



UNITED TO RESTORE AND SUSTAIN  
ABORTION COVERAGE FOR LOW-INCOME WOMEN

## Abortion Speak Outs

*Adapted from Advocates for Youth*

Abortion speak outs are an opportunity for people to share their abortion stories in a public space. Speak outs have been conducted by abortion rights activists for many years with the aim of grounding the conversation about abortion in the lives of women. The first documented speak out in the US was organized in 1969 by the feminist group Redstockings. The group interrupted a legislative hearing on abortion that featured 12 men and one Catholic nun, and demanded that the legislators listen to the voices of women. One month later the Redstockings organized a public speak out where hundreds of woman attended and shared their experiences with illegal abortion. This was one of the actions that paved the way toward legalizing abortion in the United States.

When setting up an abortion speak out, you want to secure a location for the event, pick a date and time, reserve sound equipment, work with speakers to practice sharing their stories in public, advertise the speak out, and invite attendees.

Similar to small group discussions, it is important that you take some steps to create a safe space for people sharing their stories:

1. Hand out ground rules for people that attend including:
  - No cell phones, video cameras, tweeting, Facebooking etc.
  - No sharing the stories outside of the space
  - No commenting after people share their stories
  - No judgment
2. Have a plan to remove people who do not follow the ground rules and are creating an unsafe space for your participants. It is possible that since this is a public event that anti-abortion protesters will attend. You might want to hire security to help you escort people from the event if necessary.
3. Have a counselor on site to provide support for people sharing their stories.
4. Provide an opportunity for people sharing their stories to meet up beforehand and practice.

Note: speak outs can be used as more of a direct action tactic, such as by holding them outside legislative offices that are ignoring women's rights. When using a speak out as a direct action tactic, make sure your speakers are very comfortable speaking to media and having their stories shared outside of the space. Depending on where you stage the speak out, you might also need to consider legal implications. Don't forget to contact the media, tweet and post your event on Facebook.