

## Sample Action Alert

**Mental health coverage  
should never be optional.**

**Together, we must #Act4MentalHealth.**

### **ACT NOW TO PROTECT MENTAL HEALTH CARE**

With revenues coming up short, legislators are proposing to cut millions of dollars from needed community mental health services. Case management and recovery services are at risk. Don't let the legislature balance the budget on the backs of people living with mental illness! *Speak up now.*

#### **Contact your Senator**

Time is short. **Call or email your Senator this week** and let him or her know that you are a constituent and are counting on him or her to protect mental health services in HB 39.

Make it personal: let him or her how your life has been affected by mental illness and the difference services make in promoting recovery.

#### **Talking Points:**

- One in four adults experiences a mental health condition, including our returning troops.
- Mental illness is common and, with the right care, people can experience recovery.
- When people don't get the mental health treatment they need, costs shift as people end up in jail, out of work and in emergency rooms.

# Sample Personalized Email



---

## Subject line

**Protect Mental Health in HB 39**

---

## Greeting

Dear Senator Walker:

---

## Issue and position

I am writing to urge you to protect the mental health budget.

---

## Why it's personal

I am the mother of a son with bipolar disorder and I can tell you that mental health care can make the difference between despair and recovery. I have seen it in my own family.

---

## Story or talking points

My son is a young adult who is enjoying life, working hard and making me proud.

But before he got the treatment he needs, I saw him in the back of police cars and held him in my arms after a suicide attempt. No child—and no family—should have to go through this.

---

## The “ask”

Your help is needed to protect services and help families living with mental illness. Please let me know how you intend to vote on HB 39.

---

## Thank you

Thank you for your attention to mental health care.

---

## Closing

Respectfully,

Jenny Jones  
5555 NW Hill Ave.  
Springville, OR 97999  
(555) 555-5555  
jjones@fernhill.com

# Sample Quick Email



---

## Subject line

**Protect Mental Health in HB 39**

---

## Greeting

Dear Senator Walker:

---

## Issue and position

I am writing to urge you to protect the mental health budget.

---

## Talking points

One in four adults experiences a mental health condition, including our returning troops.

Mental illness is common and, with the right care, people can experience recovery.

But, when people don't get the mental health treatment they need, costs shift as people end up in jail, out of work and in emergency rooms.

---

## The "ask"

Your help is needed to protect mental health services. Please let me know how you intend to vote on HB 39.

---

## Thank you

Thank you for your attention to mental health care.

---

## Closing

Respectfully,

Jenny Jones  
5555 NW Hill Ave.  
Springville, OR 97999  
(555) 555-5555  
jjones@fernhill.com

# Checklist for Advocacy Emails



**Tip:** Be polite and avoid strong language to prevent misinterpreted emails. Don't write anything you wouldn't be embarrassed to have forwarded to others. If you're in doubt, revise or don't send.

✓	<b>Use your subject line</b>
	<b>Identify your issue and position.</b> Use the subject line to identify a bill or issue and specify your support, opposition, or request for action.
✓	<b>Start with a greeting</b>
	<b>Properly address your policy maker.</b> Begin with "Dear [Elected Title] [Last Name]."
✓	<b>State your issue and position</b>
	<b>Indicate why you are writing.</b> Let your policymaker know the position or action you would like him or her to take on your issue.
✓	<b>Optional: Make it personal</b>
	<b>Describe why this legislation matters to you personally.</b> Include how you are affected by mental illness.
✓	<b>Optional: Add your story or talking points</b>
	<b>Option 1: Add a brief highlight of your story.</b> In one to three sentences, describe an important part of your story that is relevant to the issue.
	<b>Option 2: Make one to three brief points.</b> Talk about the impact of the issue or bill and/or why the bill is needed.
✓	<b>Make your "ask"</b>
	<b>Ask your policymaker if you can count on their support (or opposition).</b> Be specific about the action or position desired. Include a bill number, if possible. Option: Politely ask your policymaker to tell you how he/she intends to vote.
✓	<b>Say thank you</b>
	<b>Thank your policymaker for their time or for their attention to your issue.</b>
✓	<b>Add a closing</b>
	<b>Choose a respectful closing.</b> Follow with your name, address, phone number, and email address. This allows your policymaker to respond to your request.

# Personalized Email Practice Sheet



## My subject line

Identify your bill or issue and support, opposition, or request for action.

## My greeting

Address your policymaker formally. Begin with "Dear [elected title] [last name]:"

## My issue and position

Indicate why you are writing and the position or action you would like your policymaker to take.

## Why it's personal

Describe why this legislation matters to you personally and how you are affected by mental illness.

## My story or talking points

In one to three sentences, add a brief highlight of your story that is relevant. Or, make one to three brief points.

**My “ask”**

Describe (again) the action or position you want your elected official to take. Politely ask them to tell you how they intend to vote.

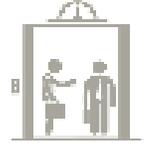
**My thank you**

Thank your elected official for their time or for their attention to your issue.

**My closing**

Choose a respectful closing. Follow with your name, address, phone number, and email address.

# Sample Elevator Speech



---

## Introduction

Hello Senator, I'm Jenny Jones from Springville. I'm a member of NAMI Spring Valley, part of America's largest grassroots mental health organization, the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

---

## Issue and position

I'm here today because I'd like to urge you to protect mental health services in HB 39.

---

## Why it's personal

As the mother of a son with bipolar disorder, mental health care is important to me and my family. With treatment, my son made an amazing recovery.

---

## The need or problem

But with cuts to mental health centers, most people can't get the help they need.

---

## What will help others

Families like mine need your vote to protect mental health services.

---

## The "ask"

Can we count on your support for mental health care in HB 39, Senator?

# Checklist for Elevator Speech



**Note:** After introductions, you may alter the order of items to make your message flow logically and smoothly.

✓	<b>Introduce yourself</b>
	<b>Address your policymaker by their elected title.</b> Add their last name, if you like. Then, introduce yourself, where you're from and your organization.
✓	<b>State your issue and position</b>
	<b>Let your policymaker know what you want them to support or oppose (or do).</b> If needed, describe the issue in a very brief sentence or two.
✓	<b>Make it personal</b>
	<b>Describe why this issue matters to you personally.</b> Include how you are affected by mental illness.
✓	<b>Optional: Add a story highlight and/or talking point</b>
	<b>Provide a brief highlight of your story and/or a talking point.</b> In one to three sentences, describe an important part of your story that is relevant and/or make a point about your issue or the impact of your bill.
✓	<b>What is the need or problem?</b>
	<b>Mention the problem or need you want addressed.</b> Transition to the challenge(s) faced by people living with mental illness.
✓	<b>What will help others?</b>
	<b>Propose a solution.</b> Let your policymaker know how a bill or their action will help address the need or problem you described.
✓	<b>Make your "ask"</b>
	<b>Ask your policymaker if you can count on their support (or opposition).</b> Be specific about the action or position you want them to take. Include a bill number, if possible.

# Elevator Speech Practice Sheet



## My introduction

Address your policymaker by their elected title. Introduce yourself, where you're from and your organization. Note: We encourage you to describe yourself as "a member of [NAMI State Org or NAMI Affiliate], part of America's largest grassroots mental health organization, the National Alliance on Mental Illness."

## My issue and position

Let your listener know what position or action you want him/her to take on your issue. If needed, describe the issue in a brief sentence or two.

## Why it's personal

Describe why this issue matters to you and how you are affected by mental illness.

## Optional: My story or talking point

Add a highlight of your story and/or make a point about your issue or impact of your bill.

## What is the need or problem

In a sentence or two, briefly describe the challenge you want addressed.

## What will help others

Let your listener know how a bill or their action will address the need or problem.

## My "ask"

Ask your listener if you can count on their support (or vote or other action) on your issue or bill.

# Demo: Phone Call with a Policymaker



## Introduction

**Jenny (Constituent):** “Hello, this is Jenny Jones and I’m a constituent from Springville. May I please speak to Senator Walker?”

**Ryan (Receptionist):** “Yes, the Representative’s schedule is free for just a few minutes. I’ll put you through.”

**Jenny:** “Thank you.”

**Senator Walker:** “Hello Ms. Jones, this is Senator Walker. How are you doing today?”

## Issue and position

**Jenny:** “Hello, Senator. I’m calling about HB 39, the mental health budget. I really want to urge you to protect mental health care.”

## Why it’s personal

**Jenny:** “As the mother of a son with bipolar disorder, mental health issues are important to me.”

**Senator Walker:** “Well, you know I was a co-sponsor of parity and I have always supported mental health issues. But we are facing some serious shortfalls this year and I’m afraid it’s going to be a very tough year for budgets. There’s just not enough to go around.”

## Story or talking points

**Jenny:** “I appreciate your support, Senator. I realize it’s a difficult economy, but mental health care can make the difference between tragedy and recovery. I know, because I have seen my son in the back of police cars and I’ve held him after a suicide attempt. But with treatment, he made an amazing recovery.”

## The need or problem

**Jenny:** “Unfortunately, there are lots of people who need help who aren’t getting it.”

## What will help others

**Jenny:** “We need more mental health services, not fewer.”

**Senator Walker:** “I’m really glad you called, Ms. Jones, and I’m happy to hear your son is doing well. We’re going to be looking at the budgets very closely and I’ll keep your concerns in mind—I know how important mental health is and I appreciate hearing your perspective.”

## The “ask”

**Jenny:** “Thank you so much for your taking my call, Senator. I hope I can count on your vote to protect mental health services in HB 39.”

# Demo: Leaving a Phone Message



---

## Introduction

**Jenny (Constituent):** “Hello, my name is Jenny Jones and I’m a constituent from Springville. May I please speak to Senator Walker?”

**Ryan (Receptionist):** “The Senator is in a hearing right now. May I take a message?”

---

## Issue and position

**Jenny:** “Yes, thank you. I’m calling to urge Senator Walker to protect mental health care in HB 39. I’m the mother of a son with bipolar disorder, so I know that mental health services help people experience recovery.

I appreciate the Senator’s attention to mental health issues and look forward to her support. Would you please ask the Senator to return my call at her earliest convenience?”

**Ryan:** “I’ll be happy to leave the Senator your message. Her schedule is very full, so it may take a few days for her to return your call. What number can she reach you at?”

**Jenny:** “I can be reached at (555) 555-5555. Thank you so much for your help.”

# Checklist for Advocacy Phone Calls



A 30-second phone call is an easy way to quickly make a difference with policy makers.

✓	<b>Introduce yourself</b>
	<b>Say hello.</b> Identify yourself by your name and mention that you are a constituent and the city or town you live in.
	<b>Ask to speak to your policymaker.</b> If unavailable, ask if staff will relay your message <i>and</i> ask for a call back. If you get voicemail, leave your message there.
✓	<b>State your issue and position</b>
	<b>Indicate why you're calling.</b> Let your policymaker know your issue and the position or action you want him or her to take. Include a bill number, if possible.
✓	<b>Make it personal</b>
	<b>Describe why this issue matters to you personally.</b> Include how you are affected by mental illness.
✓	<b>Optional: Add your story or talking points</b>
	<b>Option 1: Add a highlight of your story.</b> In one to three sentences, describe an important part of your story that is relevant to the issue.
	<b>Option 2: Make a point or two.</b> Talk briefly about the impact of the issue or bill.
✓	<b>What is the need or problem?</b>
	<b>Mention the problem or need you want addressed.</b> Transition to the challenge(s) faced by people living with mental illness.
✓	<b>What will help others?</b>
	<b>Propose a solution.</b> Let your policymaker know what will help address the need or problem you described.
✓	<b>Make your "ask"</b>
	<b>Express your hope for their support.</b> Let your policymaker know, again, the action or position you would like them to take.
	<b>Thank your elected official.</b> Let your policymaker know you appreciate their time. Option: Ask for a call back if you were not able to speak to your policymaker directly.

# Advocacy Phone Call Script Sheet



<b>My introduction</b> Fill in information indicated by brackets.
<b>Participant 1 (Constituent):</b> “Hello, this is [your name] and I’m a constituent from [town or city you live in]. May I please speak to the Senator?”
<b>Participant 2 (Receptionist):</b> “Yes, the Senator’s schedule is free for just a few minutes. I’ll put you through.”
<b>Participant 1 (Constituent):</b> “Thank you.”
<b>Participant 2 (Senator Walker):</b> “Hello [name of caller]. This is Senator Walker. How are you doing today?”
<b>My issue and position</b>
<b>Participant 1 (Constituent):</b> “Hello, Senator. I’m doing fine, thank you. I’m calling to urge you to protect mental health services in HB 39.”
<b>Why it’s personal</b> Fill in information indicated by brackets.
<b>Participant 1 (Constituent):</b> [Briefly describe how you’re affected by mental illness and the importance of this issue to you.]
<b>Participant 2 (Senator Walker):</b> “Well, you know I have always supported mental health issues. But we are facing some serious shortfalls this year and I’m afraid it’s going to be a very tough year for budgets.”

## My story or talking points

Fill in information indicated by brackets.

### Participant 1 (Constituent):

“I appreciate your support, Senator. I realize it’s a difficult economy, but mental health care can make the difference between tragedy and recovery.” [Alter this line, if needed. Add a highlight from your story or a brief point or two.]

## The need or problem

Optional: Fill in information indicated by brackets.

### Participant 1 (Constituent):

“Unfortunately, there are lots of people who need help who aren’t getting it.” [Alter this line, if needed, to describe the problem or the need.]

## What will help others

Optional: Fill in information indicated by brackets.

### Participant 1 (Constituent):

“We need more mental health services, not fewer.” [Alter this line, if needed, to fit your story.]

### Participant 2 (Senator Walker):

“I’m really glad you called, [name of caller].

We’re going to be looking at the budgets very closely and I’ll keep your concerns in mind—I know how important mental health is and I appreciate hearing your perspective.”

## My “ask”

### Participant 1 (Constituent):

“Thank you so much for taking my call, Senator. I hope I can count on your vote for mental health services in HB 39.”