Disability Rights OHIO

Advocate Toolkit: Letters to the Editor

Overview

- ❖ Letters to the editor are short opinion pieces responding to current events
- ❖ They are helpful for drawing the attention of the public and policymakers to an issue
- ❖ They are 200 words or less

Outline

1. Introduce yourself
   a. Who are you?
2. Introduce the issue you are responding to
   a. Why are you writing this?
   b. What happened?
      i. And why does it need attention?
   c. Show how this event is connected to or representative of a larger problem
3. Call for action
   a. What do you want people to take away from this issue?
   b. What do you want to see happen?

Tips for Submitting

1. Some news outlets have online forms, others have emails you send the piece to
2. Submit ASAP to the event you are referencing, i.e. 1-2 days after
3. Optional, but helpful: include 2-3 links to articles relevant to the topic and published by the place you are submitting at the top

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Where to Submit in Ohio

- ❖ Cleveland.com –
  - Online form: https://www.cleveland.com/opinion/2014/08/submit_a_letter_to_the_plain_d.html
- ❖ The Columbus Dispatch – online form OR email it to letters@dispatch.com
  - If you email, include your name, street address (only the city or township is printed) and a DAYTIME phone number (used only for verification)
  - Online form: https://www.dispatch.com/story/opinion/letters/2020/11/03/columbus-dispatch-letter-editor-submissions/6150040002/
- ❖ Dayton Daily News -
  - Email edletter@coxinc.com
  - Include a daytime phone number, your full name and the city in which you reside.
  - Online form: https://www.daytondailynews.com/opinion/sendletter/
- ❖ Toledo Blade -
  - letters@theblade.com

Example

Jordyn Zimmerman's Letter to the Editor in response to the New York Times article, *"Sabrina's Parents Love Her, But Her Meltdowns Are Too Much"*:

I was Sabrina – until age 18, when I was given access to robust alternative communication tools and appropriate supports. The police called me a "hitter, biter, and spitter." My teachers said I was "extremely challenging." My parents were told they needed to send me somewhere – that they could not keep me or themselves safe at home. Like Sabrina, I was in a perpetual state of discomfort and distress. I was restrained and secluded hundreds of times. Autistic people frequently face restraint and seclusion due to not having the support and services we need. This leads to a buildup of trauma, and unnecessary interactions with law enforcement and emergency room staff. We are not doing enough to support autistic people with communication needs. We must focus on the cause of this distress, rather than how it's showing up. It was hard and took time, but when I was supported this way, things shifted dramatically.

<u>Breakdown of Jordyn's Piece</u>

Word Count: 157 words

The introduction explains who she is and connects it to a current event (in this case, the publishing of an ablest article):

I was Sabrina – until age 18, when I was given access to robust alternative communication tools and appropriate supports. The police called me a "hitter, biter, and spitter." My teachers said I was "extremely challenging." My parents were told they needed to send me somewhere – that they could not keep me or themselves safe at home. Like Sabrina, I was in a perpetual state of discomfort and distress. I was restrained and secluded hundreds of times.

Next, she hones in on the issue she is responding to:

Autistic people frequently face restraint and seclusion due to not having the support and services we need. This leads to a buildup of trauma, and unnecessary interactions with law enforcement and emergency room staff. We are not doing enough to support autistic people with communication needs.

Finally, she ends with a call to action, but specifying what she wants to see happen:

We must focus on the cause of this distress, rather than how it's showing up. It was hard and took time, but when I was supported this way, things shifted dramatically.