



# Community Engagement Tools

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control • [www.scdhec.gov](http://www.scdhec.gov)

	Availability Session	Public Meeting	Public Hearing
<b>Purpose</b>	To share information and answer questions through one-on-one conversations and small group discussions.	To share information about a DHEC action and receive feedback from attendees in a group setting.	To provide an opportunity for oral and written comments to be given to DHEC in a group setting. Comments are recorded by a court reporter who prepares an official transcript for DHEC's record.
<b>Format</b>	Informal and open to anyone who wishes to attend. Attendees visit stations to learn more about different aspects of a DHEC action and speak directly with subject matter experts in one-on-one or small group discussions.	Semi-formal and open to anyone who wishes to attend. Two-way communication is encouraged and gives attendees the opportunity to engage directly with DHEC staff. An introduction and brief presentation is typically followed by a group discussion.	Formal and open to anyone who wishes to attend. Established guidelines are followed. Attendees are called upon individually to speak and can read from a prepared statement if they choose. Time limits are often given for each speaker.
<b>DHEC's Role</b>	To share information, hear concerns, and address questions that helps attendees to have a better understanding of a DHEC action and how they can participate.	To share detailed information, hear concerns, and address questions that helps attendees to have a better understanding of a DHEC action and how they can participate.	To give a brief summary of the proposed action and accept verbal and written comments to be considered prior to making a final decision. DHEC staff does not respond to comments or answer questions during a public hearing.
<b>Attendee's Role</b>	Become better informed about a DHEC action and how to participate effectively. Written materials on these topics are usually provided for attendees to take with them.	Ask questions, share concerns, and listen to the viewpoints of others in an effort to make informed comments about the DHEC action.	Attendees are able to listen to all comments made about the DHEC action and provide comments of their own, either verbally or in writing, that will assist staff when making a final decision.
<b>Why DHEC Uses This Format</b>	Availability sessions are typically held: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to share information about different aspects of a DHEC action.</li> <li>to promote two-way communication that allows attendees to move around at their own pace and ask questions of DHEC staff in an informal setting.</li> </ul>	Public meetings are typically held: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to share information and discuss issues before a DHEC decision is made.</li> <li>to promote two-way communications that allows attendees to ask questions of DHEC staff in a semi-formal setting.</li> </ul>	Public hearings are typically held: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>when requested in response to a proposed DHEC action.</li> <li>when the level of community concern indicates the need for a public record of communication.</li> <li>to satisfy DHEC's regulatory requirements in a formal setting.</li> </ul>
<b>What to Expect</b>	Upon arrival, attendees are asked to provide their contact information. Attendees then visit stations where different topics are discussed and DHEC staff are available to answer questions in one-on-one or small group discussions. Attendees decide how much time they want to spend at each table.	Upon arrival, attendees are asked to provide their contact information. A facilitator will open the meeting and introduce the presentation speaker. Following the presentation, the facilitator will typically guide a group question and answer discussion with attendees. It is important that everyone is given an opportunity to speak.	Upon arrival, attendees are asked to provide their contact information and indicate if they wish to make a verbal comment. A public hearing officer opens and presides over the hearing. After DHEC staff briefly explains the proposed action, attendees are called upon in random order to give their comments from a microphone. Once all comments have been made, the hearing officer will outline DHEC's next steps and close the public hearing.

### Things to Remember When Participating in a Public Meeting or Hearing:

- Arrive at least 10 minutes early to sign in and find a seat. Information and maps are often available for attendees to look at prior to the start time.
- A time limit may be established for each speaker so that everyone has an opportunity to speak.
- Provide your name and address prior to speaking.
- Speak clearly and use a microphone when available so that everyone in the room can hear you.
- Be respectful of what others have to say.
- Avoid name calling and verbal attacks.