

THE ETHICAL STORYTELLING ROADMAP: EMBEDDING SAFER STORYTELLING INTO HIV, HCV AND DRUG USER HEALTH ADVOCACY

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Background:

Storytelling is widely used across HIV, HCV and drug user health advocacy and research translation. However, it is often undertaken without structured safeguards, increasing risks of stigma, online harm, emotional distress and loss of agency. All of these issues emerged in an INHSU 2024 Discussion Space session on storytelling.

The session identified a gap in the sector for a practical, co-developed tool focused on storytelling involving people who use drugs. At INHSU 2025, a follow-up workshop was held with 30+ community members, researchers, and other organisation representatives. The objective was to develop an implementable framework that embeds ethical practice into storytelling processes.

Description of model of care/intervention/program:

The resulting [Ethical Storytelling Roadmap](#) provides a visual, structured, and practice-oriented framework for safer storytelling across four stages: Consent, Recording, Publishing and Aftercare.

To strengthen implementation and cognitive recall, the Roadmap introduces a mnemonic heuristic: the “Three Ts” (Time, Transparency, Trauma-Informed practice). This functions as a decision-making support tool, translating ethical principles into clear prompts that can be applied across all storytelling stages.

The Roadmap is designed for peer-led organisations, NGOs, research institutions, communications teams and others who gather or share stories and who want to reduce harm.

Effectiveness

The launch email resulted in 2,000 clicks, showing strong engagement with the INHSU database of 6,000. Initial stakeholder feedback also demonstrates strong demand. An Australian peer-led organisation is embedding it into an organisational readiness program. A South African organisation described it as “an excellent resource with many applications.” While a regional U.S. public health department plan to apply it to syringe access program communications. Requests for formal implementation support have followed the launch, with a webinar due to be held in mid-March 2026.

Conclusion and next steps:

This novel co-developed Ethical Storytelling Roadmap fills a critical gap in sharing lived experiences responsibly. Next steps include piloting the framework across diverse research and advocacy contexts, evaluating its impact on storytelling practices, and scaling its adoption to inform broader community-led research and communication initiatives.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: *See example below:*

I write for Filter magazine as a paid freelance journalist.