# Press Materials for your **Recovery Month** Event

"I am my own, proud woman in recovery for 21 years. I care for myself and do my best to maintain my integrity with myself and others."

**Beth** 

Blogger, *Be Here Today* Irving, TX

Health Empowerment

Education

Cupport

Community

join the voices for recovery

coetles

on pathways to wellness



# PRESS MATERIALS FOR YOUR RECOVERY MONTH EVENT

Each September, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) (http://www.samhsa.gov), within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) (http://www.hhs.gov), sponsors **National Recovery Month** (**Recovery Month**), which celebrates people in recovery, lauds the contributions of treatment and service providers, and promotes the message that recovery in all its forms is possible.

To generate positive publicity for **Recovery Month** activities, you can create and distribute press materials to spread the recovery message. These materials can garner media coverage and highlight the fact that behavioral health is essential to health, prevention works, treatment is effective, and people recover from mental and/or substance use disorders.

Use this document to guide the development and distribution of publicity materials to promote **Recovery Month** events this September and throughout the year.

#### Choose a Format...

There are several types of materials you or your organization can share with the media to publicize your **Recovery**Month event, highlighting messages that will resonate with your intended audiences and the media. The following tools will build awareness for a **Recovery Month** event. Examples of most of these tools can be found at the end of this document and can be modified to distribute to media outlets. When drafting these materials, remember to use organization-specific letterhead or the **Recovery Month** letterhead found at <a href="http://www.recoverymonth.gov">http://www.recoverymonth.gov</a>.

- **Media advisories,** or media alerts, are brief one page documents that alert the media of an upcoming event and provide essential information about the event's date, time, and location. They are brief and entice reporters to attend the event to learn more. Advisories should be sent to the calendar editor of a local newspaper and also the health care reporter or editor that covers local news or events. They should also include the organization's contact information, as well as information on scheduling interviews and taking photos.
- **Press releases,** or news releases, are one- or two-page announcements sent to the media so they will cover a story or event. A release is similar to a condensed news story, which sometimes is repurposed as a stand-alone article in a newspaper. Refer to the "Work with the Media" document in this toolkit for factors that reporters use to determine if a story is newsworthy. Press releases should:
  - Be approximately 500 words, formatted in short paragraphs;
  - o Contain the most important information at the top, followed by supporting details later in the article; and
  - o Include a quote from an event's spokesperson or key figure.
- Backgrounders are succinct, supplementary documents that often accompany a media advisory or news release. A backgrounder may also be distributed at *Recovery Month* events, or sent to reporters separately. They can be written in paragraph form or have bulleted information. Create a backgrounder, such as the one at the end of this document, that highlights SAMHSA and *Recovery Month;* your organization; the specific event; recent behavioral health data; relevant prevention, treatment, and recovery support services; and local individuals in recovery.



- **Op-eds,** or opposite editorials, provide an opinion on a specific topic or event, and are published opposite a publication's editorial page. An op-ed's purpose is to influence public opinion by taking a strong position and creating a dialogue about issues affecting a community, such as mental and/or substance use disorders. Refer to the "Share Your Voice Through Op-Eds and Online Articles" document for information on how to draft and submit an op-ed.
- Letters to the editor are brief letters written to express an individual's or organization's point of view on a particular, yet timely, subject that was recently covered in the news. Letters should be written as a response to other news stories and should highlight a timely issue, such as how the rate of mental and/or substance use disorders in a local community factors into other stories in the news. Letters to the editor tend to be published in newspapers and news magazines.
- **Public service announcements** (PSAs) are non-paid informational commercials, distributed to local radio or television outlets. PSAs create awareness of **Recovery Month** in communities and help inform audiences about the realities of mental and/or substance use disorders. Refer to the "**Recovery Month** Public Service Announcements" document in this toolkit for more information.

#### Draft...

When drafting press materials for a **Recovery Month** event, explain why behavioral health issues are important to address and why your event is beneficial to the community. Remember to share these messages with all members of your event-planning committee, so that anyone can offer a relevant quote if asked by the media. It may be helpful to review the "Work with the Media" document for more advice on interacting with reporters.

When developing press materials, keep in mind the following tips:

- Avoid using slang terms that may offend people in recovery or technical jargon that the general public may not understand; and
- Double-check the names, titles, and contact information in press materials, and verify that all statistics and spellings are correct.

#### Personalize:

Use the following resources to customize your press materials with local data when possible:

- Single-State Agency Directory (SSA)
- SAMHSA's National Survey on Drug Use and Health (https://nsduhweb.rti.org)
- SAMHSA's National Survey on Substance Abuse Treatment Services (N-SSATS) (http://wwwdasis.samhsa.gov/dasis2/nssats.htm)
- SAMHSA's Treatment Episode Data Set (http://oas.samhsa.gov/dasis.htm#teds2)
- SAMHSA Regional Offices (http://www.samhsa.gov/about/regions/index.aspx)



#### Disseminate...

Before distributing the media materials you have developed, confirm that your materials adequately highlight the importance of **Recovery Month**, have a specific "call to action," and provide community-specific information.

Press materials are most commonly distributed electronically. To ensure a reporter views the press materials, copy and paste the information into the body of an email. Make sure the headline and first paragraph are readable to prevent unnecessary scrolling. Also, personalize each email so the reporter knows it is not a mass message.

To learn where to send materials and how to build a comprehensive media list, refer to the "Work with the Media" document in this toolkit.

# **Coordinate Timing...**

Media advisories are typically sent to reporters about a week in advance of an event. Remember, these alerts serve as an invitation or "save-the-date" for the event. On the other hand, press releases are distributed either immediately before or at the event, or can be given to reporters under an "embargo" agreement until the event or announcement becomes official.

To distribute materials to a large number of recipients, use an online distribution service, such as:

- 24/7 Press Release (http://www.24-7pressrelease.com)
- Business Wire (http://www.businesswire.com/portal/site/home)
- PR Log (http://www.prlog.org)
- PR Newswire (http://www.prnewswire.com)

Once materials have been distributed, remember to post the materials on the **Recovery Month** website at **http://www.recoverymonth.gov** and link to the materials on appropriate web-based platforms. It is also important to follow up with each reporter that received the materials to ensure they received them and gauge their interest in attending the event or scheduling an interview with a spokesperson or speaker. Refer to the "Work with the Media" document in this toolkit for tips on pitching and advice on communicating with journalists.

#### Share...

As discussed in the "Promote **Recovery Month** with Events" document in this toolkit, it is important to evaluate an event after it has taken place. The planning committee can use key learnings from an event to improve future events.

- Post press materials on the Recovery Month website (http://www.recoverymonth.gov) to accompany the
  event listing.
- Share event information through *Recovery Month* social media outlets, such as the Facebook page
   (http://www.facebook.com/RecoveryMonth), YouTube channel (http://www.youtube.com/recoverymonth),
   and Twitter (https://twitter.com/RecoveryMonth) account.



- Share the event's outreach efforts and talk about the materials that were useful during **Recovery Month** by completing the "Customer Satisfaction Form."
- Send promotional materials electronically to recoverymonth@samhsa.hhs.gov or by mail to:
   Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
   ATTN: Consumer Affairs/Recovery Month
   Center for Substance Abuse Treatment
   1 Choke Cherry Road, Seventh Floor
   Rockville, MD 20857

#### Consult Resources...

For more information on **Recovery Month** and services available to people in need, please refer to the following resources:

- SAMHSA's National Helpline, 1-800-662-HELP (4357) or 1-800-487-4889 (TDD) (http://www.samhsa.gov/treatment): Provides 24-hour, free, and confidential treatment referral and information about mental and/or substance use disorders, prevention, treatment, and recovery in English and Spanish.
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-TALK (8255) (http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org): Provides a free, 24-hour helpline available to anyone insuicidal crisis or emotional distress.
- SAMHSA's "Find Substance Abuse and Mental Health Treatment" Website (http://www.samhsa.gov/treatment): Contains information about treatment options and special services located in your area.
- The Recovery Month website (http://www.recoverymonth.gov): Contains all the materials from this toolkit and a wide variety of relevant resources.
- **Technical Assistance Centers:** Maximizes self-determination and recovery and assists people on their path to recovery, ultimately decreasing their dependence on expensive social services and avoiding hospitalization. The five technical assistance centers include:
  - National Consumer Supporter Technical Assistance Center at Mental Health America (http://www.ncstac.org);
  - National Empowerment Center (http://www.power2u.org);
  - o National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse (http://www.mhselfhelp.org);
  - o The Family Café (http://familycafe.net); and
  - o The STAR Center (http://www.consumerstar.org/index.html).
- **BHBusiness (http://www.saasnet.org/bhb):** Offers targeted training and support for behavioral health care executives, CEOs, and directors, including health care insurance enrollment training information.



- Center for Financing Reform and Innovation (http://www.samhsa.gov/healthreform): Supports the need for information, analysis, products, and technical assistance to address significant changes in the organization and financing of behavioral health care, as well as the need to guide and support governments and people on how to most effectively and efficiently use available resources to meet the prevention, treatment, and recovery support needs of the public.
- **Healthcare.gov (http://www.healthcare.gov/index.html):** Contains information on finding health insurance options, help using insurance, information on the Affordable Care Act, help comparing providers, and information on prevention and wellness resources.
- SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) (http://www.prainc.com/soar/about/default.asp):
  Increases access to Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Income for eligible adults who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and have a mental and/or substance use disorder.

Inclusion of websites and resources in this document and on the *Recovery Month* website does not constitute official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services or the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.



#### SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY

[Adapt as needed for event by modifying the type of event, date, etc.]

[Name of Official] to Issue Proclamation and Lead Recovery Event to Raise
Awareness of Mental and Substance Use Disorders

Mental and substance use disorders are prevalent in our community, and it's imperative that individuals in [City or State] understand how to seek physical and mental wellness. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), in 2011, an estimated XX [Thousand/Million] people in [City or State] were affected by mental illness, and 31.6 million adults aged 18 or older in the United States received mental health services during the past 12 months. In addition, an estimated XX [Thousand/Million] people in [City or State] were affected by substance use disorders, and 3.8 million people aged 12 or older in the United States received treatment for a substance use disorder.

To address this significant problem, [Name of Official] will issue a proclamation to honor National Recovery Month this September, raising awareness about prevention, treatment, and recovery support services in the area. Additionally, [Name of Expert] will discuss local mental and/or substance use disorder programs and highlight individuals who are in recovery, detailing the paths they took to get where they are today.

Last year, **106** proclamations were issued nationwide, including one by the President of the United States. After the signing of the proclamation, attendees and all citizens of **[City]** are encouraged to join a recovery event around the community to highlight the significance of helping people in need of prevention, treatment, and recovery support services, while also celebrating the accomplishments of individuals in recovery.

WHO: [Participants]

WHEN: [Date and Time]

WHERE: [Address of Location]

**CONTACT:** [Name and Phone Number of Primary Contact for Event]



#### SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

[Adapt as needed for the event by modifying the type of event, date, and local statistics as available.]

For Immediate Release

Contact: [Name of Person Who is Available to Answer Questions From the Media] [Phone Number of Contact Person – Include Office and Cell Numbers] [Email Address of Contact Person]

[Name of Official] Hosts Recovery Event to Raise Awareness of Mental and Substance Use Disorder Support Services in [City or State]

[City, State], [Date] – Mental and substance use disorders and the many pathways to wellness in [City or State] must be addressed immediately, according to [Name of Local Official], who today proclaimed September as National Recovery Month (Recovery Month). To promote the widespread national observance, [Name of official] led a recovery event, which featured opening speakers and was intended to support people in recovery and draw attention to critical prevention, treatment, and recovery support services.

In addition, a walk, attended by more than **[Number of People Who Attended the Walk]** people, celebrated real-life examples of people in recovery.

Today's event emphasized the importance of seeking physical and mental wellness every day, through multiple pathways and throughout the recovery process, to achieve health and well-being," stated [Name of Official]. "It is critical that people experiencing mental and/or substance use disorders receive the support they need from the community. The reality is that behavioral health is essential to health, prevention works, treatment is effective, and people recover."

[Replace the Following Paragraph With Local Statistics, if Available.] In 2011, 45.6 million people aged 18 or older had a mental illness according to the 2011 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, an annual survey released by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). However, only 31.6 million people received mental health services. In addition, 20.6 million people were classified with substance dependence or abuse in 2011, and 3.8 million people aged 12 or older received treatment for a substance use disorder.

Opening speakers at the event described the impact of mental and substance use disorders on the community, and joined the crowd on the walk in downtown **[City].** The event also featured the support of local businesses and organizations that recognize the value of seeking treatment and overcoming mental and/or substance abuse disorders.

"It is important that the momentum we've established at this event is carried over to tomorrow, and the next day, week, and year," said **[Name of Person].** "We all have the potential to make a difference. We can all be examples of good health and wellness."

Today's event was part of **Recovery Month**, a national observance sponsored by SAMHSA, within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The observance raises awareness of mental and substance use disorders, celebrates individuals in long-term recovery, and acknowledges the work of prevention, treatment, and recovery support services.



#### SAMPLE BACKGROUNDER

[Adapt as needed by including additional organization-specific information or information on the event, etc.]

#### **National Recovery Month Media Fact Sheet**

#### What is National Recovery Month?

**National Recovery Month (Recovery Month)** is an annual observance celebrated each September since 1989. In September and throughout the year, **Recovery Month** spreads the message that:

- Behavioral health is essential to health;
- Prevention works;
- Treatment is effective; and
- People recover.

Refer to the **Recovery Month** website (http://www.recoverymonth.gov), for additional information on the initiative.

#### Who sponsors Recovery Month?

**Recovery Month** is sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), in collaboration with approximately 100 **Recovery Month** Planning Partners who represent local, state, and national organizations dedicated to prevention, treatment, and recovery.

#### What is this year's Recovery Month theme?

This year's theme, "Join the Voices for Recovery: Together on Pathways to Wellness," represents the many ways that people can prevent behavioral health issues, seek treatment, and sustain recovery as part of a commitment to living a mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually healthy life.

#### What events occur during Recovery Month?

Each September – and throughout the year – hundreds of events occur to celebrate **Recovery Month.** These events, ranging from recovery walks and rallies to online web chats and group barbeques, encourage the following audiences to address the continued need for prevention, treatment, and recovery support services:

- Active military and veterans;
- Civic leaders;
- Communities;
- Educators;
- Employers;
- Faith-based organizations;
- Friends and family members;



- Justice system personnel;
- Prevention, treatment, and recovery organizations;
- Recovery community; and
- Social service organizations.

#### Where can people find treatment for mental and/or substance use disorders?

Many treatment options exist. SAMHSA's treatment website (http://www.samhsa.gov/treatment) offers more than 11,000 specialized facilities in the United States that provide rehabilitation services, behavioral therapy, counseling, and medication support, among many other services. SAMHSA's National Helpline, **1-800-662-HELP (4357)** or **1-800-487-4889 (TDD),** provides 24-hour, free and confidential information about mental and/or substance use disorders, and prevention, treatment, and recovery referrals in English and Spanish. Additionally, the "Treatment and Recovery" document in the **Recovery Month** toolkit provides an overview of support options.

#### Where can people learn more about the current mental and/or substance use disorder landscape?

Refer to the "Mental and Substance Use Disorders: Fast Facts" document in the **Recovery Month** toolkit for up-to-date statistics on the prevalence of mental and substance use disorders in the United States.