

# Town Hall Meeting for a Healthier Community

*What are the roles of community advocates in effecting changes to our healthcare systems to reduce the rate of sepsis, sepsis-related deaths and other health problems?*



## Abstract

After the class has learned about the importance of civic responsibility and the ways in which citizens contribute to the common good, students will be ready to make a position on an issue that involves conflicting social values and interests. Students will use logic to state and defend a position on the issue of sepsis.

## Grade Level

9-12

## Subject Area

Health, Environmental Science, Civics, Social Studies, Government

## Times

Two 40-minute classes

*Suggestion: Offer this lesson after "Health Literacy and Laws."*

## Setting

Classroom (computer access preferred)

## Skills

Evaluate, choose and defend a position; strategize, influence; analyze issues; understand and respect values of others; make inferences; identify appropriate evidence; understand causation and the effects of decision-making; identify the significance of an event; persuade.

## Standards Addressed

### National Health Education Standards

- **1.12.1** – Predict how healthy behaviors can affect health status.
- **1.12.2** – Describe the interrelationships of emotional, intellectual, physical, and social health.
- **1.12.3** – Analyze how environment and personal health are interrelated.
- **1.12.7** – Compare and contrast the benefits of and barriers to practicing a variety of healthy behaviors.

### National Consortium for Health Science Education

- **9.12** – Describe strategies for prevention of disease.

### New York State Health Education Standards

- **ORH.C.4** – Individuals understand and are able to apply universal precautions, first aid, CPR and other emergency procedures properly.
- **CM.C.1** – Employs active listening and response skills in health-enhancing ways.
- **CM.C.2** – Applies effective verbal (assertiveness) and non-verbal communication skills in real-life health situations.
- **CM.C.3** – Demonstrates healthy ways to express needs, wants and feelings.
- **CM.C.4** – Analyzes how interpersonal communication affects and is affected by relationships.
- **CM.C.5** – Demonstrates strategies for overcoming health-related communication barriers.
- **CM.C.6** – Demonstrates ways to communicate care, consideration, and respect of self and others.
- **CM.C.7** – Demonstrates effective refusal skills in real-life health-related situations.



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- **DM.C.1** – Identifies personal health decisions and analyzes related internal and external influences.
- **DM.C.2** – Recognizes personal capabilities and limitations as they relate to possible healthy solutions.
- **DM.C.3** – Gathers, synthesizes, and evaluates available information to enhance health.
- **DM.C.4** – Personalizes health risk of decisions to self and others.
- **DM.C.5** – Applies a decision making model to real-life health-related situations.
- **DM.C.6** – Analyzes perceptions of peer, family and community normative health-related behavior.
- **DM.C.7** – Describes how personal health decisions may affect subsequent decisions.

## Objectives

Students will use their knowledge of health to make presentations at a town hall meeting in Anytown, USA, and they will share viewpoints established through research to expand their understanding. They will gather information and ideas to explain a position (an argument) based on what they have learned from evidence they have examined, classwork and discussions. With teacher guidance, students will evaluate the appropriateness of evidence.

## Technology Connection

After a classroom discussion, students will vote to select which agenda item(s) their town hall will address. Instructors may use socrative.com on laptops, pollev.com on cell phones or paper ballots if computers are unavailable.

*Note: Teacher should appoint a town moderator to preside over the proceedings*

## Materials

Computers and online access (or paper ballots).

## Directions

1. Read the “Introduction” section together. The class will vote on which issue to discuss at the town hall meeting (or if they want to discuss both issues).
2. Give each student an identity card and sufficient time to develop an argument that reflects their character's identity.
3. The students will act out their roles in the Anytown, USA, town hall on one or both of the issues raised. Students will formulate questions to ask other characters who will be present at the town hall meeting.
4. Using their identity cards, students will answer the questions in the “Criteria” sections.
5. After the town hall activity, the teacher should lead a whole-class debrief.

## Introduction

There are two items on the agenda at the town hall meeting:

1. Discussion of the recent community tragedy—the death of a 10-year-old boy from sepsis.
2. Our community's health and the cleanliness of our gymnasiums and facilities.

*Agenda Item 1: Discussion of the adoption of sepsis regulations in Anytown Hospital's emergency room and in hospitals across the state.*

A very healthy 10-year-old boy fell and cut his arm at school while playing basketball. The next day, he had a high fever, was shivering, had pain in his leg, and was feeling sleepy and very unwell, so his parents brought him to their local hospital. Hours later, with no clear diagnosis, the boy, who was still feeling unwell, was sent home from the hospital. About 72 hours later, he died from sepsis.

The Town Council is holding a meeting for concerned citizens to share their views concerning the recent death of this young child. One concerned citizen, a close friend of the boy's family, has asked the Town Council whether if sepsis protocols exist in local hospitals. She has learned that in New York state, there are regulations in place, called Rory's Regulations, that require all hospitals to adopt evidence-based protocols for the early diagnosis and treatment of sepsis.

Her research into these regulations has provided her with life-saving information. She knows that any type of infection can cause sepsis and that anyone, regardless of age, race or creed, can get sepsis. She has also learned that sepsis is a medical emergency. In her research, she has discovered that if sepsis is identified early, and the patient receives antibiotics and fluids, the person has a higher chance of survival. However, if the patient does not receive these lifesaving measures, sepsis can progress very quickly to septic shock, which can lead to death within a couple of days or even hours.

The governor of New York has estimated that Rory's Regulations could save up to 7,000 lives a year in the state. These regulations could be used as a model for other places.

If we had these regulations in Anytown, USA, it would not only save lives but save the town money, because if patients with sepsis do not receive early intervention with antibiotics and fluids, they may wind up being admitted to the intensive care unit, the most expensive unit in the hospital. Sepsis is the number one cost of hospitalizations in the United States: \$26 billion annually. Introducing sepsis protocols would reduce costs by having people diagnosed and treated earlier.

The concerned citizen wants the town to adopt the same regulations as New York. She wants Anytown Hospital to follow evidence-based sepsis protocols, and she wants every medical professional to be aware of sepsis.

To pass such regulations in Anytown, we need full support and leadership from the Town Council. But how can advocates convince our Town Council to adopt the same regulations?

The managers from Anytown Hospital will be in attendance at this town hall meeting, along with parents, teachers and other community members. All citizens who intend to speak must include the following in their Town Council address:

*Criteria:*

- Why should Anytown, USA adopt these protocols? What benefits and challenges should the town consider?
- What practical steps need to be taken to get a proposal to the local government to get Rory's Regulations adopted?
- Who must be engaged in a plan to influence the local government and get this adopted?
- Prepare a case and be ready to rebut the opposition.

**Agenda Item 2:** *Dr. Jerome Groopman wrote in The New Yorker in 2008: "The most aggressive superbug bacteria often lurk in gyms and on artificial turf."*

Streptococcal bacteria and Klebsiella are just two of the many bacteria shared on contact with many surfaces, including gym floors, cardio machines, gym mats, weights, lockers and water fountains.

Should gymnasium facilities in Anytown, USA—including private, school and hotel gyms—be required to not only clean but disinfect its floors, equipment and other surfaces on a regular and/or weekly basis? Whose responsibility is that? How else can we prevent the spread of deadly bacteria?

Local gym managers and school caretakers will be in attendance at this town hall meeting, together with parents, doctors, teachers and other community members. All citizens who intend to speak must include the following in their Town Council address:

*Criteria:*

- Who is responsible for personal health?
- What is the cost of disinfecting gyms regularly?
- What are the disadvantages linked to disinfecting gyms regularly?
- How do you enforce these rules and ensure companies and institutions really do disinfect regularly?
- Prepare a case and be ready to rebut the opposition.

*Conduct a vote to determine which item(s) will be on the Anytown, USA town hall agenda.*

**Identity Cards**

Cut the identities apart and allow each student to pick one without looking.

<b>DOCTOR</b>	<b>JUDGE</b>
<b>UNEMPLOYED PARENT</b>	<b>HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER</b>
<b>COLLEGE STUDENT</b>	<b>CHEF</b>
<b>SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER'S AIDE</b>	<b>Anytown ACCOUNTANT</b>
<b>LAWYER (and member of the Town Council)</b>	<b>AMBULANCE DRIVER</b>
<b>NURSE</b>	<b>COLLEGE PROFESSOR</b>
<b>SECRETARY/ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT</b>	<b>FACTORY WORKER</b>
<b>POLICE OFFICER</b>	<b>SCHOOL PRINCIPAL</b>
<b>ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER-in-TRAINING</b>	<b>ACTRESS</b>
<b>FIREFIGHTER</b>	<b>SANITATION WORKER</b>
<b>FACTORY WORKER</b>	<b>AUTO REPAIR SHOP OWNER</b>
<b>STORE OWNER</b>	<b>MIDDLE SCHOOL BASKETBALL COACH</b>
<b>DAIRY FARMER</b>	<b>SCHOOL CAFETERIA WORKER</b>
<b>RETIRED PERSON</b>	<b>NEWS REPORTER</b>

## Prepare an Argument

Record your answers on a separate piece of paper or in your notebook to prepare your argument.

1. Consider the background of this issue. [You may need to conduct additional research.]
  - a. What is the current system for handling this issue?
  - b. What is the proposed change and why?
  - c. Who may most benefit from the proposed changes and why? Who may be most challenged by the proposed changes and why?
  - d. Who opposes the proposed changes and why?
  - e. Who is accountable for the current system? Who is accountable for change?
2. What is your character's position on this issue?
  - a. List precise and persuasive points your character needs to make to articulate a position.
  - b. State data that supports your character's position.
3. What process would you advocate the Town Council use to make a decision about this issue?

## Town Hall Presentations

Each presentation should have the following elements:

- A clear argument in accordance with the student's character, with a position that is clear, substantiated and logical.
- Research that is carefully selected, relevant, detailed, credible and accurate.
- Highly effective presentation skills, with a presentation that is direct and well-organized.
- A high level of understanding, with pertinent points that are appropriate for the character being portrayed.
- Examples to help others understand the problem from the character's point of view.
- Logical conclusions.

*Summative task:* Students will write a brief summary of the town hall and answer the following questions:

- How did the behaviors and morals of the various characters (the way they were acted out) affect justice in the end?
- How did the behaviors and morals of the various characters (the way they were acted out) affect social justice? What is social justice?
- Cite specific observable examples from the characters (verbal or nonverbal) in your town hall meeting to support your answers.

Discussion Questions:

- What are some things students can do to become involved in their local government?
- Have your students brainstorm at least three things we can do as a class to become involved in our local government.
- If you have noticed an unhealthy procedure or practice in your town that could lead to the spread of infections, name three things you can do to effect change in the situation.
- Specifically, who in your community can make changes in your town?
- Can you, as a young person, effect these change by respectfully communicating that you care and are trying to help? Explain your thoughts.
- Research a list of community leaders who would oversee or be able to start a discussion about these things.
- Have students draft a letter, with a personal touch, that might convince your local community leader to hold an in-person meeting to discuss ways to reduce health risks.
- Have a class-brainstorming session to select one letter to send to a local town official. Choose a letter that clearly addresses the following questions:
  - » Who is responsible for fixing the unhealthy situation?
  - » What is the behavior you want to change?
  - » Where is the unhealthy situation that you have identified?
  - » Why is the situation unhealthy and why should it be fixed?
  - » When is the best time to fix this?
  - » How will you get your town officials to pay attention to you?
- Timely and accurate information is very important! Make sure you include in your letter the sources you used to research valid and current information on sepsis.

## Bibliography

Rory Staunton Foundation: [www.rorystauntonfoundationforsepsis.org](http://www.rorystauntonfoundationforsepsis.org)  
Center for Civic Education (National Standards for Civics and Government): [www.civiced.org](http://www.civiced.org)  
Nebraska Department of Education: [www.education.ne.gov](http://www.education.ne.gov)