

## Developing a Media Advisory and Press Release

Part of putting together a successful *National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month (Recovery Month)* event involves effective promotion – attracting an array of community leaders, groups, members, and targeted media. Spread the word through multiple mediums, such as print, broadcast, and online outlets, to showcase the *Recovery Month* campaign in its 20<sup>th</sup> year and raise awareness of the issues surrounding substance use disorders.

Distribute traditional media tools, such as a media advisory and press release, to spark media interest and generate public attention. Following is information about efficiently developing, targeting, and distributing such materials, with media advisory and press release templates included for your adaptation.

### Definition of a Media Advisory and Press Release

Media advisories and press releases complement each other. A media advisory is a one-page invitation to your event. It is typically constructed in an easy-to-read bulleted format and sent a week before your event. Advisories serve to invite the media to the event by providing basic facts: **who, what, when, where, and why**. Highlighting any local celebrities or policymakers who will be involved adds recognition and strengthens your media advisory. As timely communication is important, you need to follow up with a phone call to reporters closer to your event day.

In contrast, a press release is a more detailed, personalized announcement developed to encourage media to write or broadcast a story about an event, performance, or newsworthy item, whether or not they attend your event. It can announce breaking news and is written just like a story you would read in the newspaper. On average, a press release is roughly 500 words, organized into short paragraphs. Highlight key spokespeople’s opinions in quotes to convey your organization’s messages without editorializing. A good press release can make the difference in getting your *Recovery Month* story published. Again, timeliness is key. Distribute your press release the morning of your event. Refer to the “[Promotional Event Ideas and Publicity Tips](#)” page for additional tips on how to make an event newsworthy.

The templates at the end of this document are sample formats for each of these media tools. Use your organization’s letterhead or the *Recovery Month* letterhead found under the “[Media Outreach](#)” section when crafting these materials.

### Distributing Media Advisories and Press Releases

Before distributing your media advisory and press release, create a list of publications, key reporters, their titles, and contact information, as well as any notes about what they cover and how they prefer to be contacted:

- **Research** popular news outlets and recent coverage to see which reporters have been covering issues surrounding substance use, treatment, and recovery. You want to reflect their interests in your outreach by showing you are well versed in their work.

Use large search engines, such as **Yahoo!** and **Google News**, to find recent coverage on addiction in your community.



# JOIN THE VOICES FOR RECOVERY

- **Visit** the Web site of the reporter’s publication or outlet to find the reporter’s contact details or a newsroom number you can call for that information.
- **Include** members of all media types – broadcast, print, and online – and reach out to diverse populations, such as Hispanic communities, highlighting issues specific to these audiences.

Continually update your media list and use it in all your outreach efforts. To offer a customized approach, your **Recovery Month** media advisories and press releases should be targeted and sent to reporters individually. When you contact reporters via e-mail, send photographs and supplemental information files in the body of the e-mail, since many do not open attachments from unfamiliar e-mail addresses.

There are a number of available services to help with the distribution of both your media advisory and press release. Some of these distribution resources require a fee, so research their costs and guidelines before submitting your materials. Remember that a media advisory is sent about a week before your event and a press release is usually sent the morning of your event.

Research community calendars, daybooks, and “week-ahead” columns on your local area’s media Web sites and send your media advisory to the contacts closest to your city; they often publish event listings. In addition, please share your media advisory and press release with community newsletters, local school and university publications, and local organizations and businesses to increase the visibility of your event. After distributing your materials, follow up with a phone call to reporters. This helps to ensure that they have received your information and enables you to gauge their interest in your **Recovery Month** effort.

Several resources for publishing releases and advisories on media distribution sites:

- **Business Wire** – <http://www.businesswire.com/portal/site/home>
- **PR Newswire** – <http://www.prnewswire.com>
- **PRWeb Direct Press Release Newswire** – <http://www.prwebdirect.com>
- **24/7 Press Release** – <http://www.24-7pressrelease.com>
- **PR Leap** – <http://www.prleap.com>

When contacting these sites, or similar services, ask about any special rates available for nonprofits.

## Tools to Make Your Outreach More Efficient

Many resources are available that will help you localize and customize your press materials and underscore why the local media should be interested in **Recovery Month**. Please note that local information is available for many metropolitan areas; use national numbers to make your case only if you do not have access to local statistics. Resources include:

- Your Single-State Agency (SSA) – Found 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>

## Share Your Activities and Successes

Promote your activities and share the success of your **Recovery Month** events by:

- Posting your **Recovery Month** plans on <http://www.recoverymonth.gov>. This will help generate momentum for the campaign, which touches millions of people affected by substance use disorders
- Completing the “**Customer Satisfaction Form**” to share your stories and other outreach efforts during **Recovery Month**
- **Sending your promotional materials and media clips to:**  
Office of the Director, Consumer Affairs  
SAMHSA’s Center for Substance Abuse Treatment  
1 Choke Cherry Road, Second Floor  
Rockville, MD 20857

## More Resources on **Recovery Month** and Substance Use Disorders

Various resources exist about **Recovery Month** and substance use disorders:

- All materials from this planning toolkit and an extensive array of relevant information are available electronically at the **Recovery Month** Web site, <http://www.recoverymonth.gov>.
- Substance use disorder, treatment, and recovery information is available at SAMHSA’s Web site, <http://www.samhsa.gov>, and by calling SAMHSA’s 24-hour national helpline, **1-800-662-HELP**, for information in English and Spanish.
- Information on treatment options in your area and the special services available can be found at <http://www.samhsa.gov/treatment>, a portal that includes a searchable database of more than 11,000 U.S. treatment facilities and additional treatment resources.

**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.**

# SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY

[Date]

**[ORGANIZATION] TO HOST TOWN-HALL MEETING WITH [LOCAL LEGISLATOR/SPECIAL GUEST] TO INCREASE AWARENESS OF SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS IN [TOWN/CITY]**

More than 23 million people aged 12 or older needed treatment for a substance use disorder in the United States in 2007, and in [state/community] alone, [number] people and their families are affected by this disease. Many people do not understand that addiction is a treatable disease, and this misconception can keep people from getting help. In 2007, as many as 20.8 million people nationwide needed but did not receive treatment at a specialty facility.

To help alleviate this issue and overcome barriers to long-term recovery, [organization name] will host a town-hall meeting on [date]. This community event is intended to increase public awareness of substance use disorders and what local leaders are doing about it. It also will educate people about the positive effect that treatment and recovery can have on loved ones and the community’s well-being, and celebrate people in recovery – as well as those who help them.

The meeting, featuring [name of special guest or local representative], is part of *National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month (Recovery Month)*’s 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary and will address this year’s theme, *“Join the Voices for Recovery: Together We Learn, Together We Heal.”* For 20 years, *Recovery Month*, supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, through its Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, has celebrated people in recovery from addiction and the treatment providers who help them.

*Recovery Month* applauds their individual achievements and encourages access to treatment services for all those in need. By alerting people to the recovery services available, we can help community members and their families find a path of recovery and lead productive, healthy lives once again.

- WHO:** [participants]
- WHEN:** [date and time]
- WHERE:** [address of location]
- CONTACT:** [name and phone number of primary contact for event]

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# SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

[Please adapt as needed for your event, including modifying the type of event, date, etc.]  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact:** [Name – Must be a person who is available to answer questions from the media]  
 [Phone Number – Include cell phone number if the person is not always available at the office]  
 [E-mail Address]

**[ORGANIZATION]'S TOWN-HALL MEETING [OR OTHER EVENT] URGES [CITY]'S RESIDENTS  
 TO RECOGNIZE THE LOCAL IMPACT OF SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS**

**[Number] people aged 12 to 18 have a substance use disorder in the [city/state] area**

**[City, state], [date]** – At a town-hall meeting today hosted by **[organization], [city official]** called for improved recovery services for **[city's]** citizens who suffer from substance use disorders, along with their families.

Citing recent research that showed that only a small fraction of the more than 23 million people aged 12 or older who needed treatment in the United States in 2007 had received some form of treatment, **[city official]** is calling on the community to help raise awareness about this gap. “It’s time for **[city's]** citizens to start helping their friends and neighbors by noticing the signs of addiction and offering places to turn for help,” said **[city official]**.

**[Number]** people in **[state, city, or community]** are affected by substance use disorders, according to details provided at **[organization's]** town-hall meeting today **[or your event day]**.

**[Organization]**'s event, which featured an appearance by **[name of local legislator/special guest or expert]**, is part of a national initiative known as **National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month (Recovery Month)**. As it celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, **Recovery Month**, supported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, recognizes people in recovery from substance use disorders, as well as their families, friends, and treatment providers.

The campaign acknowledges the importance of community awareness and encourages those in need to seek treatment. This year, the **Recovery Month** theme, **“Join the Voices for Recovery: Together We Learn, Together We Heal,”** promotes the need for better awareness about addiction and educates the entire community about the importance of access to treatment and recovery tools.

With the support of guests, local businesses, and families, including **[name of sponsor or business]**, **[organization]** encouraged people to raise public awareness of substance use disorders and sought to change the perceptions associated with treatment. In fact, fewer than 20 percent of Americans say that they would think less of a family member or friend who is in recovery from addiction to drugs or alcohol.



“This issue warrants immediate action. It’s important to showcase the value of long-term recovery, because increased knowledge can help improve our community’s health and safety, as well as alleviate addiction’s damaging effects on our residents,” said **[name of organization’s spokesperson]**. “Every September, **Recovery Month** reminds us about the reality of this disease, the importance of making treatment accessible, and the advantages of communication and education, which can open doors to treatment, support, and long-term recovery.”

Town-hall meeting participants endorsed **[organization]**’s effort to help the **[number]** people in **[city, state, or community]** in need of treatment and support from others. Participants discussed what is being done at the local level to address this public health issue and highlighted the ways our community is touched by the substance use disorders of loved ones, friends, colleagues, and neighbors. Nationally in 2006 and 2007, an annual average of 5 million people aged 12 or older participated in a self-help group, and one-third (32.7 percent) of them received specialty treatment.

“By working together as a community, we can foster awareness of addiction, treatment, and recovery and encourage those in **[city, state, or community]** to seek the services they need,” said **[name of organization’s spokesperson]**.

#### **[Organization name] Urges Residents to Recognize People in Recovery**

**[Organization name]** also has planned an additional **Recovery Month** event. **[An online forum or other Web event]**, with leading and expert guest panelists, including **[names of experts]**, will be held on **[date / time]** on **[Web site / social network and address]** to foster discussion about addiction, treatment services, and recovery. It will educate participants about treatment and support programs available to people in need and their loved ones and friends. The event will answer questions from members of the community and address the ways to fight the misconceptions people may face during recovery.

#### **The National *Recovery Month* Initiative**

During **Recovery Month** each September, communities across the country join together to help people recognize that substance use disorders are treatable diseases. Treatment and other recovery support programs are as effective as treatment for other chronic conditions. **Recovery Month** aims to ensure that all those affected by addiction are aware of and can seek treatment so they can reclaim their lives in recovery.

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