

## STRATEGIC SHARING 101

- Introduce yourself. Remember that you are more than just a young person who was/is involved with the juvenile justice system, foster care system, or any other system. You might want to mention your school or career goals if you think it is relevant.
- Give some general information on the issues facing young people involved in the juvenile justice system and the roundtable topic you are being asked to discuss. You should also consider the level of experience or knowledge that your audience has with the subject matter. Remember that practices can vary widely from one location to another and not everyone might have the same understanding of a particular issue.
- Incorporate your life experiences into the issues that you've mentioned. Keep in mind the parts of your story that you have decided you will share, and those that you have decided in advance are outside the circle of what you feel comfortable sharing.
- Remember to be aware of your own as well as the audience's comfort level. If you don't feel comfortable with disclosing a piece of your personal history, then DON'T. You should also think about the impact of your disclosure on the audience members. Look at the faces of your audience. Are they crying? Are they avoiding eye contact with you? Are they shifting in their seats? Some discomfort is okay, but you don't want the audience to experience such a "low" during your presentation that they are not able to hear what you're saying.
- After you talk about your own life experiences, make the connection with the general information that you presented at the beginning of your remarks. You need to be able to bring them back to the purpose of your statement. Be sure to keep the conversation relevant to the roundtable topic the group is being asked to discuss.
- Questions: After you have spoken, people may ask you questions either during the roundtable or one-on-one when they see you after the session. You may encounter questions that seem inappropriate or make you uncomfortable. If you don't feel comfortable with responding to a question, here are some key phrases that will help you move on to the next question or comment:
  - a. **"Thanks for your question, but let's think about why we've come together today."** (Then you can reframe your purpose and move onto another question)
  - b. **"Great question-let's see what others have to say on this issue."** (This works if you don't have an answer or don't want to put your opinion out there for scrutiny.)
  - c. **"I'm not really comfortable with the question."**
  - d. Respond with general comments about the issue and redirect the attention away from your own personal experiences. For example, if someone asks about your parents' drug use, you might respond: **"Many young people that are involved in the juvenile justice system come from families struggling with drug and alcohol abuse. We need to support those families in accessing treatment."**

