



Sample Candidate Forum Ground Rules

Below are recommended ground rules to build off of for your candidate forum. For a virtual forum, some of the ground rules may be adjusted or may no longer be necessary. Note: If your NAMI has co-hosts, update throughout to indicate both NAMI and partners are co-sponsoring this event.

- All news releases about the event will be handled by NAMI and sent at the same time to all the candidates.
- No campaign banners, signs, literature handouts or other campaign paraphernalia will be allowed in the forum hall (or visible if a virtual event). There will be equal space provided for each candidate to place campaign paraphernalia outside of the forum hall.
- The audience will be asked to refrain from applauding or in other ways demonstrating support or nonsupport for a candidate. On virtual platforms, audience members will be muted.
- Questions will be solicited from NAMI's membership prior to the forum. Questions will be screened, selected and edited for clarity by NAMI. Questions will not be provided in advance to candidates.
 - Note: Your NAMI may choose to send general themes to all candidates prior to the event.
- There will be a coin toss to determine candidates' order of taking the first question and making closing statements. There will be no opening statements.
- The moderator will introduce the candidates using name and title only. Thereafter, "Mr." and "Ms." will be used.
- Candidates will be asked the same question and have the same time to answer. Each candidate will have two (2) minutes to respond. The order of the first question is determined by the pre-forum coin toss and the order will alternate for subsequent questions. If there are more than two candidates, the order will proceed in the following pattern: ABC, BCA, CAB, and so on.
- Time limits on responses will be strictly observed. A timekeeper will hold cards, visible to the speaker, indicating how much time remains. When the "stop" card is shown, the speaker must end their speech within ten (10) seconds.
- The moderator will have the responsibility for enforcing time limits. The moderator will also have the authority to interrupt the proceedings to enforce the ground rules and format agreed upon by all candidates.
- The moderator may restate the question but cannot ask a follow-up question.
- The candidates will not interrupt one another.
- Candidates should refrain from personal attacks or charges. Answers should remain focused on relevant policy topics.
- The candidates' closing statements should be significantly related to the matters discussed previously. Candidates will have ninety (90) seconds for closing statements.
- Candidates are free to speak to the press following the forum.
- Candidates are invited to remain after the forum to meet with attendees outside of the forum hall.

It is recommended that you ask candidates to submit written acceptance of these ground rules (via email) prior to the event.