or awkward for Compassion & Choices?
- » Are you speaking to your peers? Most people are more open to a message from a peer than from someone outside their circle: For example, a nurse is best positioned to speak to an audience of nurses.
- » Should you expect there to be opposition at the event or in the audience?

Important: Compassion & Choices' Media Policy

All volunteers undertaking public speaking opportunities, whether informally within your community or as formally requested by Compassion & Choices, are expected to adhere to Compassion & Choices' policy on interaction with the media:

- » Any and all media inquiries must be referred to Compassion & Choices' Communications Department (see page 14)
- » Do not provide comment directly to representatives of the media unless the Compassion & Choices Communications Department asks you to do so
- » Make sure your remarks are consistent with Compassion & Choices' policies and positions

Section IV: Messaging Basics

At the end of the day, public speaking is about delivering a message. When you are speaking on behalf of Compassion & Choices, that message should combine fact-based arguments about end-of-life options and medical aid in dying with details about Compassion & Choices as an organization.

Be sure that you are delivering accurate, up-to-date information and a consistent message. Information on state campaigns, national news stories and organizational developments is available on the website at our news center CompassionAndChoices.org/news. Your Compassion & Choices staff contact is also a good source for the most recent updates.

Top-Tier Messaging Points

Use the fact sheets on our website so that you [understand medical aid in dying](#). You should be able to articulate clearly that [medical aid in dying is not suicide](#). These are the most convincing and compelling points to support the importance of access to medical aid in dying:

- » ***Decisions about end-of-life treatments and options should be left to the individual***, their family and their doctor. Their decisions should be guided by medical standards and a medical process, not the whims of politicians or religious leaders.
- » ***Public support for medical aid in dying is consistently strong*** — in red states, in blue states, across demographic groups and religions; this strong support has held steady for two decades.
- » ***Medical aid in dying is not suicide or euthanasia***. The person accessing medical aid in dying is already dying due to their underlying illness. Neither the physician nor the medication are causing the death; rather, they are helping the person find a peaceful end to their suffering.

Words Matter!

It's important to use the correct terminology to help ensure that everyone clearly understands what we are trying to achieve. "Medical Aid in Dying" is the preferred term that refers to a medical practice that gives a terminally ill, mentally capable adult with six months or less to live the option to request their doctor write a prescription for medication that they can decide to take to die peacefully in their sleep if their suffering becomes unbearable. We are careful to avoid words like "euthanasia," "suicide" or "physician-assisted suicide", which are inaccurate and hurtful to those who want to live but but are stricken with life-ending illnesses.

Section V: Using Technology Wisely

While visual aides, video and audio amplification can enhance our presentations, they require management before and during a speaking engagement. Some use of visual tools, like a Powerpoint presentation, is recommended, and C&C has a selection of presentation slide shows you can use. Stick to these basic guidelines:

- » Don't write your script on the slides. Only include the basic points and headlines (this will also help you avoid "reading" your slides).
- » Use primarily images and pictures in your slides. People came to listen and learn, not to read.
- » Always look at the audience, not at the screen, while you are speaking.
- » If you are using video, either embedded within a presentation or as a stand-alone piece, be sure to properly introduce what you are about to show, and manage the transfer of attention from you to the screen and back again. Practice this in advance!
- » Test your visual tool BEFORE you begin speaking — do a complete dry run, if possible — making sure your computer is hooked up to the projector correctly, that your remote control or pointer works, and that any audio you may be using is working, etc. A dry run is especially important if you will be using a computer or other devices that are not your own.

Using a Microphone

Some speaking engagements require the use of a microphone, specifically if the auditorium is large or if the presentation is being recorded. Here are a few pointers for using a microphone effectively:

- » To gauge your correct speaking volume in an informal engagement, ask the audience (through the microphone) if you are too loud or too soft — they will tell you!
- » Put your lips as close to the microphone without touching it as possible; your audience will hear you much more clearly that way.
- » If the microphone is on a podium, remember to speak directly into it. Take the time to adjust it so you are not slouching down or standing on your toes to reach it.

Section VI: Public Speaking Best Practices

Everyone has a different approach to — and a different comfort level for — public speaking. Whether you are an old hand who’s comfortable in front of a crowd or new to the art of presentation, these do’s and don’ts are designed to give you confidence in putting your best foot forward.

DO: Know the Format

Most often, Compassion & Choices speakers will either be part of a panel discussion with others or will make a solo presentation to a group. For both of these formats you will generally be relying on the same content. The main difference is that when presenting solo, you are in control of how and when you deliver each point. If you are speaking on a panel, you will make your points as they become relevant to the conversation.

Stay Away From Personal Healthcare Specifics

Avoid the natural tendency to offer help when questions are asked about individual cases or situations. If the question involves someone who is terminally ill and is looking for information on their options, they should be referred to our End-of-Life Consultation (EOLC) team at 800.247.7421.

Never discuss methods or medicines that are used to bring about death, avoid commenting on whether one method is preferred over another. Never offer medical advice or opinions.

Instead, tell the audience that our EOLC team works one-on-one with our clients, helping them explore the options that are best for them based on their particular situation, and that our official policy is to refer potential clients directly to the EOLC program.

DO: Know Your Material

Pick a topic you are interested in. Know more about it than you include in your speech. In addition to facts, use a “news hook” if applicable, such as a bill recently introduced in your municipal or state government, a supportive comment made by a local public official, a change in position by your state medical association, etc. Use humor, personal stories and conversational language — that way you won’t forget what to say.

DO: Know the Players

If the invitation is for a debate or panel discussion, find out who the other panelists or co-presenters are. Go to your local newspaper's website to search for news about the other participants or to see whether they have written letters to the editor about controversial topics. Conduct a Google search to expand your background knowledge. If you're still unsure, contact Compassion & Choices staff, who may be able to assist you. If you find anything of concern, consult with Compassion & Choices staff.

DO: Know Your Audience

Perhaps more important than anything else, familiarize yourself with your audience and know generally what this group will expect in a presentation. For example, law students are a much different audience with a different set of expectations than you will find at a Rotary Club meeting. In most cases, the venue or event at which you are presenting will come with a well-defined audience (association of nurses, assisted-living facility, a church or faith group, etc.). Be sure to identify and focus your attention on the interests of that audience. The venue or organization hosting you is the first and best place to ask. In some instances, it may not be clear who your expected audience includes. In these cases stick with general messaging points, and be prepared to refer more specific questions to the Compassion & Choices website or Compassion & Choices staff.

DO: Make It Personal and Relatable

Face your audience, make eye contact and ensure they are "with" you. Pause between your major points, and remember to pace yourself. Often, as speakers become more comfortable with a presentation, they begin to speed through the material without realizing it. While speaking quickly may show enthusiasm, it can also reduce your audience's ability to understand and retain more complex information.

DO: Be Authentic

Although notes are a helpful tool for delivering a presentation, it is not a good idea to read a speech verbatim from notes. Reading generally sounds stilted and unnatural, and can convey a lack of enthusiasm for the subject. Instead, consider using index cards to remind you of your most important points. With a little practice you'll be able to deliver much of your message by memory.

DO: Stay Up to Date

In recent years we've seen a huge uptick in legislation, legal action and movement building surrounding medical aid in dying and end-of-life care. Before your presentation, always visit the national website, CompassionAndChoices.org, and check for the latest information and developments that may be happening in Congress, in the courts, in state legislatures and even locally in your area.

DO: Practice, Practice, Practice!

Rehearse out loud with all the equipment you plan on using. Revise as necessary. Work to control filler words such as um, so, uh, etc. Speak slowly, take pauses and remember to breathe. Practice with a timer and allow room for the unexpected. Have a few go-to messages that pivot the conversation back to your main points. Memorize one or two of your favorite quotes: Gov. Jerry Brown, Desmond Tutu, Brittany Maynard, Barbara Coombs Lee. If there is a Toastmasters International club near you, contact them and ask whether you can serve as a guest speaker for one of their upcoming meetings to practice in front of a live audience. Record yourself delivering the presentation on a smartphone so you can hear how it sounds.

DON'T: Reveal Confidential Information

Personal stories are often the most moving and effective parts of a presentation. Remember, however, that there are important limits on what can be shared publicly. It is critical to make sure that you have permission to share a personal story, a name, or any details about an individual. If you have any doubt, leave it out!

DON'T: Take It Personally

When a member of the audience disagrees with something that has been said, or disagrees with our organization in general, don't take it personally. Stay level-headed and be generous with those who disagree with you. Don't try to talk someone out of their position or get dragged into arguments or debates. Time you spend arguing with someone who doesn't agree is time you are not spending engaging those who are open to support our cause. Rather than belaboring a point, try this simple pivot: "We appear to disagree on this point, but this isn't the time for an extended debate on this one issue, so I'm going to take another question. Thank you for your thoughts." Be diplomatic, professional and in charge of the conversation.

DON'T: Go Over Your Allotted Time

The two most commonly requested formats are 20 minutes and 45 minutes. Presentations longer than 45 minutes risk losing the audience's attention and are generally not as effective as shorter presentations. Be respectful of your audience's time. For example, if you are asked to speak for a half hour, keep your presentation to 20 minutes, and allow time for a Q&A session or to greet attendees one-on-one after your talk.

DON'T: Ad Lib If You Don't Know

When a question comes up that you don't know the answer to, it's okay to say that you don't know the answer but would be happy to find out and follow up. As a volunteer representative you aren't expected to have all the answers about these complex issues and campaigns. It is fine to say that your role does not include providing legal or medical advice, or that you simply don't know the answer. You can also refer questions to the C&C website, our C&C End-of-Life Consultation program or our Doc2Doc physician resource, or note the question and follow up.

Section VII: Training and Resources for Volunteers

To make our movement stronger and ensure that we are speaking in a unified voice, we ask that all storytellers, volunteers and supporters working with Compassion & Choices use the same up-to-date and accurate information in your advocacy, and that you review the training resources found on the Volunteer Resource Center webpage at CompassionAndChoices.org/volunteer-resource-center.

Informational Resources for Public Speaking and Storytelling

- » [Compassion & Choices storyteller's webpage](#)
- » [Public Speaking and Storytelling Webinar](#)
- » [TEDx Talk: The Brittany Effect — Transforming the Death with Dignity Movement / Barbara Coombs Lee](#)

General Advocacy Resources From Compassion & Choices

- » [House Party Host Toolkit](#)
- » [Lobbying Toolkit](#)
- » [Petitions, Tabling and Canvassing Toolkit](#)
- » [Volunteer Action Network Video Training: Petitioning, Tabling, Canvassing](#)
- » [Volunteer Action Network Video Training: How to Lobby and Talk to Lawmakers](#)
- » [How to Die in Oregon Home Screening Kit](#)

Other Resources

- » [Current Information and Fact Sheets](#)
- » [Compassion & Choices Magazine](#)
- » [Compassion & Choices Online Newsroom](#)

Section VIII: Frequently Asked Questions

What is Compassion & Choices?

Compassion & Choices is the nation's oldest, largest and most active nonprofit working to improve care and expand options for the end of life. For more than 30 years we have worked to change attitudes, practices and policies so that everyone can access the information and options they need for more control and comfort at the end of life.

What is medical aid in dying?

Medical aid in dying is the preferred term for the practice in which a mentally capable, terminally ill adult with less than six months to live requests medication from their doctor that they may self-ingest to bring about a peaceful death if their suffering becomes unbearable. Many do not take the medication, but simply having access to it can provide great comfort for someone suffering in their final days.

What are we working for?

All people should have the ability, in consultation with their families, spiritual advisors and doctors, to make the end-of-life decisions that are right for them. When in the final stages of a terminal disease this should include the option to request a prescription from their doctor to die peacefully if suffering becomes unbearable. We are working toward integrating and normalizing medical aid in dying as an additional end-of-life option.

What is C&C's vision?

We strive to create a society that affirms life and accepts the inevitability of death, embraces expanded options for compassionate dying, and empowers everyone to choose end-of-life care that reflects their values, priorities and beliefs.

Is it okay if I give an interview to a media outlet?

No. Compassion & Choices' volunteers should never participate in a media interview without prior discussion and authorization from the Compassion & Choices Communications team. Compassion & Choices tries, whenever possible, to feature local volunteers in media coverage. So if you are approached by the media, even for a short quote or a simple question, direct them to the Compassion & Choices Communications team via your Action Team leader or staff volunteer manager. Please note our Media Policy on page 6.

What kinds of speaking engagements can I pursue on my own?

Volunteer community speakers are encouraged to pursue speaking opportunities at local community organizations and centers. Local elder care facilities and public libraries are good examples, as are local resource fairs or other community events (see page 5). You can also consider hosting or participating in a Compassion & Choices house party — see our [House Party Toolkit](#) for more information!

Which speaking engagements should I refer to Compassion & Choices?

Any speaking engagement that will draw audiences from outside your community or that is intended for medical professionals should be referred to Compassion & Choices staff. Other examples include any event at a medical school, a national conference that is coming to your area (like an association of faith leaders or hospice professionals) or other formal institutional events.

How should I refer a more formal speaking opportunity that I find locally?

If during your local outreach you discover a speaking opportunity that should be referred to Compassion & Choices staff, please submit the speaker request form on our website at CompassionAndChoices.org/speakers or have the event organizer do so. We will review the request promptly and consider the best speakers for the opportunity.

Appendix:

Public Speaking Checklist

Here we've provided a basic checklist with steps to consider for a good public speaking experience. Your own personal touch is important, but if you are able to check all these boxes, you can be confident you are ready to go.

___ Necessary background about the speaking opportunity and audience: Be sure you understand the context, format and purpose of your appearance, along with the duration of your presentation and all the basic details. Consider your audience and tailor your presentation accordingly.

___ Logistics: Double check where the event is located and directions to get there, how parking will work, how you will travel to and from the site, your total travel time and when you will need to depart to give yourself plenty of time.

___ Technology: Be prepared with any video assets you may need (thumb drive, Powerpoint or other presentation, etc.), and be sure that audio/video assets are appropriate for the particular event. In advance of the presentation, verify that the required equipment will be available to you onsite. Ask if you will be using a microphone or whether a microphone is required.

___ Top three points: Whatever the context or format, you should be clear on the main thrust of your presentation. Identify and articulate three primary points that are a good fit for a particular audience, and refer to those points throughout the presentation.

___ Local connection: When possible try to include specific information with a local connection — a story about someone from the community or a recent update that has significance to the area or group you are addressing.

___ Personal stories: Including a personal story is a powerful tool in any presentation. Whether you are talking about Brittany Maynard, any of our other advocates, someone else you may know about or yourself, real-life stories will keep your audience connected to the issues. Remember to tell other people's stories carefully and check that it's OK to share details.

___ Materials from Compassion & Choices: Always bring some materials to offer to your audience: sign in sheets, Compassion & Choices Magazine, palm card, fact sheets, local/state flyer or brochure, or promotion for upcoming local events.

___ PRACTICE: Even if you have given your presentation many times, each situation is unique. Do at least one run-through to incorporate your local connections, personal stories and top three points.