

Important Reminders

- Testimony can be 5 minutes long, which is about 500 – 600 words
- You will need to provide 10 hard copies of your testimony
- The agency's performance is what is being evaluated, and information about your services is an indicator of their success

Prepare Your Message

DEVELOP A SOLID KNOWLEDGE BASE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR SERVICES

- Create an organizational overview that includes what makes your services unique, who you serve, the needs your services meet, whether your services are neighborhood- or Ward-specific, and years of funding from OVSJG
- Identify key programming/service benefits, including quantifiable information (e.g., number of clients served, programmed delivered, or increased programming)
- Express the importance and impact of organization services/programming to the city

DEVELOP/HIGHLIGHT KEY MESSAGE POINTS

Focus on no more than two or three key points, for example:

- Existing funding has made it possible for us to serve [x] clients per year
- We have long waiting lists for services
- Our physical office space places limits on our services and ability to grow

COORDINATE YOUR TESTIMONY WITH OTHERS IN ADVANCE

If possible, you should coordinate with other organizations that share your position on an issue so that all concerns can be made to the Council in a coordinated way that keeps the Council Members engaged

Prepare Your Written Testimony

BRIEFLY INTRODUCE YOURSELF

- Tell who you are and give information about the program you are representing
- Provide an overview of services and populations served, to include achievements, goals, and challenges

STATE YOUR GOAL AND OUTLINE YOUR MAJOR POINTS

In a few sentences, tell the committee what you hope to accomplish in your testimony

TALK ABOUT THE PROBLEM

- Discuss the problems that sexual assault victims face when trying to get adequate services to address all their needs
- Use touching anecdotes/stories from your work or personal experiences
- Discuss the citywide significance of the issue and then try to relate the problem to specific Wards, if possible
- Be as specific and detailed as possible
- Develop testimony that fully explains the importance of your programs and services

AVOID JARGON, ACRONYMS, CLICHÉS, OR TOO MANY STATISTICS

- Make sure you speak in layman’s terms
- Statistics can be useful, but should be used sparingly
- Note, however, that your written testimony is a place to include a few important statistics that you can’t fit into your oral testimony

LIST YOUR SPECIFIC, CONCISE RECOMMENDATIONS

Your conclusion should be a brief restatement of your request

Prepare Your Oral Testimony

GIVE THE KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- What do you want the Committee Members to remember when you leave the hearing room; use this as your guide to creating concise oral testimony
- Keep the intricate detail to your written testimony
- Don’t be afraid to ask for what you need, but make your requests reasonable

PERSONALIZE YOUR TESTIMONY

- Let them know how the issue affects their constituents
- Explain how OVSJG supports your work and the communities you serve

MAKE EYE CONTACT

- Separate your pages, removing clips and staples
- Use large type, double-space your text, and highlight key phrases and talking points
- Don’t carry a sentence over to the next page

RESPECT THE TIME LIMITS

- Plan to testify for one minute less than your allowance
- Time your presentation and adjust your testimony accordingly
- Keep your testimony concise and accurate
- Don’t rush; speeding through your testimony is not the answer to staying within the time limit
- Be prepared to state a strong conclusion quickly and concisely in case you run out of time
- Thank the committee for the opportunity to speak, even if your time has run out

Prepare for Questions from Committee Members

PERSONALIZE YOUR RESPONSE

- What have you seen in your work
- Describe a particular situation that exemplifies the issue

REMEMBER YOUR Q&A FORMULA

- If a general question is posed to all panelists don't be afraid to answer it
- Respond directly to the questions posed
- Answer concisely, honestly and quickly
- Don’t be afraid to say “I don’t know;” say you will find the answer and get back to them immediately

PRACTICE ANSWERING TOUGH QUESTIONS

- Try to anticipate and be prepared to address the tough questions
- Get to the point and offer to provide additional information in writing

Much of the material herein was adapted from various other sources