



Dear Comprehensive Opioid Abuse Program (COAP) Grantees,

We would like to invite you to join us in supporting National Recovery Month during September 2018. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA) sponsors National Recovery Month to increase awareness of mental health and substance use disorders and celebrate people who are in recovery. This year's theme is "Join the Voices for Recovery: Invest in Health, Home, Purpose, and Community."

Promoting recovery matters more than ever. As a counter-narrative to the devastating national statistics and personal stories of loss, participating in National Recovery Month allows us all to celebrate the lives of people in recovery as well as the people and organizations that support them. This can be powerful and encouraging for all who participate: people in recovery, their friends and families, and those on the front lines treating and addressing the opioid crisis—you and your community partners.

The goals of the Bureau of Justice Assistance-supported COAP Grant Program are to reduce opioid misuse and the number of overdose fatalities. Supporting and promoting recovery is an important part of achieving these goals. COAP grantees across the country are working on comprehensive, cross-system projects that provide substance misuse treatment and recovery support services. **It is powerful when people from different backgrounds promote a single message.** By participating in National Recovery Month, your COAP grant team can help spread the message that recovery is possible and share the successes of the COAP investments in your community.

Currently, more than 300 organizations and associations are planning events and activities during National Recovery Month. This includes federal agencies such as the U.S. Department of Justice; the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy; the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration; the U.S. Department of Transportation; and the U.S. Department of Defense, as well as national, state, and local organizations. (You can find a full list of planning partners online at <https://recoverymonth.gov/planning-partners>). Join us and participate on social media by following National Recovery Month on Facebook (Recovery Month) and Twitter (@RecoveryMonth).

We invite you to join these efforts by planning an event or activity to highlight your work and promote recovery in your community. To make it a little easier, we have put together this resource packet including ideas, online resources, sample press releases, op eds, and social media posts.

As always, we love to learn from you. Please share your activities and successes with us at COAP@iir.com.

Thanks,



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## Planning Recovery Month Activities: A Step-by-Step Guide

1. Appoint a project leader.
2. Assemble/recruit/appoint a small working team (three to five people) to plan the activities. Ideally, your team should include representatives from:
  - a. Treatment partners
  - b. Law enforcement/corrections
  - c. Public health
  - d. A person in recovery

Set aside time to have an informal “kickoff” meeting as a team. Make it as fun and casual as possible. Check with leadership to see what (if any) funding might be available to support the team’s projects.

3. As a team, brainstorm ideas. Review the ideas here and at other online sources, and come up with your own. Think big!!!
4. Discuss the financial and personnel resources available within your partner organizations to determine how much you can build on what already exists. You may be surprised at what you can already access. For example, your sheriff’s office may have an existing relationship with local media or someone on staff who writes press releases. One of your treatment partners may have an active recovery social group or host regular recovery meetings. If you look at a community calendar, you may find programs or community events that you can build on or become part of (for example, street festivals or back-to-school events). It is always easier to work within existing channels than to try to create something new! So don’t be afraid to beg/borrow/commandeer your friends!
5. Based on your list and the available opportunities, select two to three activities for your team to implement. Make sure that everyone on the team knows who is responsible for which activity.
6. Make a brief calendar/timeline for the three activities. It may be easiest to spread them out across the month. Think about your partners’ other obligations in planning this timeline or who else may need to be involved.
7. If an activity is going to require particularly heavy lifting or special approval from one partner (e.g., asking a treatment provider to organize people in recovery to speak or share stories), meet with appropriate representatives in advance to make sure that this is feasible.
8. Report your proposed activities to the large planning group/governing body for approval (if necessary) and buy-in/support. It is important that all of your partners feel engaged in the ideas. This can be done in a meeting or in an update email.
9. Execute your projects!!!

10. Celebrate with your team! At the end of the month, plan a celebration gathering so that you can document what you did, reflect on what you learned, and brainstorm ideas for next year. Make sure to report back to all your partners, and share your successes with us too! You can share your activities with us at [COAP@iir.com](mailto:COAP@iir.com)!

Things to keep in mind:

- **There will be many recovery celebration events in September, so you don't have to do it all. Look for ways to add your voice to the conversation and to highlight your successes.**
- It will be more meaningful to do two or three well-executed activities than ten sloppy ones. Focus! Unless you have a budget and a staff dedicated to this, don't bite off more than you can handle.
- If you are working with high-level executives, politicians, or other community leaders, be sensitive to the demands on their schedule and competing public obligations. For example, if your health department is providing a special detail for several large community events this fall, it may not be realistic to expect all of those officials to attend a picnic on a Saturday.
- There is no rule requiring that recovery celebrations stop in September. Think of this month as a kickoff, and strategize ways you can integrate recovery into your ongoing work and communications all year.
- Recovery Month is about celebrating the successes of our friends in recovery as well as the hard work that you and your COAP community partners do to support recovery. **MAKE IT FUN!**

# Recommended Recovery Month Activities

## Free/No-Cost

- To set an aspirational tone, at the beginning of each team meeting, invite someone to share his or her recovery story with the team (or share a written recovery story). Stories can come from former clients or graduates of your program, community volunteers, or peer recovery supporters.
- Have a representative or representatives of your project draft an op ed on the importance of celebrating recovery (see Sample 1).
- If you have a social media account post or share information about recovery (see Sample 2), share/retweet information from your partners and national partners.
- Host a press conference with your partners (see Sample 3 for a press release). The focus of the event can be:
  - Highlights of the success of your program
  - Recognizing people in recovery in the community
  - Recognizing community partners (employers, businesses, health-care providers) who support recovery
  - An official proclamation celebrating Recovery Month or your program (mayors, state representatives, city/county officials, etc. may be willing to assist with this)
- Appoint a small group of team members (including a person in recovery or a peer recovery support specialist) to visit key stakeholders and influencers in your project area (e.g., state/local elected officials, executives, the chamber of commerce, the Rotary Club, etc.) and talk about your work, lessons learned, and your successes.
- Host a “community forum” to highlight addiction and recovery in your community. Invite partners from your COAP project to sit on a panel and discuss their different perspectives (see Sample 4 for talking points).

## Low/Minimal Cost

- Partner with behavioral health providers to organize a “thank-you tour.” Invite people at various stages of recovery to thank first responders and others who helped with their journeys. This can include the following:
  - Handwritten notes/cards/drawings
  - Snacks/treats delivered to fire stations and police departments
  - Individual meetings or visits
- Create small, wearable tokens (stickers, buttons, ribbons, bracelets, lanyards, tattoos, etc.) and ask the team to wear them throughout the month.
- Make arrangements to set up “outreach booths” throughout the community to share information about recovery, as well as your project, partners, and access to care. Suggested locations include:
  - Jail visitation areas
  - Probation offices
  - Local churches
  - Local festivals and parks
  - Offices of local veterans’ organizations
  - Local sporting events

### **May Require Funding/Fundraising/Partnerships**

- Host a “recovery night” social event (this can be also held in conjunction with/as a fundraiser), where the partners make arrangements to have alcohol-free spaces or an entirely alcohol-free event. Invite your partners, their families/friends, and other community members. Ideas include:
  - Recovery night at the ballpark
  - Recovery night at a restaurant or concert
  - Recovery night movie
  - Recovery picnic in a park (similar to National Night Out)
- Buy ads in local media outlets (or ask for donated time) and promote resources for treatment and recovery, including local crisis lines and treatment finders or providers. Possible advertisement mechanisms include prerecorded radio PSAs, billboards, newspaper ads, movie screen advertisements, and ads on public transit.

## Sample 1: Recovery Month Op Ed

When Communities Come Together, We Can Make a Difference

The opioid crisis has stolen headlines, torn apart families, filled our jails, and taken too many young lives too soon. No one seems to be winning in this crisis. Often, individuals with a substance use disorder feel isolated and alone. So do their families. Treatment providers feel overwhelmed and underappreciated. First responders are frustrated and exhausted. Yet, every year, millions of Americans experience and recovery from addiction through treatment and recovery. Those stories don't always make headlines, but it's important that we offer support to them and celebrate their successes. Too many people are still unaware that prevention works and that substance use disorders can be treated, just like other chronic health conditions.

Having [been in long-term recovery for XX years/worked in law enforcement for XX years], I have witnessed the positive reality of recovery. Individuals who embrace recovery achieve improved mental and physical health and form stronger relationships with their neighbors, family members, and peers. We need to make more people feel as though recovery is possible. Addiction does not discriminate—it can affect people of all ethnicities, ages, genders, geographic regions, and socioeconomic levels. They need to know that help is available. These individuals can get better, both physically and emotionally, with evidence-based treatment and the appropriate support services.

One great example of hope in the opioid crisis is the *[name of project]*, in *[location]*. We're bringing together partners from across the community to *[project description]*. It has not always been easy. We've had to learn how to work together, try new things, and make changes to the way we do our work. *[Explain more here.]* But the benefits have far outweighed these costs. *[Describe some of your successes here.]* We are proud to be a community coming together to make a difference for people with opioid addiction and their families.

This month, *[name of project]* is celebrating National Recovery Month by *[description]*. We want to recognize and honor the individuals and families who are in long-term recovery. We invite all community members to join the celebration and help stem the opioid crisis. Let people know that free, confidential help is available 24 hours a day through SAMHSA's national helpline, 1 (800) 662-HELP (4357) or 1 (800) 487-4889 (TDD) *[or insert local resources here]*. In addition, you can be part of National Recovery Month by visiting [www.recoverymonth.gov](http://www.recoverymonth.gov) or following @RecoveryMonth on Facebook or Twitter.

Offering support to those experiencing mental and substance use disorders can make a huge difference. Together, we can help others realize the promise of recovery and give families the appropriate support to help their loved ones.

*[Include author name, title, and brief summary of qualifications.]*

## Sample 2: Recovery Month Social Media Posts

September is National @Recovery Month! Follow us and help us celebrate our friends in recovery!

*To promote an event:*

September is National @RecoveryMonth! Join us all month for a celebration of our friends in recovery! In the meantime, don't forget to register for *recovery month event* at [\[link\]](#).

*To promote a media interview, op ed, or article:*

Check out our partner, *person's name's* @RecoveryMonth interview in *local newspaper*. She's highlighting our project's recent successes.

*To encourage interaction:*

We are proud of our friends in recovery! To celebrate @RecoveryMonth, reply and tell us your recovery anniversary!

*To highlight a team member/partner in recovery:*

If you want some @RecoveryMonth inspiration, follow @TagTeamMemberHere.  
(make sure you have permission before doing this)

*To highlight a community partner:*

We're celebrating @RecoveryMonth with great partners who make recovery possible. Follow @OrganizationOrPerson to learn more about their work!

*To share resources:*

Do you or someone you know need help with addiction? Find it at [\[link\]](#)!



## Sample 3: Recovery Month Press Release

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

[Name of official] to Issue Proclamation and Host Community Forum to Raise Awareness of the Opioid Crisis. Substance use disorders are prevalent in our community, and it's imperative that individuals in [city or state] understand how to seek help. According to the Centers for Disease Control, there were more than 63,000 overdose deaths in the United States in 2016. In [city or state] alone, there were more than \_\_\_\_\_ deaths.

To address this significant problem, [name of official] will issue a proclamation for National Recovery Month this September, raising awareness about prevention, treatment, and recovery support services in the area. In addition, [names of panelists] will discuss a collaborative program funded through the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Comprehensive Opioid Abuse Program (COAP) that addresses opioid use disorders. Panelists will share recent successes of the program and highlight individuals in recovery, detailing the journeys they took to get where they are today.

Last year, 43 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 or state] 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 event] CONTACT: [name and phone number of primary contact for event]

## Sample 4: Talking Points and Tips for Community Presentations

### Tips

- Pick a location that is easily accessible via public transit and has plenty of parking.
- Advertise your presentation through partners as well as through social media and traditional media.
- The best community presentations represent a variety of perspectives. Include several partners to present a diversity of opinion and perspectives.
- At the beginning of the event, provide an introduction and do some “level-setting” about:
  - Time set aside for discussion
  - Topic(s) to be covered
  - Ground rules for conversation (if necessary)
  - Expectations for follow-up or next steps
- Provide panelists/speakers with an agenda and a set of questions so that they can prepare.
- Rehearse talking points so that the event stays on message (see example below).
- Brainstorm with your partners to identify any “tricky” or “controversial” issues that may come up, and plan responses to those questions (see examples below).
- Appoint a “host” or “timekeeper” who will keep discussions on track and redirect any dialogue that becomes distracting or takes too much time.

### Sample Talking Points

- Overdose deaths are on the rise. The opioid crisis affects every part of our community.
- Addiction is a chronic disease, and treatment works. Recovery is possible.
- September is National Recovery Month, and we are celebrating recovery in the community.
- Our project, funded through a grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Comprehensive Opioid Abuse Program (COAP), brings together partners from across the community to address the opioid crisis by \_\_\_\_\_.
- We hope that this project will talk about your anticipated outcomes here.
- We are working together and making a difference (explain outcomes/share stories).
- In the long run, we hope to continue this work by [identify any long-term project plans and sustainment strategies you may be considering].  
or  
We’re still looking into options to continue the work after our grant ends and will keep you updated.
- You can help by [if there are direct ways people can be supportive, list them].
- People in the community who need help can find it by [share information about local treatment finder, hotline, etc.].

## **A Few Common Tricky Questions and Sample Responses**

*Shouldn't we just lock up all drug users? or Shouldn't we just let them die?*

No. This hasn't worked in the past, and it isn't working now. Addiction is a disease, and people who are addicted need treatment. Treating addiction is in the interest of public safety.

*Where were you during the crack epidemic (or some variation on this question)?*

Our partners in the treatment community were working to provide treatment and support to people with addiction, just as they are now. We have learned a lot in the past 20 years about what works, and we're getting better about how we handle addiction.

*What can I do?*

Everyone can do a few things to fight addiction and promote recovery:

- Carry Narcan—you never know when you will have a chance to save a life.
- Talk about it—help reduce stigma by talking about addiction.
- Clean out your medicine cabinet—properly dispose of old medications by finding a drop box at [https://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug\\_disposal/takeback/](https://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/takeback/) and <http://rxdrugdropbox.org/>.
- Support people in recovery and their families with compassion—the same way you would support anyone facing any other serious illness or challenge: Make a casserole, send a card, give a hug.