

PROMOTING WELLNESS

A GUIDE TO COMMUNITY ACTION



USING THIS GUIDE

This guide aims to inspire communities to promote wellness. The tools in this guide define wellness and present a number of ways communities can share the message that **wellness is central to recovery from behavioral health conditions**. Since the path to wellness is different for each individual and community, this guide includes a range of recommendations that can be tailored to a community's unique considerations.

What Is Wellness?

Wellness has a personal meaning for each individual, so it can be defined in many ways. In general, wellness refers to overall well-being.

More than the **absence** of disease or stress, wellness involves **having**:

- Purpose in life;
- Active involvement in satisfying work and play;
- Joyful relationships;
- A healthy body and living environment; and
- Happiness.¹

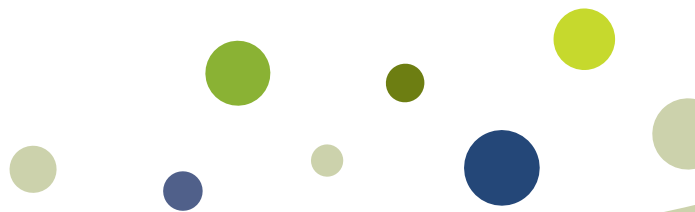
Wellness incorporates many dimensions of health, each of which is interconnected within an individual's total well-being. SAMHSA's Wellness Initiative supports embracing the Eight Dimensions of Wellness—emotional, environmental, financial, intellectual, occupational, physical, social, and spiritual—to achieve longevity and improved quality of life.

Eight Dimensions of Wellness



Source: Adapted from Swarbrick, M. (2006). A Wellness Approach. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 29(4), 311-314.

www.samhsa.gov/wellness-initiative





Why Are We Talking About Wellness?

The Wellness Initiative was inspired by data showing that individuals diagnosed with serious mental illness (SMI) and served by the public mental health system die years earlier than the general population.ⁱⁱ They also experience diabetes, high blood pressure and cholesterol, hypertension, and obesity at 1.5 to 2 times the rate of the general population.^{iii, iv, v}

Wellness can decrease risk factors leading to premature death among individuals with behavioral health conditions.

What Can Communities Do?

By creating an environment that is socially inclusive, communities can help individuals thrive in many areas of their lives and positively impact their overall wellness.

Socially inclusive communities recognize that each member offers unique strengths that help meet the needs of the entire community. They also provide opportunities for individuals in recovery from mental or substance use disorders and trauma to contribute as students, colleagues, parents, spouses, congregants, citizens, community members, hobbyists, workers, and more.

What Is National Wellness Week?

In 2011, SAMHSA launched the first National Wellness Week as part of SAMHSA's Recovery Month to inspire individuals and communities to incorporate the Eight Dimensions of Wellness into their lives. Celebrated the third week of September every year, National Wellness Week is part of SAMHSA's Recovery Support Strategic Initiative and encourages individuals in recovery and those who support them to commit to wellness.

Each day of National Wellness Week focuses on a wellness dimension:

- Sunday:** Environmental Dimension
- Monday:** All Dimensions Work Together
- Tuesday:** Physical Dimension
- Wednesday:** Intellectual Dimension
- Thursday:** Spiritual Dimension
- Friday:** Social and Emotional Dimension
- Saturday:** Financial and Occupational Dimensions

GETTING INVOLVED

National Wellness Week offers an excellent opportunity to improve the overall health of a community while showcasing the talents of its members. Since wellness can look different across communities—based on culture, circumstances, resources and other factors—get creative and brainstorm unique ways to incorporate the Eight Dimensions of Wellness into your community.

If you're involved in an activity, e-mail us at wellness@samhsa.hhs.gov with details about your event. We'll post it, so others can see what you're planning.



NATIONAL PARTNERS:

Encourage your local chapters to take part in National Wellness Week, and help get the word out!



How Can We Integrate Wellness Year-Round?

National Wellness Week is a great opportunity to amplify the wellness message, but there are many ways you can spread the word throughout the year. Consider these steps:

1. Featuring wellness-related articles and case studies in organizational newsletters, e-mail communications, and websites.
2. Creating or expanding a learning community, via a web page or e-mail account, where people can share ideas and announce activities that enhance community wellness.
3. Sharing Wellness Initiative materials at meetings and activities with local officials, schools, or other community leaders.
4. For more ideas, check out what other communities have done at <http://www.samhsa.gov/wellness-initiative>.

What Messages Can We Share?

SAMHSA's vision is that peers with behavioral health conditions achieve optimal health, happiness, recovery, and full and satisfying lives in the community. One way to get there is to communicate consistently about wellness and the health conditions that can be prevented.

Here are some facts to use in presentations, materials, and social media activities:

- Individuals with serious mental illness (SMI) die years earlier than the general population, mostly due to preventable medical conditions, such as heart disease and diabetes.^{vi}
- Wellness can improve quality of life and increase years of life, especially for individuals with behavioral health conditions.
- Wellness incorporates eight dimensions of health, all of which are interconnected.
- National Wellness Week, celebrated in September as part of National Recovery Month, encourages individuals and communities to improve health behaviors, while also exploring their talents, skills, interests, social connections, and environment to incorporate other dimensions of wellness into their lives.

How Do We Partner for Wellness?

Think outside the box when looking for local partnership opportunities. While behavioral health-related organizations may seem like an obvious choice for wellness activities, consider where and how the people you're trying to communicate with spend their time, so that you can reach them in meaningful ways. If you're trying to reach parents, for example, you may consider partnering with an organization that provides day care services to distribute materials about wellness.

Consider partners that share your goals, represent your audience, or can reach the people you want to take action.



APPLYING CULTURAL RELEVANCE

Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services in California made a commitment to Wellness, with a slightly different take on the Eight Dimensions of Wellness. In the spirit of cultural relevancy (and social marketing), the organization sought the input of its community to determine what the eight dimensions mean for them.

Alameda County has been one of the most active communities in the country by organizing wellness dialogues and carrying out engaging wellness activities that include diverse stakeholders.

Alameda County's Dimensions of Wellness





Local groups and professionals that may be interested in teaming up to promote wellness may include:

- Advocates
- Behavioral health providers
- Business and professional associations
- Colleges and universities
- Faith-based organizations and faith leaders
- Hospital and clinic administrators
- Local businesses (e.g., grocery stores, retail stores)
- Local school district or charter schools
- Musicians and performing artists
- Non-profit organizations
- Parent groups
- Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)
- Physical fitness and nutrition practitioners
- Police forces, firefighters, and emergency services workers
- Primary care providers
- Recovery community organizations
- United Way of America
- YMCA
- Youth groups and organizations



PRESENTING ON WELLNESS? USE OUR SLIDES!

At your next partner recruitment meeting, customize our “Bringing Wellness to Your Community” PowerPoint presentation to demonstrate the importance of wellness.

Download it at www.samhsa.gov/wellness-initiative.

DEVELOPING STRONG PARTNERSHIPS FOR WELLNESS

- 1. Create a team to identify and engage partners.** Engaging colleagues, friends, and community members interested in spreading the word about wellness and enlisting their support can help get the job done while sharing the wellness message in your community. Your colleagues may also have connections in the community that can help you expand the reach of your efforts.
- 2. Consider partners that reflect the cultures in your community.** Having an array of partners that reflect the diversity of your community will help ensure that you address your community in a culturally inclusive manner and direct them to culturally appropriate supports and services.
- 3. Prepare materials for partner recruitment.** The two questions most organizations or individuals will ask when you reach out to collaborate is “What’s in it for me?” and “What do you want me to do?” Craft materials that communicate these answers clearly.
- 4. Recruit.** It’s time to pick up the phone, schedule a meeting, and put all you’ve prepared to work! Remember, common ground leads to meaningful collaboration—so emphasize how the wellness message relates to a potential partner’s mission and vision. Avoid terms that may be unfamiliar to them (e.g., use “heart health” instead of “cardiovascular health”), and present the messages that would best compel them to get involved.
- 5. Engage partners early in the planning process.** Depending on the partnership role you’ve defined for your activity or event, a true partner should be engaged from the beginning. Partnerships are a two-way street, so consider the benefits to partners for their support, such as positive earned media coverage, online recognition for local wellness activities, cross-promotional efforts on social media, and opportunities to network with other leaders in your community.



How Can We Use Social Media?

Use SAMHSA's Facebook page and Twitter account (#ShareWellness) as active forums to start conversations about Wellness, engage with your target audiences, and encourage the use of Wellness materials on the SAMHSA website.

You can promote Wellness tips, alert your audience to upcoming events, and remind your community about the Wellness Community Activation Kit's Step-by-Step Guide, PowerPoint, fact sheets, and PSAs.

How Do We Talk With Media Outlets?

Reaching out to local media organizations is one of the most effective strategies to share information about wellness for a broad audience. Media can include magazines, newspapers, television and radio stations, as well as online news and blog sites. Take advantage of the media's role in educating and informing the public on important issues by working with them to raise awareness about the value of wellness.

LEARNING YOUR COMMUNITY'S MEDIA LANDSCAPE

Are there one or two daily newspapers? Are there community or ethnic publications? Is there a television news station in your city or town, or is it located several towns away? Does the radio news feature interviews with local personalities?

As you consider the media options in your community, think about those that would be the best suited to report about wellness and your wellness activities. To obtain media coverage in your community, you can request, or "pitch," feature stories, expert resources, customizable pre-written articles, calendar items for local events, op-ed (i.e., opposite the editorial page) articles and letters to the editor, and blog entries.

PITCHING TO THE MEDIA

- Be brief—Before making the call, narrow your message down to a brief sentence or two. Tell reporters who you are and where you are calling from and that you have an idea for an important health story.
- Be creative—Consider the various perspectives and elements that a reporter could use to cover the story. Know the kinds of stories the reporter often writes and try to fit your story into their mold.
- Be persistent—If a health reporter is not interested in covering your story during National Wellness Week, an arts and entertainment reporter may be if it is art-related.
- Be compelling—Stories of people helping others overcome challenges in your community are powerful. They illustrate the importance of well-being and provide the human-interest angle that reporters love.
- Be prepared—When you offer a spokesperson for your story, be sure that the person is willing and ready to talk to a reporter, understands the overall outreach goal, and is prepared with the appropriate messages.
- Be convincing—Use compelling data (included above) that shows wellness is essential for overall health and recovery so that reporters will be more likely to believe your messages.
- Be quotable—Think about the best way to describe the impact of wellness and prepare some short sentences for your spokespersons in advance of their interviews.



PARTNERING FOR CREATIVE EXPRESSION OF WELLNESS

As part of National Wellness Week in 2012, Peerlink, the National Empowerment Center, the National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse, NAMI Star Center, and the Family Cafe TA Center partnered to host the Wellness Works Initiative.

The organizations invited peers in recovery from mental and substance use disorders and trauma to submit a piece of original creative work expressing what wellness meant in their life and for the community.

Artists submitted art, poems, songs, and videos to display in the [Wellness Works online gallery](#), raising public awareness about the importance of embracing a wellness-based perspective.



How Do We Collaborate With Public Opinion Leaders?

Public opinion leaders can extend the reach and impact of your wellness events and messages by providing information from a reliable source. When messages are delivered by public opinion leaders, relevant audiences will be more receptive to the information and hopefully, motivated to improve their wellness.

FINDING THE RIGHT LEADER

When we think of public opinion leaders, we often think of legislators, but there are other trusted, respected figures who can help you reach your audiences and inspire them to take action.

To identify the right public opinion leader to approach, consider your audience. Who is important to them? Who do they listen to? Then look at the four categories of types of public opinion leaders (see below) and start writing down names.

Public Opinion Leaders

Elected Officials—Mayors, City Council members, school board members, district/county judges, County Board members, State representatives, members of Congress

Civic Leaders—Government officials, police/fire chiefs, school superintendents, business owners/CEOs, Chamber of Commerce officers

Respected Leaders—Religious leaders, business and neighborhood association officers, youth/school athletic coaches, college/university leaders, local celebrities or heroes, behavioral health advocates

Networked Leaders—PTA officers, charity organization leaders, behavioral health support service providers, union organization leaders



STEPS TO GET A WELLNESS PROCLAMATION

1. Identify the best person/office, such as city councilmember, State representative, or congressperson, to approach.
2. Contact the government official's office to request the proclamation using formal request instructions on their website.
3. Draft your proclamation and include the date on which you would like the proclamation issued.
4. Make an appointment to meet with the official for the signing of the proclamation (if possible).

ASKING PUBLIC OPINION LEADERS

Celebrating National Wellness Week offers the perfect opportunity to solicit action and support from public opinion leaders. Here are some ideas that engaged public opinion leaders can help promote wellness activities in your community:

- **Sponsor a proclamation**—Elected officials often write proclamations to commend individuals or to announce upcoming events or celebrations. See the sidebar for steps for securing one.
- **Serve as an honorary chairperson**—A high-visibility public opinion leader could serve as your wellness event or program's honorary chairperson, creating multiple opportunities to bring more attention to the issue of wellness in your community. These leaders can speak at events, participate in media interviews, and even lead wellness activities with your audience.
- **Byline an opinion piece or letter to the editor**—What appears in the local newspaper's editorial section still matters in many communities. Encourage a public opinion leader to write and submit an op-ed or letter to your local newspaper supporting wellness and its importance.

ENDNOTES

- i Dunn, H. L. (1961). *High-Level Wellness*. Arlington, VA: Beatty Press.
- ii Parks, J., Svendsen, D., Singer, P., & Foti, M. E. (Eds.). (2006). Morbidity and mortality in people with serious mental illness. Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) Medical Directors Council.
- iii Fagiolini, A., Frank, E., Scott, J. A., Turkin, S., & Kupfer, D. J. (2005). Metabolic syndrome in bipolar disorder: Findings from the Bipolar Disorder Center for Pennsylvanians. *Bipolar Disorders*, 7(5), 424–430.
- iv McEvoy, J. P., Meyer, J. M., Goff, D. C., et al. (2005). Prevalence of the metabolic syndrome in patients with schizophrenia: Baseline results from the Clinical Antipsychotic Trials of Intervention Effectiveness (CATIE) schizophrenia trial and comparison with national estimates from NHANES III. *Schizophrenia Research*, 80(1), 19–32.
- v Newcomer, J. W. (2005). Second-generation (atypical) antipsychotics and metabolic effects: A comprehensive literature review. *CNS Drugs*, 19(suppl 1), 1–93.
- vi Parks, 2006.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For additional tools and resources visit the following organizations and Web sites:

SAMHSA-HRSA Center for Integrated Health Solutions

<http://www.integration.samhsa.gov/>

Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation

<http://www.bu.edu/cpr>

Faces & Voices of Recovery

<http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org>

healthfinder®

<http://www.healthfinder.gov>

Million Hearts®

<http://www.millionhearts.hhs.gov>

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) 1-800-950-NAMI (1-800-950-6264)

<http://www.nami.org>

National Empowerment Center 1-800-POWER2U (1-800-769-3728)

<http://www.power2u.org>

National Wellness Institute

<http://www.nationalwellness.org>

Peerlink National Technical Assistance Program

<http://www.peerlinktac.org>

The Wellness Institute

<http://www.welltacc.org>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

<http://www.hhs.gov>

Wellness Works Initiative

<http://www.power2u.org/wellnessworks>