Public Speaking & Media Guidance

(Community Settings)

MICHIGAN Oral Health Coalition

Public Speaking & Media Guidance

Whether you're stepping up to a microphone at a town hall or responding to a reporter's question, effective public communication doesn't require expertise, it requires clarity. This guide gives community members the tools to speak with confidence, stay focused, and make a real impact in public settings.

Clear

One idea, plain language, easy to follow

Brief

30-60 seconds is safe and effective — shorter is often stronger

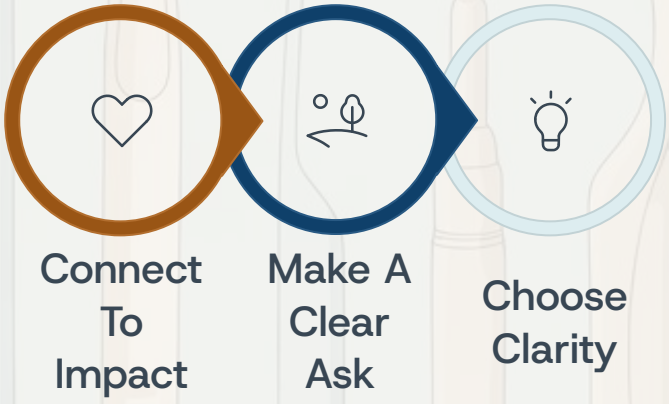
Focused

One main point beats five scattered ones every time

Grounded

Rooted in values or real community impact

You do not need to be an expert, you need to be understandable. The most memorable comments are the ones that connect a clear ask to a real human impact. Clarity beats complexity every time.



What to Say & How to Say It

Every strong public comment follows a simple, repeatable structure. Use it every time you speak, regardless of the topic or setting. If you forget everything else, fall back on this one sentence:

"This matters because _____, and I'm asking you to _____."

01

Who You Are

Briefly identify yourself as a community member, no credentials required.

02

What You Care About

Name the issue clearly and directly in one sentence.

03

Why It Matters

Connect to impact. Instead of "This is evidence-based," try: *"This helps families stay healthy and prevents problems before they start."*

04

What You're Asking For

End with a clear, specific ask directed at the decision-makers in the room.

If you only have 10 seconds, say one clear sentence: **"I support community water fluoridation because it helps protect health and prevent disease, and I encourage you to continue supporting it."** That's enough.

Avoid jargon and speak the way you would to a neighbor. Use plain language that anyone in the room can follow. Focus on one idea, don't try to cover everything. One clear point lands far more powerfully than five scattered ones.

Media Mindset & Fluoride Talking Framing

Even in a town hall, it helps to think like a communicator. Keep your message sharp and purposeful no matter the setting. Before you speak, ask yourself three questions:

What value am I reinforcing?

What action am I asking for?

What's the one thing I want people to remember?

Clarity beats complexity every time.
You have everything you need to speak up, and your voice matters.

A Memorable Item

Anchor every comment to a single takeaway. If people remember nothing else, what should it be?

Reinforce a Value

Ground your message in something the audience already cares about — health, family, prevention, fairness.

Ask for Action

Every comment should end with a clear, direct ask. Don't leave the audience guessing what you want.

"This is about making sure everyone in our community has access to basic prevention."

When speaking about fluoride specifically, lead with health and prevention, emphasize community-wide benefit, and avoid framing the issue as a conflict or debate. Consistent tone matters: the goal is to reinforce shared values, not to argue a position. A message built around access, prevention, and community care is both more persuasive and more durable than one built around controversy.