

## Building Community Coalitions

Community-based coalitions have been an integral part of the success of **National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month (Recovery Month)**. As you prepare for and celebrate **Recovery Month's** 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary this September, use this document to help you collaborate with other organizations to strengthen your **Recovery Month** efforts and expand the reach of your campaign.

Addressing complex public health problems such as substance use disorders requires an extensive amount of support and strategies. Unite with other local groups to expand your outreach and educate a wider range of community members about addiction, treatment, and recovery. Coalitions are an alliance of people representing diverse organizations who agree to work together to achieve a common goal. Bolster your **Recovery Month** campaign by creating a coalition to promote educational resources in your area.

This year's **Recovery Month** 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, to get help. Coalitions can support this effort by providing a comprehensive pool of resources available in their communities and encouraging those struggling with substance use disorders to seek treatment and recovery.

### Achieving Common Goals

Coalitions bring together community leaders who represent different constituencies – such as political, business, educational, health services, social, and religious groups. They may also unite organized grassroots groups and individuals in the shared interest of achieving a mutual goal or need. Additionally, many coalitions include ordinary community members who have no official ties to any organization. Including concerned citizens ensures that a diverse group of people is involved and increases opportunities for success.

Use a well-organized, broad-based coalition to generate change, increase public knowledge, and create a network. This can lead to innovative solutions to complex problems, such as the emotional and societal tolls of substance use disorders.

Depending on your needs and goals, it might be more practical to form a task force instead of a broader coalition to focus on a single objective. The main difference between a coalition and a task force is that a task force is a temporary collaboration between individuals or organizations, usually formed around a specific issue, with a set objective and time frame in mind. Once the task force achieves its goal, it typically presents its findings and/or successes and then disbands.



## Developing a Coalition

You can participate in coalitions by:

- Building one on your own if there is no active coalition already established in your community
- Joining the efforts of a coalition that already exists in your area

Creating a new coalition provides you more extensive control and the ability to implement your vision, rather than uniting with one that already has a mission and programming in place. Remember that coalition building takes time and effort; consider looking into pre-existing entities with related missions before beginning your own coalition.

Refer to the following tips to create a coalition that emphasizes the goals of **Recovery Month**:

- **Decide specifically what issues related to substance use disorders you are trying to address in your community.** How are these problems currently being handled? For example, are local treatment and recovery facilities available that can address the specific needs of certain populations, such as the elderly or parents of young children?
- **Determine what resources are already available and what groups are currently involved in your community.** Consider people in the public and private sectors who might make influential and positive contributions to your **Recovery Month** coalition. Find local prevention services, treatment and recovery services, law enforcement, and other social and educational agencies to partner with. Other organizations that may have the resources and expertise needed to build a successful coalition around substance use disorders include:
  - Recovery support groups or individuals in recovery
  - Schools, universities, and educational centers
  - Drug and alcohol treatment centers and clinics
  - National and local media outlets, as well as local bloggers
  - Government officials and agencies
  - Mental health organizations
  - Child welfare organizations
  - Private companies/businesses
  - Faith-based organizations
  - Youth and civic groups
  - Health-related organizations
  - Foundations and volunteer groups

Find local groups involved with addiction, treatment, and recovery services by using online search engines such as [Google News](#), [Yahoo! News](#), and the Web sites of local news outlets. Additional information about groups in your community can be found in the “Resources” section of this toolkit and at the [Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America Web site](#).

# JOIN THE VOICES FOR RECOVERY

For a coalition to be most effective, each member must be committed to the problem and to the notion of collaboratively working with others. **Research organizations** before you invite them to join your coalition to be sure their missions are aligned with yours.

- **Recruit members to the coalition.** Contact your potential coalition allies and invite them to be a part of your coalition, taking advantage of any existing connections you may have with members of their organizations. You can reach people and organizations through:

Create a Web site for your coalition to showcase how community members can contribute to treatment and recovery efforts in your area by participating in your coalition. Sample coalition Web pages include:

- **Healthy Community Coalition**
- **National Inhalant Prevention Coalition**
- **The Coalition for Drug Abuse Prevention**

- Face-to-face meetings
- Phone calls or Webinars
- E-mail
- Personal letters
- Mass mailings
- Flyers and posters

When you recruit people to participate in your effort, have something substantive to offer them about your mission or to ask them to do.

- **Confirm the coalition participants** and evaluate whether you included a diverse selection of organizations that work with different groups in the community. Participation commitments can be informal verbal agreements or formal written contracts among the members. For the coalition to be successful, keep in mind these steps: set priorities and goals, communicate and meet regularly, have a main contact person to coordinate all members, and establish a process for how you will determine the coalition's leadership early in the coalition's development. Your leadership team should oversee the coalition and ensure the efficient and timely execution of the coalition's plan, while fostering communication and a clear sense of the coalition's direction.
- **Grade your coalition and celebrate its successes.** See [http://www.indicatorshandbook.org/Indicators\\_Handbook-v1.pdf](http://www.indicatorshandbook.org/Indicators_Handbook-v1.pdf) for tools on how to tell if your coalition is making a difference.

## Examples to Follow

Community coalitions have helped combat alcohol and drug problems for nearly 20 years. The Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT), a part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, has its own coalition of more than 60 groups in the addiction, treatment, and recovery field. The group meets four times a year to determine goals and set priorities for **Recovery Month**. Additionally, the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) and the U.S. Department of Justice fund hundreds of community partnerships throughout the country. In 2007, the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) estimated that there were more than 5,000 operational anti-drug coalitions in the United States.

## Recovery Month Coalition Resources

### Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA)

*CADCA builds and strengthens the capacity of community coalitions to create safe, healthy, and drug-free communities.*

*The organization supports its members with technical assistance and training, public policy, media strategies, conferences, and special events.*

625 Slaters Lane, Suite 300

Alexandria, VA 22314

800-54-CADCA (22322)

<http://www.cadca.org>

### Faces & Voices of Recovery

*This national recovery advocacy organization mobilizes people in recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs, families, friends, and allies in campaigns to end discrimination and make recovery a reality for even more Americans.*

1010 Vermont Avenue NW, Suite 708

Washington, D.C. 20005

202-737-0690

<http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org>

### National Association for Children of Alcoholics (NACoA)

*This national family recovery organization has members and affiliate organizations throughout the country who initiate or support **Recovery Month** activities in their local communities.*

*NACoA provides its members with information, tools, and strategies to support recovery for children and families impacted by addiction.*

11426 Rockville Pike, Suite 301

Rockville, MD 20852

888-55-4COAS (2627)

301-468-0985

<http://www.nacoa.org>

### National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD)

*Founded in 1944, NCADD is dedicated to increasing public awareness and understanding of the disease of alcoholism and drug dependence. NCADD and its national network of state and local affiliates provide education, prevention, information/referral, intervention, treatment services, and advocacy, and have helped hundreds of thousands of individuals and families into recovery.*

244 East 58<sup>th</sup> Street, Fourth Floor

New York, NY 10022

Hope Line: 800-NCA-CALL (622-2255)

212-269-7797

<http://www.ncadd.org>

For a more extensive list of *Recovery Month* coalition resources and organizations, refer to the “**Resources**” section of this toolkit on the *Recovery Month* Web site at <http://www.recoverymonth.gov>. 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 HHS, SAMHSA, or CSAT.