

MHA Cleveland County Storyteller Guidelines

Thank you for your interest in participating in our upcoming event! Our goal with this event is to help address the stigma associated with sharing stories about our mental health. We all have mental health and sharing our experiences gives hope and resources to those who may be currently struggling.

After signing up, you will receive an email from the event coordinator including a checklist guide, a list of helpful resources in Cleveland County, and a copy of these guidelines.

Your point of contact for this event is Lizz Grimsley. You can reach her by call or text at 704-286-6018 or email at egrimsley@clevelandcountymha.org.

Storyteller Night will be held at Got Books on May 24 at 5:30 PM.

Inclusivity Statement.

- At the Mental Health Association of Cleveland County (MHACC), we serve everyone regardless of age, race, ability, gender & sexuality, religion, or any other lived experiences. We work to build an inclusive and supportive space for people in our community.

Section 1: General Guidelines & Responsibilities

All Storytellers are asked to follow these guidelines:

- Only one presentation per signup. Please indicate if you are sharing your original story/poem or a story/poem written by a different author when you sign up.
- While we expect the contents of people's stories to be honest, resilient, and difficult for some to hear, we ask that Storytellers use thoughtful and intentional language in their stories and poetry. The night will lead with an acknowledgement to the audience that some of the performances may be difficult to hear and that they are welcome to take a step outside during the performance as needed. Presenters are welcome to share stories and poems on behalf of someone else. Please see Section 4 for more information.
- All ages are allowed to participate. Please keep in mind that this is a multi-generational show and Storytellers are invited to share their lived experiences. This event may be unsuitable for younger audiences, so parent/guardian discretion is advised.
- Workshops will be scheduled leading up to the event. It is not mandatory to attend all workshops, however we strongly encourage people sharing their original poems and stories to attend at least one in preparation for the event. Times and dates for these workshops will be emailed to registered participants at a later date.
- On the night of the event, Storytellers should be prepared to share a short introduction including your name, the title of your work (if it has one), and any information you think

would be relevant to share. Presenters who are sharing on behalf of an author or sharing a previously published work must state the name of the author in their introduction.

- If you find that you are not able to participate, please inform us **as soon as possible**.

All storytellers are asked to follow these responsibilities:

- Help people understand the prevalence of mental illness and reduce the stigma associated with it.
- Willingness to share a personal story or your reason for being passionate about mental health.
- Maintain a positive and respectful attitude toward your audience
- Take a look at and try to utilize thoughtful language like it is described in [this guide](#).
 - **Please note:** if it is imperative that you share words described in the “don’t” section to highlight the way you have personally experienced mental health stigma, that is okay. We are asking that speakers refrain from using words in the don’t section to describe the experience of others.
- Take a look at the Storyteller checklist, which will be shared with you after you submit your intent to participate.

Section 2: Important Dates and Deadlines

Relevant text

- Intent to Participate deadline is March 18, 2024
- Workshop dates will be shared via email.
- During the first week of May, the event coordinator will send an email to all registered storytellers that includes information about the event and scheduled order of speakers.
- Storyteller night is **May 24, 2024 at 5:30 - 7:30 PM**. Please arrive by 5:00 PM to receive the speaker schedule and prepare for the event.

Section 3: Guidelines for Original Stories & Poems

These guidelines are for individuals preparing original stories and poems. These are works that are based on the Storyteller’s own life experiences and words. If you are presenting on behalf of a friend or family member, please see the next section for your guidelines.

- Must be ten minutes or under (this may be adjusted depending on how many speakers sign up).
- Please be thoughtful and intentional with the language you use in your story. While there are no strict guidelines, we are seeking to raise awareness about the experience of mental health in our community. Avoid using stigmatizing language to describe others.

Section 4: Guidelines for Stories & Poems Written by Other Authors

- Must be under 5 minutes
- Presenters must introduce the piece using the author’s name and original title the piece is published under.
- If you are presenting on behalf of someone you know, you must have their expressed consent to share their story. You must also acknowledge that the story is someone else’s experience in your introduction. It is okay to change the name of the individual and

anyone in their story, **with their permission to do so**. If we learn that you did not obtain consent or are plagiarizing a previously published work, you will be disqualified from participating.