

## Connecting With the Media

Promoting your **National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month (Recovery Month)** activities will lead to opportunities to speak with the media. The 2009 theme, **“Join the Voices for Recovery: Together We Learn, Together We Heal,”** emphasizes the need to use all available resources, in our communities and on the Internet, to educate people and their families about the disease and to help those with substance use disorders, and those close to them, get support. The theme asks all of us to teach others about the realities of treatment and recovery for those currently in or seeking it, and to educate others to dispel the common misconceptions people have.

In this document, you will find tips for preparing for interviews and delivering key messages that resonate with the 2009 **Recovery Month** theme and the milestone of the initiative’s 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

### How to Prepare for an Interview With the Media

Interviews are a great way to share your message with both traditional media and online outlets. To secure interviews, identify and contact reporters in your local area who have covered addiction or health-related topics in the past, using the tips provided in the **“Media Advisory and Press Release”** document and **“Promotional Event Ideas and Publicity Tips”** document. Tailor your outreach to the reporter’s interests, mentioning how this public health issue affects the well-being of your local community.

Use the following tips to prepare for and conduct interviews that you have secured.

- **Enter the interview armed with knowledge of the audience.** Research the media outlet and the reporter to learn what subjects have been previously covered. This information will help you determine the types of questions the reporter will likely ask and what aspects of your story you may want to highlight for each specific audience.
- **Know what points you want to emphasize.** Focus on three to four talking points during the interview and keep them short. Avoid using jargon, confusing terms, or acronyms to explain your story. Instead, briefly explain the basic landscape of substance use disorders, treatment, and recovery. Talking points and examples of **Recovery Month** key messages are provided at the end of this document.
- **Practice before your interview.** Anticipate what the reporter will ask you and rehearse your answers so they communicate your message in a clear and concise manner.

Seek out online media outlets in your area and celebrate the power of community understanding and support for those in and seeking sustained recovery. Many local newspapers and community groups have Web sites that keep readers up to date on current events and activities in the area. Search online for sites in your community and contact them with information about **Recovery Month** and your specific event.



## At the Interview

Whether your interview is in person or on the phone, engage reporters in a friendly manner and pique their interest in what you are discussing. The following tips can help:

- **Be emphatic.** Repeat your three or four talking points so the reporter walks away remembering your messages. This is your interview – use it to get your message across to your community.
- **Be an expert.** Offer background information about **Recovery Month**, substance use disorders, treatment, recovery, and the impact they have on your community’s well-being. Provide the reporter with factual evidence supporting your statements and do not worry if there is a question you cannot answer. Instead, promise to research the answer promptly and provide additional evidence or sources after the interview, and follow through on that promise.
- **Be mindful of privacy issues** and inform the media about the reasons for “anonymity.” People willing to come forward about their experiences in long-term recovery can speak with the media without violating the anonymity clause of some mutual support groups. Many groups permit sharing stories as long as membership in the group is not mentioned.
- **Be local.** Reporters know their audiences will connect to relevant local stories that feature specific information related to your community. Local information is available for many metropolitan areas; only if you do not have access to local statistics, use national numbers to make your case. Consult the following sources:
  - Your Single-State Agency (SSA) – In the “**Resources**” section of this planning toolkit
  - The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA’s) **National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)** – <http://oas.samhsa.gov/nsduh.htm>
  - SAMHSA’s **National Survey of Substance Abuse Treatment Services (N-SSATS)** – <http://oas.samhsa.gov/DASIS.htm#NSSATS2>
  - SAMHSA’s **Treatment Episode Data Set** – <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/DASIS.htm#TEDS2>
  - SAMHSA’s Drug Abuse Warning Network – <http://dawninfo.samhsa.gov>

Other important resources are SAMHSA’s 24-hour national helpline for information and treatment referrals in English and Spanish, **1-800-662-HELP**, and SAMHSA’s “Find Substance Abuse and Mental Health Treatment Web site,” <http://www.samhsa.gov/treatment>, which helps find a treatment facility or support group for people in need.

## Key Messages to Convey When Speaking With the Media

- **For a Specific Event:** On [date] at [time], [organization] is hosting [event or activity] at [location] to [help the community understand addiction and address the myths associated with this disease through education / demonstrate support for people suffering from addiction, their treatment providers and family and friends, and those in treatment and recovery]. Addiction affects everyone, including people in [city], and it is imperative that our community makes resources available for confronting this treatable disease, as only **[10.4 percent of those needing treatment nationwide for a substance use disorder / (local number) of those needing treatment in (city)]** received it at a special facility in 2007.
- **To Promote Recovery Month:** [Organization]'s activities mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of **National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month**. For 20 years, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has supported this month-long celebration of people in recovery from substance use disorders, as well as the people who have helped them and those still in need of treatment. Supporting families in recovery and local treatment facilities is another important aspect of **Recovery Month**. This year, [organization] will be observing **Recovery Month** by [name and briefly describe one or two activities being held in relation to Recovery Month].
- **To Provide Information and Sources:** The Internet is limitless with information about addiction, treatment, and recovery, but communities do not always turn to it for information. According to one study, only 10 percent of the 80 percent of Americans using the Internet to search for health information were seeking information about drugs and alcohol. **[Local organization names / local treatment facility names / local recovery support program names]** all have useful Web sites with more information about substance use disorders in our community.

Web sites or event examples mentioned in this document and on the *Recovery Month* Web site are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, or the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment.