

#Out4MentalHealth

Making Public Comment

You have the right to voice your concerns at public meetings. When you speak at public meetings, you are providing what is called a “Public Comment”. Organizations running public meetings are required to offer some time for public comment, but they can limit each public comment to 2 - 3 minutes. Organizations can also choose to receive only a certain number of public comments in order to manage their time. They are not allowed to require you to sign in with your name or address.

This information is intended to help you manage your expectations when you are making public comment.

1. You are entitled not to be interrupted unless you have exceeded the time limit of the public comment, which is typically 2 or 3 minutes.
2. There are typically opportunities for public comment after specific agenda items in the meeting as well as an opportunity for “General Public Comment.” This can often give you a chance
3. There is usually a form that you asked to fill out in order to provide public comment. By law, you are not required to fill out this form. If you are comfortable filling it out, it can help the organization to call you by name to provide public comment. If you are not comfortable filling out the form, then you are entitled to step up to the microphone during the public comment period anyway.
 - a. *Note:* Some organizations may not know that you have this right; you can inform the organization of your right to speak without identifying yourself during your public comment.
4. It typical to simply receive a “thank you for your comment” after you have said your piece. This does not mean that they have ignored you. The flat response is procedural.
5. Some organizations allow for written public comment.
6. Your public comment is required to be written into the publicly accessible Meeting Minutes within a couple of weeks after the meeting. At the following meeting of that organization, the organization is required to “approve the minutes.” *Note:* If your public comment is not included or is not accurately reflected, you can make public comment before approval of the minutes at the following meeting to call for edits to the minutes. It is important that your voice be heard and accurately reflected.

Out4MentalHealth is a collaborative program funded by the California Mental Health Services Act (Prop 63) and the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC).



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Template for Making Public Comment

The template below may help you plan your public comment. You do not have to share your name, but it is an excellent idea to share why you are there and what experiences make you passionate and form your knowledge. Your public comment should always finish with an actionable demand, like “I ask you to pass a motion.” You have a fantastic opportunity - and a right - to be heard by people who are entrusted and empowered by the people to make decisions.

Template:

Hello, my name is _____

I identity as a [consumer / parent / teacher / provider / youth / student / member of the LGBTQ community] _____

with experience in [using mental health services / raising children who attend public school / providing mental health services / working on the local mental health board] _____

I am concerned about _____

I ask that you support / oppose / consider _____

Thank you.

Example:

“Hello, my name is Sam and **I identity** as a member of the LGBTQ community **with particular experience** receiving mental health care services that made assumptions about me based on my sexual orientation and presumed gender identity. **I am concerned** about the Commission’s lack of inclusion of LGBTQ-affirming practices as a requirement of the proposed mental health services program. **I ask that you make a motion** requiring that service providers in this proposed program receive ongoing training on how to provide culturally appropriate mental health services to LGBTQ people. **Thank you”**

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