

## **Advocacy: Mock Public Hearing**

**Overview and Goals:** In groups of 2 to 4, students will adopt the role of stakeholders (“interest group”) on an issue with significance for environmental health. The student stakeholders will testify before a “legislator” or “legislative committee” composed of faculty. Following the “public hearing,” each student will write a paper synthesizing his/her analysis of the issue based on the testimony from the hearing. Through this process, students are expected to learn to present a concise and well-researched position on an issue. Students will also gain experience in evaluating an issue from the perspective of multiple interest groups.

### **Process:**

#### 1. *Identify Issue and Stakeholders*

Faculty may choose the topic for the hearing, or the entire class may make the choice. The topic should be one of current local interest, with environmental health ramifications, in which many different groups of people have a particular type of concern. For example, proposed legislation to limit commercial and recreational fishing in a body of water because of pollution affects many stakeholders: fishers, retail establishments that sell fish, local businesses (including hotels and restaurants) that depend on business from recreational fishers. Other groups with an interest might be a local citizens group with general concerns about water quality, and local companies that contribute to the pollution.

Once the topic has been chosen, stakeholders need to be identified and each student group needs to adopt the role of one stakeholder group.

#### 2. *Plan Testimony*

Each student stakeholder group will plan a five-minute testimony to be presented to the faculty “legislator” or “legislative committee” at the “public hearing.” In developing the testimony, the group should consider (but is not limited to) the following:

- delineating the issue
- taking a “stand” on the issue
- stating a rationale for the “stand”
- forming an action to reduce or prevent the issue
- delineating how this action will impact the issue
- deciding how the action will fit into existing initiatives
- budgetary implications

Interviewing stakeholders in the community who are involved in the real situation, or a similar one, would be very helpful in preparing the presentation. Specific information should be obtained from local newspapers and local agencies. Specific topics can be researched at the library and on the internet.

3. *Present Testimony*

After the oral presentation, submit written testimony to the faculty “legislator.”

4. *Write “Mock Hearing Synthesis Paper”*

Write a paper that addresses the following:

- What was the most revealing thing you learned during the testimony?
- Briefly describe how hearing the testimonies impacted you as a learner.
- If you were the legislator (or a member of the legislative committee) that heard this testimony, what would your position be? Explain your stance.

*The Mock Public Hearing student project was developed by faculty of the Department of Behavioral and Community Health at the University of Maryland School of Nursing. Coordinator: Carol O’Neil, PhD,RN. For more information on environmental health issues, see [www.envirn.umaryland.edu](http://www.envirn.umaryland.edu).*

## Resources for Mock Public Hearing

### *Advocacy:*

- National Academy of Science: [www.nap.edu](http://www.nap.edu) → Nursing, Health and Environment
- Mississippi Delta Project: [www.sis.nlm.nih.gov/Tox/ToxMiss](http://www.sis.nlm.nih.gov/Tox/ToxMiss) (Module Five)
- American Public Health Association: [www.apha.org](http://www.apha.org) → government relations and policy → advocacy
- Childrens Environmental Health Network: [www.cehn.org](http://www.cehn.org) → Training Manual on Pediatric Environmental Health → advocacy chapter
- Center for Health, Environment and Justice: [www.chej.org](http://www.chej.org) → publications → toolbox

### *Risk Communication:*

- Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry: [www.atsdr.cdc.gov](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov) (see “Environmental Health Education”)

### *State and Local Public Health and Environmental Agencies:*

- State websites (often have links to county websites): [www.state.xx.us](http://www.state.xx.us) (xx = state abbreviation)
- Links to State environmental agencies: [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov) → “Where You Live”

### *Overview of environmental health issues:*

- National Library of Medicine: [www.sis.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.sis.nlm.nih.gov) → Toxicology and Environmental Health → MEDLINEplus: Poisoning, Toxicology and Environmental Health
- Healthy People 2010 resource: [www.nlm.gov/partners](http://www.nlm.gov/partners) → HP2010 Information Access Project → environmental health
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)

### *Specific chemicals:*

- Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR): [www.atsdr.cdc.gov](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov) (see “ToxFAQ’s” and “Toxicological Profiles”)
- National Library of Medicine – TOXNET: [www.toxnet.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.toxnet.nlm.nih.gov)
- National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS): [www.niehs.nih.gov](http://www.niehs.nih.gov) → National Toxicology Program → Chemical Health and Safety Information)

### *Laws and Regulations:*

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov) → Laws and Regulations
- State websites: [www.state.xx.us](http://www.state.xx.us) (xx = state abbreviation)

### *Community Right to Know:*

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov) → Laws and Regulations → Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act

### *Environmental Justice:*

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): [www.epa.gov/oeca/main/ej](http://www.epa.gov/oeca/main/ej)
- Mississippi Delta Project: [www.sis.nlm.nih.gov/Tox/ToxMiss](http://www.sis.nlm.nih.gov/Tox/ToxMiss) (Module Five)

