

# Creating Verbal Public Comments for an Elected Body

For most local elected bodies in California, regular meetings must include time for public comment on agenda items and non-agenda items that are within the body's subject matter jurisdiction. This provides tobacco prevention staff and coalition members an opportunity to contribute to the public discourse, bringing education and information related to their CTPP workplan. Most opportunities for public comment are limited to two or three minutes. Below is a step-by-step guide and a 3-minute example to help you successfully create your verbal public comments.

**STEP 1**

Introduce yourself and your project. Thank the elected body (board of supervisors, city council, etc.) for the opportunity to speak.

**STEP 2**

State what your project is currently focused on (Tobacco Retail, Tobacco Product Waste, Secondhand Smoke Multi-Unit Housing, Secondhand Smoke Outdoor Air).

**STEP 3**

Provide a couple commercial tobacco/nicotine related facts relevant to your area of focus. (E.g. local use rates vs. statewide rates; results of local surveys; etc.)

**STEP 4**

Offer a quick story about you personally or someone you know.

**STEP 5**

Offer best practice solutions, noting if neighboring jurisdictions have adopted these. (e.g. tobacco retail licenses, prohibiting secondhand smoke in multi-unit housing, etc.)

**STEP 6**

State how your project/coalition can help the elected body and staff. (e.g. give a full presentation, offer educational materials to be emailed, etc.)

**STEP 7**

Thank them for this opportunity to bring this important issue before their body.



# Verbal Public Comment Example (3 Minutes)

## STEP 1

Good morning. Thank you, Madame Mayor, City Councilmembers, and staff. My name is Josie Brooks and I'm the Community Engagement Coordinator for the Healthy Communities for All project. We appreciate this opportunity to speak to you today.

## STEP 2

Our project is currently focusing on the health of our residents who live in multi-unit housing, specifically those who are impacted by secondhand smoke.

## STEP 3

We know there are no safe levels of secondhand smoke. For people who do not smoke, secondhand smoke exposure can lead to coronary heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, and reproductive health effects, among other harmful conditions. In children and infants, it can also cause low birth weight, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), respiratory and ear infections, and asthma attacks. Secondhand smoke is particularly problematic in multi-unit housing because it easily transfers from one unit to another through shared ventilation systems, gaps in doors and windows, and even through small cracks in building walls. In a recent survey we learned that over 85% of our residents that live in multi-unit housing prefer to live where smoking is not allowed in homes and shared spaces, such as walkways and play areas.

## STEP 4

I know one mother that had to move out of her apartment complex because she and her children we're exhibiting signs of asthma. It's been quite a burden on their family.

## STEP 5

Many communities in California are choosing to restrict smoking and vaping in all multi-unit housing complexes, including our neighbors to the north, North Town, and to the east, East Town.

## STEP 6

If interested in learning more about the problems with secondhand smoke in multi-unit housing, our project can provide an educational presentation to you, and/or if you'd like more information on the policies our neighbors are adopting, our project is available to provide you with this information.

## STEP 7

Thank you, again, for this opportunity to bring this important information to you, as I know we are a community committed to the health and wellness of all of our residents.