



Studies show that when you share a story, people are more likely to be persuaded to see your point of view—or to take action—than when they receive information alone. Additionally, real-world examples are proven to make information and statistics more easily understood, and thereby, more compelling.

This case study template and example will help you focus your storytelling, ensuring your stories are impactful as you share them with policymakers, business leaders, and your community. We've also recommended ways to share your stories to make sure they are seen by the right audiences to help inspire action.

## Five Best Practices for Case Studies

To ensure your case studies make a meaningful impact, we recommend the following top five best practices:

1. **Aim for diversity at all levels** (of race and ethnicity, gender, family type, experiences) because readers are more likely to empathize and act when they identify with someone.
2. **Include images** because 90% of the information processed by the brain is visual.
3. **Incorporate direct quotes** from your main storytellers (e.g., families, providers, and partners) to ensure their voice is clear and represents the foundation of the story.
4. **Consider the impact** a story will have on the storyteller's life and ensure you're using stories (especially families' stories) as a tool for empowerment. Show your impact, but position your organization as a partner, not a savior.
5. **Keep your case study to a seven-minute read or less** (up to about 1,600 words) for maximum reader attention.

# How to Write a Case Study

1. **Determine your “main character,”** or the person, family, or organization whose story will be the focus of your case study. Interview them for direct quotes and experiences to include.
2. **Interview “secondary characters”** as needed. This could be a leader at your organization, a provider, another family—whoever makes the story complete.
3. **Request and receive photos.** (Whenever possible, ensure there are infants and toddlers in the photos!)
4. **Draft the case study** and share with everyone included for their feedback.
5. **Incorporate feedback**, then share a final draft with everyone included.
6. **Share the case study.** Post it online and direct constituents and stakeholders to the case studies through your marketing channels. Ideas to promote case studies:
  - **Running the stories in any newsletters you send.** Nonprofit newsletters are seeing [higher open rates](#), and nearly [90%](#) of Americans over 15 use email.
  - **Create three to four social media posts** and share them on your channels, with a link to the case study. Policymakers use Twitter the most. Parents use Facebook—[75% logging on daily](#).
  - **Pitch the case study to local media** as part of a “trend” piece on Early Head Start’s impact.
  - **Incorporate case studies into any presentations you give.**
  - **Ask providers and partners to run the case study on their own websites** (with credits and links to you) or in their newsletters. Creating social media posts to share with your partners so they can post about your case studies on their social media channels.

## Sample Questions to Ask

### FOR FAMILIES

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- How did you find out about Early Head Start?
- How has Early Head Start helped you as a parent?
- How has Early Head Start helped your child/children?
- Has there been anything surprising you’ve learned from the program?
- What do you wish other families and parents knew about Early Head Start?
- What do you wish policymakers knew about Early Head Start?

### FOR PROVIDERS/PARTNERS

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- Why is Early Head Start important to the families you serve?
- Tell us about the impact that Early Head Start has had on your community.
- What is the need like in your community for Early Head Start? Please be as specific as possible.
- How would you be able to expand or grow your work with increased funding?
- What do you wish policymakers knew about Early Head Start?

## Case Study Example:

# Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP

September 14, 2021

## Seattle Mother Becomes an Advocate for Other Parents After Early Head Start 'Holistically Lifted Our Family Up'

Seattle mother of two Galena White, who is autistic, signed up for Early Head Start when she was pregnant with her first daughter. She worried someone would try to take her children away and wanted someone to witness and support her parenting.

"I didn't always know that I was autistic, but I have always had great anxiety and difficulty forming and keeping relationships," Galena says. "I used to worry that I would be a terrible mother, or that someone would take my children away because of my mental illness. I wanted someone to witness my parenting and keep me on a good track. I wanted to have evidence that I was a good parent to keep anybody who doubted me from taking my children away."

Galena says Early Head Start has changed both her children's lives and her own. Her daughter's speech delay has disappeared, and Galena has had an opportunity to care for herself and family in an entirely different way.

"I have been able to leave the children at school and complete medical treatments I needed. I've been encouraged to broaden the activities our little family does together. My husband and I are spending more time together," Galena says. "I'm also starting a business that may someday pull our little family out of poverty! All of that was helped along by Early Head Start."

And with the support and confidence that Galena has gained, she has been able to pay it forward. Not only has she been volunteering throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to help those who are losing their homes, Galena is learning how to become an advocate for other parents by participating in the Parent Ambassador program of the Washington State Association of Head Start and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP).

As a parent ambassador, Galena wants to help other families get the Early Head Start education they need, the same support that made a difference for her and her family.

Galena—and other parent ambassadors—are critical advocates to ensure that all families have access to these resources and support, says April Messenger, program administrator for the Parent Ambassador program. April says her favorite thing to do is to help parents have a voice in the policymaking process at local, state, and national levels.

"When it comes to the policy level, we have a saying: 'nothing about us, without us.' Parents need to be in the rooms where policies are being made," April says.



The Parent Ambassador program, now in its 14th year, is a year-long training program where parents with children under nine can learn the basics of government, civics, and advocacy. Participants in the program receive college credit when they complete the year.

The program started in Washington but has now expanded to eight states. And April—who herself is a program alum—is the program’s first dedicated staff member.

Participants in the program—particularly parents in Early Head Start—focus on policies that increase child care availability and affordability. Last year, parent ambassadors in Washington successfully campaigned to increase the number of ECEAP slots funded by Washington State for children aged three and four.

April says the Parent Ambassador program is particularly important for Early Head Start parents, who may be finding their voice as parents and advocates.

For Galena, Early Head Start has not only provided child care but also improved her parenting and “holistically lifted our family up.”

“I think that every family deserves access to the same resources that helped me through these very formative years,” she says.