



Campaign Toolkit

Resources in this toolkit

- Overview and background about the campaign
- How to participate in 3 easy steps
- Opportunities to take action through the campaign including the chance to have your expenses paid to come to Washington, DC, sharing your personal experience with the media, being part of our forthcoming booklet, and more.
- Practical tools and resources to develop your story, record it and write it

About the Campaign

The Center for American Progress, Food Research and Action Center, Feeding America, the Coalition on Human Needs and Witnesses to Hunger are partnering to launch this campaign to **gather and share personal stories about nutrition assistance programs from across the country**. When you share your story, we'll help connect you with opportunities to take action with the media and policymakers. This toolkit will help you learn all about how to participate, practical tips for interviewing storytellers, and why stories are so important.

SNAP, school lunch, summer meals and other nutrition assistance programs are all essential to ensuring millions of low-income families can get the nutrition they need when they fall on hard times. Yet these programs and the people they serve are not always well understood by both the public and elected officials. We have seen proposals to cut or restrict access to these programs arise in Congress and in statehouses across the nation. With Congress due to reauthorize Child Nutrition programs like WIC, school lunch and breakfast, summer meals and afterschool and child care feeding programs, we all have an opportunity to build upon success and make additional gains to ensure all of our children have access to the healthy food they need to grow and thrive.

Who can participate?

This campaign is open to individuals who want to share their own personal experience about the impact of nutrition assistance programs, as well as service providers, family, friends, and community members who want to share the experience of someone on their behalf.

People who have experienced hunger and participated in nutrition assistance programs are the true experts on how they work. It is their voices that need to be heard and truly listened to as Congress considers these important programs.

How do I join the campaign?

It's easy! There are 3 easy steps to join our campaign, and we're here to help you along the way:

1. **Identify a personal experience** you want to share (see page 3 for details)
 - a. Share your own story – you are the expert!
 - b. Find stories in your community or where you work if you're a service provider
2. **Write or record your story**, or interview someone else with a personal story (See page 4 for details)
 - a. You can record audio or video of your story using the new StoryCorps app, or submit a written version of your story to our website
3. **Register at our website and upload your story** (See page 4 for details)
 - a. Go to [our website to register](#) your information and upload your story for a chance to come to Washington, DC and take action!

How long do I have to participate?

The campaign kicks off on June 3 and will run through July 30, 2015.

Official Rules and Guidelines

The official rules and guidelines for the campaign [are available here online](#).

What if my organization already has a story-sharing program?

Our campaign is meant to have individuals and organizations participating whether they're new to story-sharing or are already pros. If you already have stories that would be a good fit for this campaign, just register and [submit them on our website](#). In any action events, publications, media or other opportunities, we'll be sure to reach out to you and/or your organization and credit your role in contributing to the campaign. This national campaign is a great opportunity to amplify any story-sharing work you may already be doing.

After I submit my story, what opportunities are there to share it through the campaign?

Our organizations want to find as many ways as possible to share the stories that are submitted to the campaign with members of the media, Congress, administration officials, and your local communities. We will identify these opportunities over the next several months and reach out to you to help you develop your story into op-eds, interviews with media, excerpts for policymaker speeches, and more. **Additionally, 4 of the participants in the campaign will be chosen to have their expenses paid to join us in Washington, DC for a day of action** meeting with their policymakers and participating in media events to support nutrition assistance programs. Several stories will also be included in a **new booklet that we will be developing to distribute to every member of the House and Senate in the fall.**

What kind of stories are you looking for?

Congress is currently considering reauthorizing a number of critical child nutrition programs and making changes to current programs like SNAP (formerly food stamps). This means that the media will be increasing their coverage of the impact of these programs and policymakers will be discussing the issue much more in the coming months. You can help us educate Congress, the media and the public about what these programs mean to you by sharing your own personal experience or the experiences of others in your community. We are looking for personal experiences about the following programs:

- SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps
- WIC
- Summer meals
- School breakfast, lunch, and after school meals
- Child care feeding programs

To give policymakers and the public an understanding of the wide range of ways these programs are important, we are looking for:

- **How nutrition assistance programs impact families.** We are looking for stories that show how nutrition assistance programs help families. We are also looking for stories about how potential cuts to benefits might harm families (or how past cuts have already harmed families) and the challenges related to putting nutritious meals on the table.
- **Service providers and their clients in the community.** First-hand personal experiences about these programs are important for the public to hear, but so too are the stories of service providers in their communities helping families put nutritious food on the table. We want the stories from the Food Bank Director or other social service provider about families that are impacted by the services they provide to the teacher who has seen the impacts of her students' ability to learn because of the free breakfast program.
- **How programs have helped improve economic security.** Not only do these programs help families gain access to nutritious meals when they're struggling, but they can also help families get through tough economic situations and become more economically secure.
- **The challenges faced when participating in these programs.** Individuals who are being supported by nutrition assistance programs often face many difficult challenges including work and income, healthcare issues, family issues, transportation, and other costs of living.
- **The diversity of those who participate in these programs.** These critical programs serve a wide variety of people from a lot of different communities and backgrounds. The public needs to hear about experiences from different parts of the country, communities of color, faith and non-faith communities, LGBT people and others. The more diverse voices we can share, the more people can relate to the importance of these programs.
- **How hunger is connected to many other issues of poverty.** We know that hunger affects so many pieces of a person's life – housing, education, job attainment and retention, domestic and community violence. We want people to share their experiences with nutrition assistance programs and feel encouraged to talk about how those programs had an effect on other aspects of their experience on a limited income.

How to share your stories and register for the campaign

There are 2 ways you can submit your story:

1. **Write it.** After you identify your story (whether it is your own or someone else's) review the materials in this toolkit and write it down in 500 words or fewer. Go to the [Campaign Submission Page](#) at TalkPoverty.org to register and enter your written story.
2. **Record it.** You can record an audio or video version of your story using your phone or other device. The easiest way is to download the new free [StoryCorps app](#) to use your phone as a microphone or video cam and record yourself or record an interview with someone else. Look below to see how to use the app, and tips for recording. After you're done, you can register on our [Campaign Submission Page](#) by filling out the form and sharing the link to your recording.

How to use the registration site

1. Go to the **Campaign Site** ([click here](#))
2. To enter to the submission page, scroll down and click **Submit your Story**.
3. On the **Submission Page**, scroll down to register and enter the information.
 - a. You have the option to write your story or to provide a link if you used the StoryCorps app or recorded a video on Youtube or Vimeo.
 - b. Be sure to fill out all the information on the form, and campaign guidelines before submitting your story.
 - c. NOTE: uploading your interview through the StoryCorps app will not automatically enter you in the Community Voices campaign. You must go to the campaign page, fill out all of the necessary contact information and provide the link to your interview in order to join
4. Click submit at the bottom of the page.
5. Check your email for a confirmation email.
6. Once you receive your email, sign, date and return [our campaign release form available here](#). Then, please return it to us by **July 30, 2015** by:
 - a. Email: mcrichardson@americanprogress.org
 - b. Fax: ATTN: Michael Richardson (202) 682-1867
 - c. Mail: Michael Richardson, C/O Center for American Progress, 1333 H ST NW, 10th FL, Washington, DC 20005

How to use the StoryCorps app to record your interview

1. Download the app from iTunes store (Apple users) or the Google Play store (Android users) to your mobile device.
 - a. Download the app and create an account at <http://storycorps.me>
 - b. If you have trouble creating an account on your mobile device you can also create an account from your desktop or laptop computer.
2. Distribute flyers and information sheet to potential interview participants.
3. Choose who you will interview.
4. Arrange a day, time, and quiet place to interview a community member.
5. On the day of the interview:
 - a. Review and use the Interviewer Guide & Example Script, which provides sample interview questions (pages 6-7 of this toolkit).
 - b. Complete Interviewee releases (pages 4-5 of this toolkit).
6. Record your interview via the StoryCorps app.
 - a. Make sure you are using a device with enough memory to save your interview.
7. Upload the interview to the Internet via the StoryCorps app:
 - a. Include an interview: (1) title, (2) key phrase **EndHunger**, and (3) photo.
 - b. Title should include the participant's town, state, zip code.
 - c. Optional key words: SNAP, foodstamps, WIC, SchoolLunch, Nutrition, Hunger, SafetyNet, Nutrition4Kids, KeepKidsHealthy, VoicesofHunger, KeepSchoolFoodHealthy, MealsonWheels, MoreThanaMeal, SummerMeals, HealthyKids15
8. Register for the campaign
 - a. Once you upload your story/interview to StoryCorps you will receive a public web link. Be sure to keep the link.
 - b. [Fill out the information on our form](#) to register for the campaign. If you used the StoryCorps app there will be a place on the registration page to paste the link to your interview.
 - c. Be sure to fill out all the information on the form, and campaign guidelines before submitting your story.
 - d. NOTE: uploading your interview through the StoryCorps app will not automatically enter you in the Community Voices campaign. You must go to the campaign page, fill out all of the necessary contact information and provide the link to your interview in order to join the campaign.

Interviewers Guide

Thank you for joining our campaign!

We appreciate your time and the effort you are making to help share the experiences of your family member, friend, or loved one. These are the stories that can inspire and move others to take action to end hunger, and providing a platform that is safe and supportive for the interviewee is an important task that we thank you for taking on!

The following provides some instruction and a list of potential questions to help stimulate a conversation with a family member, community member or friend. These are just to help you get started.

Instructions:

At the beginning of the recording session, ask the story teller/interviewee to state their name, city and state where they live, and the name and relationship of the person with whom you are speaking.

Introduction

We're talking with community members to better understand the food needs of families in [city/county/state]. We want to hear and record your story to help inform future programs and improve access to healthy food. We need your help to identify barriers faced by people in this community to purchase and eat healthy food. Your story along with others will be shared with other community members, media, and policymakers across the country to raise awareness about hunger in America. By participating in this campaign you are also entering for the chance to win a trip to take action to share your personal experience in Washington, DC. We will also be sharing a number of stories gathered in this campaign in a forthcoming booklet to be shared with members of Congress. If you have questions about this interview you can contact Michael Richardson by e-mail at mcrichardson@americanprogress.org or call (202) 796-9708.

Provide the Interviewee with a printed copy of the Information for Interviewees (Including Consent Form).

Participant needs to sign a consent and photo release form to take part in this campaign. Obtain consent before moving forward. The Interviewee may want to keep a copy of the Information for Interviewees (Including Consent Form). Be sure to have a few extra copies printed out.

(TIP!) If you are interviewing during your work day, it would be prudent to obtain consent from your employer as well.

This interview should only last about 3-5 minutes. We can stop at any time. Please feel free to speak openly. There are no correct or wrong answers to these questions. We would like to get as many different points of view as we can.

Do you have any questions before we start?

Before you begin recording, set your device on airplane mode.

****START RECORDING****

Icebreaker Question (1 minute)

1. *What's your name and where do you live?*
2. *Why did you agree to tell your story?*

To “loosen up” or break the ice, you may wish to ask some general questions such as:

- *Who most inspires you?*
- *What do you want others to learn from your experiences?*
- *What values are most important to you?*

When you are feeling more comfortable, you may start in with more specific questions:

Sample Questions (2-4 minutes):

- Tell us a little bit about you and your family?
- Has there ever been a time where you had to sacrifice anything to feed your family? What have been some of your challenges when you didn't have adequate income?
- Was there a particular instance/circumstance that happened in your life that led you to seek food assistance? Did you seek other help first before seeking SNAP or other assistance?
- How have nutrition assistance programs (SNAP, WIC, summer meal programs, school breakfast and lunch) helped you? Did it put nutritious food on your table during difficult times? Did it help you find better economic opportunities? Do you have any specific stories of how any of these programs helped you and/or your family?

- If cuts were made to the nutrition program(s) you use, how would it affect you or your family?
- What do you need to help you no longer be food insecure?
- If you had a chance to speak to your policy makers about nutrition assistance programs, what would you tell them?
- What struggles have you faced finding healthy food? How have you worked to overcome these struggles? What have been the hardest moments? What have been the moments when it started to feel better?
- Who has had the biggest impact on you during your struggles getting healthy food? Tell me a story about them.
- What have your experiences been like with food programs such as [SNAP, WIC, the National School Lunch Program, Meals on Wheels, or congregate meals]?
- What do you think would surprise people about your experiences with hunger?
- What do you do when there is not enough food available?
- Why do you think it is important to eat healthy food?
- What hopes and dreams do you have for you and your family?

Thank you for taking the time to tell me your story. I greatly appreciate your time.

****STOP RECORDING****

Information for the Interviewees

What is the purpose of this interview?

Members of Congress make decisions every day that impact families throughout this country. When members consider ways to address hunger in this country it is crucial they hear from the true experts on hunger—people who have experienced it. Help us educate Congress, the press, and the public on the importance of nutrition assistance programs.

What will happen if you take part in the interview?

Your expertise will be shared. Your story may be used as a media resource where there are opportunities to advocate for nutrition programs. For example it could be used in a news article, blog, a letter to elected officials, etc. The stories can also be shared on the internet via Twitter, Facebook, and email.

You will be asked 3-6 questions. The main topics include your experience with nutrition assistance programs, how they've helped you with economic challenges, and what it's like to provide nutritious meals for yourself and your family. You may choose to respond or not respond at any point during the interview. Your interview will be recorded.

Your consent form should make the interviewee of whether they have any rights to this story or if they will get to approve the final version. Who will upload the story? You or them? If your organization will upload, can they asked for it to be removed in the future? (A lawyer should review all the consent forms). A photo release must be signed as well.

How long will your interview last?

Your interview will last approximately 3-5 minutes.

What are some general things you should know about your interview?

This interview is *voluntary*. You may refuse to participate, or you may participate and then drop out of the interview at any time and for any reason. Details about your interview are discussed below to help you understand its purpose.

Will you receive anything for participating in the interview?

No. You will not receive any monetary or other compensation for this interview.

Will it cost you anything to participate in the interview?

No. There are no costs for being in the interview other than your time.

What if you have questions about the interview?

You have the right to ask, and received answers to, any questions you may have about the interview. If you have questions, or concerns, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, [XXX] at [XXX] or by email to [XXX].

Release form for the campaign

Release and License for the Community Voices: Why Nutrition Assistance Matters campaign

Thank you for participating in the Community Voices: Why Nutrition Assistance Matters campaign, a project of Center for American Progress (“American Progress”), Food Research and Action Center, Feeding America, Witnesses to Hunger, and Coalition on Human Needs.

Your signature below indicates that of your own free will, you agree that you represent and warrant that you have full power and authority to enter into this agreement and to perform its obligations hereunder and that you will receive no monetary payments for the license or grant described herein. Furthermore, you represent and warrant that you are not knowingly hiding or falsifying your proper legal identity, submitting untrue, false, or otherwise misleading materials, or otherwise engaging in deceptive or misleading actions with regards to this release.

Additionally, you agree that you are granting American Progress, its agents, employees, and assigns a worldwide, royalty-free, non-exclusive, fully paid-up license to (check all that apply):

- use of your personal image and remarks, in whole or in part, for any purposes, including but not limited to, simultaneous and archival webcasting.

- use of an image of your building, trademark, artwork, music or other copyrighted material (as applicable) in whole or in part, for the purposes of simultaneous and archival webcasting and promotion of this entry and American Progress’ use of it.

Signature

Date

Please Print Name

On Behalf of (required if participant is a minor): _____

I registered for the campaign and shared my story, what else can I do to take action?

After submitting your story, there are many ways you can continue to take action in your community and on a nation level. Here are a few tips on how:

- Integrate the experiences of people impacted by the programs into your organization's materials, website and promotional efforts.
- Include printed copies of stories in media packets given to reporters during press events.
- Encourage your organization to share it via social media outlets.
- Encourage your participants to become advocates and share their experiences broadly.
- Share with media contacts for press purposes.
- Share with legislators on a local, state, and national level.
- Tweet, post and share through your personal networks.

Questions about the campaign?

Have questions about how to participate in the campaign? Need additional assistance? Contact Michael Richardson, Field and Outreach Coordinator for the Poverty to Prosperity Program at the Center for American Progress Email Michael at mcrichardson@americanprogress.org or call (202) 796-9708.

An example of impact from our 50th anniversary of the War on Poverty campaign

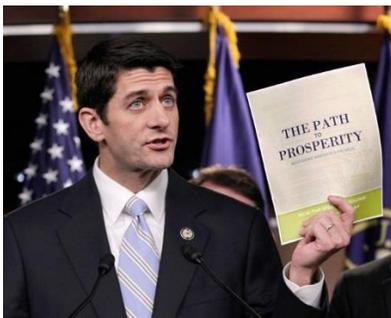


If Members of Congress Hear From Americans Living in Poverty, Will They Do Something About It?

Amy Treptow came to Washington to tell her story of climbing out of poverty. Some elected officials were more interested than others.

Greg Kaufmann

January 27, 2014



House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan, R-Wisconsin, touts his federal budget plan at a 2012 news conference. (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)

Recently, at the Social Mobility Summit at the Brookings Institution, Representative Paul Ryan declared the War on Poverty a failure. He went on to [announce](#): “Later this year I plan on saying a whole lot more about this subject. But before I lay out any policy prescriptions for poor families, I need to hear more from the real experts—the families themselves.”

He had an opportunity to do just that when Amy Treptow visited Washington, DC, as the winner of the [50th Anniversary of the War on Poverty Storyteller Contest](#), sponsored by the Half in Ten campaign and the Coalition on Human Needs. The contest was part of the [Our American Story](#) project, which connects people who have experienced poverty with political leaders, media, and advocacy organizations—an ongoing effort to raise the visibility of

those who don't have a high-profile lobby representing their interests during policy debates. (Full disclosure: I am an adviser to the Half in Ten campaign.)

Treptow visited the nation's capital to share her story with journalists and policymakers. She met with her representative, Mark Pocan; Representative Barbara Lee; and Paul Ryan, whose staff contacted her to set up a meeting.

When Treptow showed up to meet with Ryan, he suggested they take a photo in the corridor in front of the flag where Treptow could tell him a little about herself.

"I let him know that I had become a single mother unexpectedly, and that through the help of [Medicaid](#), [Section 8](#), [food stamps](#) and the West CAP [[job training](#)] program I was able to get back on my feet, be self-sufficient and own a home again," she says. "I told him it was important to protect programs that help people."

"Republicans aren't against all of those things, despite what you might have heard," Treptow says Ryan told her.

They snapped the photographs and the congressman said he had to head to his next appointment. Treptow was disappointed. She had heard that Ryan wants to speak with people who have experienced poverty firsthand.

"I was right there," she says. "He didn't ask me to elaborate on a single thing. If he's really thinking about [how these programs are working](#) for people, he could have asked *something*. But I shared as much of my story as I could—whether he chooses to listen or not."

Treptow's story is indeed a compelling one. A veteran of the Navy, she says that just six years ago she had "a very good life" with her then-husband and two children in a house that they owned. The family's income allowed her to stop working full-time as a first grade teacher. She taught reading at the school for three hours a day, worked as a substitute teacher, and did a lot of volunteer work.

"But then my life drastically and instantly changed," she says.

Treptow's husband left without warning, and she found herself alone with her two children.

"It was terrifying," she says. "I was worried I was going to be homeless."

Treptow waited for a year to receive Section 8 housing assistance. (She notes that many people wait for much longer.) She turned to food stamps and Medicaid, and applied for 110

full-time teaching positions to no avail. She continued to work as a substitute and part-time reading teacher, earning approximately \$15,000 a year—well below the poverty line for a family of three.

“The district hadn’t hired in several years,” she says. “I knew I needed to go back to school to make myself more valuable to a district so I could obtain a full-time job with benefits.”

Her caseworker referred her to the [West CAP](#) community action agency in Glenwood City, Wisconsin. The agency offers a program for low-income adults who work at least twenty hours per week; it helps them gain additional skills to obtain a living wage job with health benefits.

To be admitted to the program, Treptow had to demonstrate that becoming certified as a reading specialist would boost her chances at a full-time teaching position. She found job postings online and submitted them to the agency. A professor at University of Wisconsin-Stout also wrote her a letter of recommendation. Treptow was accepted into the program, which then covered a portion of her tuition and textbooks.

With the help of West CAP’s \$2,076 investment in her, Treptow received her certification and now earns nearly \$40,000 and health benefits teaching mostly low-income children to read.

“I work with students in first through fifth grades who need intense intervention to increase their overall reading skills,” says Treptow.

In order to support her family and pay off her student loans, Treptow works two additional jobs—in the afterschool program and at an athletic field house on Saturdays. She once again owns her home.

Treptow enjoyed her time speaking with Congressman Pocan—whose congressional district shares Rock County with Ryan’s district.

“He was very welcoming,” she says. “We talked for about fifteen minutes or so.”

Pocan called her story “inspirational” and read it into the Congressional Record on the floor of the House of Representatives. Treptow says that was important to her.

“I was very hesitant to come to DC,” she says. “I hadn’t shared my story with my colleagues because of the negative stereotypes about people who receive public assistance. But this

made me feel better about what I've been through, and that these kinds of stories need to be heard by politicians, if there is a chance of these safety net programs continuing.”

Representative Lee is someone who frequently shares with her colleagues the stories of ordinary Americans who are struggling. In fact, Treptow sat in the House Gallery as Lee spoke on the floor of a constituent whose children were benefitting from Head Start. Treptow says she had “read up on” the congresswoman prior to her visit and wasn’t surprised that they connected with one another when they met.

“Because she had been in the same shoes as me,” said Treptow. “I admire her—where she has been and where she is now. And not only that, she fights for where she has been and what she believes makes a difference.... These are the people we need in Congress, not people who just want to cut everything.”

Treptow hopes that the media and policymakers will keep telling the stories of the millions of people who turn to our safety net programs to “move forward, or get out of poverty—to have a better life.”

“If it’s just a couple of stories here and there, people see it as an exception and the negative stereotypes continue,” she says. “But if it’s story after story after story—that makes a difference. We need that now. Because if you take those safety net programs away, then what’s going to happen?”

Read the story here: <http://www.thenation.com/article/178084/if-members-congress-hear-americans-living-poverty-will-they-do-something-about-it>