

PROMOTIONAL EVENTS

Promoting *Recovery Month* With Events

Hosting a special event during September in observance of **National Recovery Month: Prevention Works, Treatment is Effective, People Recover (Recovery Month)** is a great way to unite communities in support of treatment and recovery support services for substance use and mental disorders. This year's **Recovery Month** theme, **“Join the Voices for Recovery: Recovery Benefits Everyone,”** emphasizes that all Americans have the opportunity to access provisions within the Affordable Care Act and Mental Health Parity and Addictions Equity Act (MHPAEA), aimed to improve physical and emotional health while ensuring people will receive the care they need at a more reasonable cost. Additionally the theme emphasizes that public awareness will increase access for those in need of essential substance use and mental health treatment and recovery support services, including behavioral health treatment.

Every year, the **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT)**, within the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)**, stresses the importance of sponsoring events to support individuals and their families who are in recovery and to honor the service providers who helped and supported them. By holding a **Recovery Month** event, you will provide your community with information and resources on substance use and mental health treatment and recovery. Additionally, you will fulfill several of SAMHSA's **Strategic Initiatives**, particularly the goals of increasing public awareness of substance use and mental disorders, health reform implementation, and offering recovery support through an individual, program, and system approach.

Did you know that under the Affordable Care Act Medicaid will expand its eligibility to 133 percent of the Federal Poverty Level and all newly eligible parents and adults without children will receive basic benefits, which include essential substance use and mental health services at parity? Find out more about how provisions under the new law are specifically aimed at improving access to substance use and mental disorder treatment by visiting the **“Fast Facts About Health Reform, Substance Use and Mental Disorders, Treatment, and Recovery”** document in this toolkit.

This document guides you through the **Recovery Month** event planning process from start to finish. Examples of various sizes of **Recovery Month** events are included to provide ideas for events in your local community. Here you will find the materials you need to support this national movement, garner attention for the **Recovery Month** mission, and help your community overcome misconceptions associated with substance use and mental disorders through an engaging, informational, and exciting event. With your effort, the community will learn about the effectiveness of prevention and treatment, the possibility of recovery, and the contributions that individuals in recovery make to their community every day.

What Are the Different Types of *Recovery Month* Events?

To plan a **Recovery Month** event, it's important to consider which event will be best for your community. Whether large or small, remember that your overall goal is to open a dialogue about the positive impact that treatment and recovery has on individuals and the community. You know your community best, so choose an event that will be well received and appropriately communicate the **Recovery Month** mission for your audience. Below are some examples of past events and activities to give you ideas on how to start planning your own.

A **forum** or **community roundtable** is an event that allows community members to discuss the benefit that treatment and recovery has on our society and how people can access treatment and recovery support services. It also provides a great opportunity to incorporate this year's **Recovery Month** theme, **“Join the Voices for Recovery: Recovery Benefits Everyone,”** and discuss health reform, your community's access to substance use and mental health treatment and recovery support services, and the overall benefits of providing them. Invite health care providers who work with people with substance use or mental disorders to speak about how treatment and recovery positively helps their patients, as well as individuals in recovery who can tell their personal stories and who they are today because of recovery. Remember to allow time for a question and answer session.



A **rally** unites a community to demonstrate the importance of substance use and mental disorder treatment and recovery. Encourage attendees to make their own signs and rehearse chants of support such as, “Recovery for you and me, benefits society!” The rally also can include speeches by a motivational speaker or individuals in recovery and hosted in conjunction with a **walk or run**. Depending on the size of your community, a walk or run of any length can attract a broader public audience and raise awareness about recovery through a healthy activity. In September 2010, community members in Houston, TX hosted the “**Run for Recovery & Citywide Sobriety Celebration**,” a 5K walk/run race featuring an “After Race After Party,” with live music, an awards ceremony featuring local, State, and national dignitaries, a volleyball tournament, children’s activities, and a cook-off competition. **Community fairs or festivals** also are entertaining ways to bring together large groups of people and inviting keynote speakers, such as elected officials or celebrities, to help draw a larger audience.

Incorporate this year’s **Recovery Month** theme, “**Join the Voices for Recovery: Recovery Benefits Everyone**,” which educates the public about how recent legislative changes will broaden the availability of treatment and recovery services for those in need of substance use and mental disorders, into printed materials like an informational brochure.

Hosting an informational booth at a **professional, minor league, or high school sporting event** is a great way to distribute information on substance use and mental disorder treatment and recovery, especially to a younger audience. Today’s youth are the future, so let them know that substances such as alcohol and/or drugs can greatly harm their health now and in the future. Modify the materials in the “**Targeted Outreach**” section of this toolkit to get a jump start.

A **prayer weekend** is a cost-effective way to promote that recovery is possible and assemble people together to gain support for **Recovery Month**. Places of worship help to reach people and families in recovery who find hope and strength in their religion. The East Central Florida region came together in September 2010 for a “**Non-Denominational Prayer Ceremony**” as part of a larger celebration in honor of **Recovery Month**. Insert **Recovery Month** messages and events into bulletins, newsletters, and outdoor signage to spread the campaign to the congregation and other community members.

Consider **hosting a webinar or other online event** to allow the online community to participate in **Recovery Month**. An online event can feature experts in the treatment field with a question and answer session to allow participants to interact “live.” A digital event provides a platform to garner support from people all around the world, allowing for open dialogue where participants can tell their personal recovery story. Other inexpensive events could include decorating substance use or mental health clinics in **Recovery Month** theme colors, like the **Port Morris Wellness Center** in the Bronx did in September of 2010 to raise awareness for the initiative and get their patients and staff involved.

Whatever your event entails, it is important to make information available about how to get help for substance use and mental disorders and the detrimental effects that untreated disorders have on individuals, families and communities. This will ensure that people receive knowledge, skills, and education to recognize that substance use and mental disorders deserve the same care as any other condition.

What Are My First Steps in Planning an Event?

- **Form a committee** – This is the first step for a successful event and ensures that the workload is divided evenly between volunteers, staff, and partner organizations. It also encourages the exchange of ideas. How many committee members you need depends on the size of the event. A leader should be selected and the committee should meet regularly to create a timeline and develop goals for the event.
- **Determine a budget** – Crunch the numbers in the early planning stages. Fundraising opportunities, food and entertainment, rentals, licenses, permits, and decorations are just some examples of what to include in the estimate. More about how to fundraise for **Recovery Month** can be found on the **Recovery Month website**.
- **Explore partnership opportunities** – Partnerships include joining an already-planned recovery event or a new endeavor with a local business or organization that can provide donated goods or donations to assist your event.
- **Agree on a publicity plan** – Flyers, advertisements, banners, and social media activities catch your community’s attention and brand your organization and event. The committee also needs to decide if media, such as newspaper, television, radio, or local magazines, should be present to report the event. Refer to the “**Working with the Media**” document in this toolkit for more information on garnering publicity for your event and speaking with media.

How Do I Ensure People Will Attend?

- **Pick the right date** – Make sure that the date you chose doesn’t conflict with other similar events or activities in your community. Use the following resources to find other events:
 - Search for local conflicts on <http://www.recoverymonth.gov>, by putting in your zip code in the “Community Events” page. When your date is finalized, [post your event](#) on the **Recovery Month** website.
 - Check event postings in your local newspaper’s community calendar, which are often housed on its website.
 - Go to <http://www.charityhappenings.org> to view a master calendar of nonprofit events, galas, and benefits.
 - Ask your local treatment center or a support group if they know of any other events occurring on the same day or weekend.
- **Pick the right location** – Choose a location that is convenient, easily accessible, and can accommodate the amount of people you expect to attend. If the event takes place in a public area, check with local authorities to see if permits or a license is required, along with police presence.
- **Pick an overall message or theme** – To make your event stand out, choose a unique focus to showcase your **Recovery Month** event. Using a topic or theme that reaches many in your community like “Teen Drug Use” or “Improving the Health and Well-being of Everyone,” will differentiate your event from others. Use a catchy event title like “Run for Recovery” or “Health Reform Helps Heal.” Showcase this year’s **Recovery Month** theme, **“Join the Voices for Recovery: Recovery Benefits Everyone,”** which focuses on how public awareness will increase access for those in need of essential substance use and mental health treatment and recovery support services, including behavioral health treatment.
- **Bring the right attention** – Two big factors that draw a crowd are:
 - Developing the event around a **newsworthy activity**—this could include an opening of a new treatment center, a health fair, a high school or professional sporting event, or a celebrity visit.
 - Having a prominent local figure serve as a **spokesperson**—examples include a community leader or public official, a local star athlete, anchor of the local news, or even a prominent community member in treatment or recovery.

By having a person in long-term recovery speak at your event, people who are affected by substance use and mental disorders, including those in recovery will be more likely to attend your event and invite others to join them.
- **Have a back-up plan** – If your event location is outdoors, always plan a back-up indoor space, or a well-publicized rain date.

How Do I Prepare for the Event?

- **Consider the logistics** – After identifying the date, location, time, and budget, it’s imperative to reserve your venue and secure any necessary permits. Keep in mind that public safety is a priority, and insurance coverage might be needed. You may wish to have participants sign a photo release form to get consent to use their likeness for promotional purposes.
- **Distribute materials** – To successfully promote **Recovery Month**, prepare printed materials explaining the importance of treatment and recovery and how health reform provides increased access to insurance coverage, including treatment and recovery support services. These materials could include flyers, brochures, fact sheets, local treatment center information, or any other resource that is helpful to your community. Add artwork to set your event apart, available at <http://www.recoverymonth.gov/Banners-Logos-and-Flyers.aspx>. Refer to the “Targeted Outreach” documents in this toolkit for more information.
- **Gather your volunteers** – Base the number of volunteers you need on the projected amount of attendees. If possible, have volunteers stand out by wearing a badge, matching t-shirt, or hat, so event attendees can clearly identify them.

- **Remember any last-minute details** – Hold a meeting to finalize any logistics prior to the event. Prepare to arrive at the event early to set up booths or multimedia needs. Confirm all arrangements with any vendors and speakers outside your organization a few days before the event.

How Do I Publicize and Handle the Media For My Event?

- **Publicity is key** – Ask friends and family to spread the word about your **Recovery Month** event and distribute flyers in public areas. In the section below, you will find out more information about interacting with the media during your event.
- **Brand your event** – Be sure to brand your event as a **Recovery Month** event by placing the official **Recovery Month** logo on your printed materials. It might also help to note that the **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA’s) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT)**, within the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)** sponsors this annual national observance.

The media may be interested in attending or covering your event. This will expand your event’s audience and increase your organization’s name recognition. Use the following helpful tips to generate media coverage:

- Invite newspaper reporters who focus on community events, advocacy, or local health issues.
- Send out a media advisory or press release ([templates](#) are included in this planning toolkit) to television and radio stations and local magazines with accurate event details at least a week before to help the media prepare to cover your event.
- Follow up with calls to the media to encourage coverage of and attendance at the event, and send a reminder to the media a day or two before your event.
- Have committee members or the head of your organization available for interviews, photo opportunities, or comments during the event.

Refer to the “[Working with the Media](#)” section of this toolkit for more information on how to work with the media.

How Do I Evaluate My Event?

After your event, when details and activities are fresh in your mind, meet with your committee to evaluate outcomes. The evaluation could be formal, with a questionnaire for the volunteers and event participants, or an informal conversation among committee members. It’s important to highlight the successes and note things that could have been done better. Your committee or organization might want to consider posting a “thank you” letter on its website or in the local paper to show appreciation for the event’s volunteers or others who helped make the event a success. Send any materials that you used for promotional purposes to recoverymonth@samhsa.hhs.gov. It’s never too early to start planning next year’s **Recovery Month** event!

How Do I Share the Outcomes of My Event?

The **Recovery Month website** is always interested in stories of your event outcomes and any successes you had in promoting **Recovery Month**. Share them by:

- Posting your event details, materials, or pictures on the **Recovery Month website**, [Facebook page](#), [YouTube channel](#), and [Twitter account](#). If you need help on how to use these online tools, visit the “[New Media Glossary](#)” and “[Developing Your Social Network](#)” documents in this toolkit.

- Sending a copy of your promotional material electronically to recoverymonth@samhsa.hhs.gov or to:

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
ATTN: Consumer Affairs
Center for Substance Abuse Treatment
1 Choke Cherry Road, Second Floor
Rockville, MD 20857

Also, we encourage you to fill out the “[Customer Satisfaction Form](#)” to share your outreach efforts and give feedback.

Additional Recovery Month Resources

For further information on **Recovery Month**, substance use and mental disorders, treatment and recovery, use the following resources:

- **SAMHSA's National Helpline – 1-800-662-HELP (4357)**, or 1-800-487-4889 (TDD) – Provides 24-hour free and confidential information about substance use and mental disorders, prevention, treatment, and recovery referrals in English or Spanish.
- **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.
- **SAMHSA's ADS Center (<http://www.stopstigma.samhsa.gov>)** – Provides information and assistance to develop successful efforts to counteract prejudice and discrimination and promote social inclusion.

Inclusion of websites and event examples 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.