



JOIN THE VOICES FOR RECOVERY

“I am so grateful to all of those who stuck by my side and didn’t give up on me, even after I had given up on myself. Every day is a new opportunity to learn and grow, and I do not take any of it for granted. I am so grateful to be on this journey and to have found this new way of life.”

Jenna

TARGETED OUTREACH (FIRST RESPONDERS)



FIRST RESPONDERS

First responders are often the first line of defense to handle challenging, life threatening, and complex situations. Police officers, firefighters, paramedics, and search and rescue personnel provide crisis interventions for individuals with mental and substance use disorders and can direct them to the emotional and physical supports they need. Now more than ever, emergency service personnel need the tools to communicate with people in crisis, identify symptoms of an issue, and administer life-saving medications, like naloxone.

Each September, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) (<https://www.samhsa.gov>), within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) (<https://www.hhs.gov/>), sponsors **National Recovery Month (Recovery Month)** (<https://recoverymonth.gov>). This observance celebrates the millions of Americans who are in recovery from mental and substance use disorders, reminding us that treatment is effective and that people can and do recover. It also serves to help reduce the stigma and misconceptions that cloud public understanding of mental and substance use disorders, which potentially discourage others from seeking help.

The 2019 **Recovery Month** theme, “*Join the Voices for Recovery: Together We Are Stronger*,” emphasizes the need to share

resources and build networks across the country to support the many paths to recovery—and sheds light on the crucial role first responders play in doing so. It reminds us that mental and substance use disorders affect all of us and that we are all part of the solution. The **Recovery Month** observance will highlight inspiring stories to help thousands of people from all walks of life find the path to hope, health, and overall wellness.

During the 30th anniversary of **Recovery Month**, communities across the nation will reflect on their positive strides and their plans to make recovery support services more accessible so people can live meaningful and productive lives. Over the years, recovery-oriented organizations have also played an essential role in states, cities, towns, and neighborhoods to help countless people start and sustain their recovery.

The following portion of this toolkit will provide the necessary materials and information for educating first responders about providing quality care and acting with sensitivity toward people living with mental and/or substance use disorders, especially people in crisis.

The Issue

The effects of mental and substance use disorders are impacting communities every day—especially the opioid crisis. According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), an estimated 2.1 million people aged 12 or older had an opioid use disorder in 2017. First responders are on the front lines of helping their communities, and they need the proper training and tools to promote long-term recovery and help people live healthier lives. Appropriately responding to those in need requires an understanding of common mental disorders and misused substances, a knowledge of effective strategies for de-escalation when necessary, and an awareness of community networks and available resources.

- A rising number of emergency calls are from people dealing with opioid overdoses. In 2017, from July 2016 through September 2017, a total of 142,557 emergency room visits (15.7 per 10,000 visits) from 52 jurisdictions in 45 states were suspected opioid-involved overdoses. This rate increased on average by 5.6 percent per quarter.ⁱ
- According to SAMHSA's Treatment Episode Data Set, in 2016 the number of admissions to substance use treatment for alcohol use aged 12 or older was 552,990.
- Further, in 2016 the number of admissions to substance use treatment for methamphetamine use aged 12 or older was 178,547.
 - » This number has steadily increased since 2011, when there were just 115,244 admissions for methamphetamine use.
 - » Additionally, there were 114,653 outpatient hospital discharges for patients who received medication-assisted opioid therapy in 2016.
- According to NSDUH, an estimated 1.4 million adults aged 18 or older attempted suicide in 2017.
- The 2017 NSDUH report also found that about 3.1 million adults aged 18 or older had co-occurring serious mental illness and a substance use disorder the past year.
- Kratom—a plant consumed for its stimulant effects and as an opioid substitute—is on the rise, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC also says that published case reports have associated kratom exposure with psychosis, seizures, and deaths.
 - » A CDC study found that from 2010 to 2015, cases of kratom exposure rose from 26 to 263. The FDA has reported that at least 44 deaths can be tied to exposure to kratom in the U.S.
- According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, in 2017, there were 37,133 alcohol-impaired driving fatalities, accounting for 29 percent of the 2017 overall crash fatalities. First responders will undoubtedly see the effects of alcohol-impaired driving when responding to crashes on our roadways.



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Recovery Spotlight

Consider promoting a Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety training for local first responders. The courses are designed for public safety professionals and focus on warning signs and risk factors, de-escalation techniques, and early intervention options. [Find a local course](#) and encourage first responders in your area to attend by sharing the information, along with relevant facts and figures, on your social media channels:

- SAMPLE Tweet: These 8-hour trainings on Mental Health First Aid can help you support your neighbors #RisforRecovery. Check out upcoming courses nearby: [LINK TO TRAINING LOCATOR - <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/take-a-course/find-a-course/>]
- SAMPLE Facebook Post: The National Council for Behavioral Health offers Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety—this 8-hour course is designed to help police officers and first responders better understand mental illnesses and addictions. If you're a public safety professional looking for tools to better serve your neighbors, check out upcoming courses nearby: [LINK TO TRAINING LOCATOR - <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/take-a-course/find-a-course/>]

Additionally, [SAMHSA's](#) Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) 63 is a go-to resource for healthcare professionals and caregivers supporting individuals in recovery from opioid use disorder. This evidence-based best-practice guidance also has shareable facts and figures for both formal trainings and social media outreach. Consider sharing this information on social media:

- SAMPLE Tweet: An estimated 1.9 million Americans have opioid use disorder related to opioid pain relievers. First responders, refresh your knowledge on the signs and

strategies for safe and effective response here: [LINK TO TIP 63 - <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/TIP-63-Medications-for-Opioid-Use-Disorder-Full-Documents-Including-Executive-Summary-and-Parts-1-5-/SMA18-5063FULLDOC>]

#RecoveryMonth

- SAMPLE Facebook Post: An estimated 1.9 million Americans have opioid use disorder related to opioid pain relievers. Identifying patients who may have conditions related to substance use often begins with the emergency responders. Support recovery and know the signs and strategies for safe and effective response: [LINK TO TIP 63 - <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/TIP-63-Medications-for-Opioid-Use-Disorder-Full-Documents-Including-Executive-Summary-and-Parts-1-5-/SMA18-5063FULLDOC>] #RecoveryMonth

What You Can Do

Recovery advocates can share tips with first responders on how best to incorporate support strategies for individuals with mental and substance use disorders, including:

- Law enforcement agencies can establish opioid overdose response programs to train officers in the handling and use of life-saving medication, like naloxone. Trainings can often be provided by local departments of health, community-based organizations, or healthcare facilities, which can prepare officers to carry and administer naloxone to local residents.
- Public servants and emergency response personnel can familiarize themselves with the basics of recovery and recovery-oriented care, managing expectations for positive outcomes in encounters with persons experiencing co-occurring or substance use conditions. For example, the “Treatment and Recovery Support Services” section of the **Recovery Month** toolkit offers an overview of the various treatment options available for people

experiencing these conditions and those who care for them.

- Public officials can publicize treatment resources, like [SAMHSA's Behavioral Treatment Services Locator](#) and [SAMHSA's National Helpline](#), 1-800-662-HELP (4357). These free and confidential and anonymous information sources are essential self-help and peer support offerings that can assist in recovery even before first responders are called to the scene.
- First responders should remain constantly aware of these at-risk populations in their daily work. According to the CDC, suicide is the tenth leading cause of death in the U.S. Some populations—such as American Indians and Alaska Natives, people in justice and child welfare settings, and members of the military—are at higher risk than others for suicide. For example, according to the 2017 NSDUH findings, the number of American Indians or Alaska Natives who attempted suicide tripled from 2016 to 2017.

Resources

First responders who are interested in supporting recovery have many resources. The following materials provide useful information and trainings for emergency response personnel:

- **Get Naloxone Now** (<https://www.getnaloxonenow.org/>): Contains interactive trainings on naloxone administration for professional first responders.
- **Harm Reduction Coalition** (<https://harmreduction.org/>): Provides resources on naloxone distribution and partnering with law enforcement to advocate for individuals and communities affected by drugs.
- **Mental Health First Aid** (<https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/>): Lists training resources for supporting people with substance abuse and co-occurring disorders.
- **National Council For Behavioral Health** (<https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/>): Details guidance on policy action, consulting, and best practices in behavioral health.
- **National Institute on Drug Abuse's Brief on Naloxone for Opioid Overdose** (<https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/naloxone-opioid-overdose-life-saving-science/naloxone-opioid-overdose-life-saving-science>): Includes information and resources for those who may use naloxone to combat opioid overdoses in their work.
- **National Training and Technical Assistance Center: Naloxone Toolkit** (<https://bjatta.bja.ojp.gov/tools/naloxone/Naloxone-Background>): Offers information and resources for law enforcement agencies to establish a naloxone program.
- **Office of National Drug Control Policy's Fentanyl Safety Recommendations for First Responders** (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/key-issues/fentanyl/>): Provides a fact sheet with evidence-based recommendations for first responders when they encounter fentanyl during their daily activities.
- **Police-Mental Health Collaboration** (<https://pmhctoolkit.bja.gov/>): Offers a toolkit with resources for law enforcement agencies to partner with mental healthcare providers.
- **Police, Treatment, and Community Collaborative** (<https://ptaccollaborative.org/>): Serves as an alliance of practitioners in law enforcement, behavioral health, community, advocacy, research, and public policy, whose mission is to strategically widen community behavioral health and social service options available through law enforcement diversion.

- **Prescription Drug Abuse Policy System** (<http://www.pdaps.org/>): Contains information on policies to promote the safe use of controlled medications and reduce the impact of overdose.
- **SAMHSA's Crisis Intervention Team Methods for Using Data to Inform Practice** (<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Crisis-Intervention-Team-CIT-methods-for-Using-Data-to-Inform-Practice-/SMA18-5065>): Helps local systems use data to implement Crisis Intervention Team programs that can improve the safety and effectiveness of law enforcement response to people experiencing crises related to mental or substance use disorders.
- **SAMHSA's Disaster Technical Assistance Center (DTAC) Supplemental Research Bulletin for First Responders** (<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/dtac/supplementalresearchbulletin-firstresponders-may2018.pdf>): Explores protective factors and interventions to reduce behavioral health risk in first responders.
- **SAMHSA's DTAC Training Courses** (<https://www.samhsa.gov/dtac/education-training>): Lists free online trainings designed to improve awareness and understanding of the behavioral effects of disasters and emergency response.
- **SAMHSA's Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit** (<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Opioid-Overdose-Prevention-Toolkit/SMA18-4742>): Offers strategies to healthcare providers, communities, and local governments for developing practices and policies to help prevent opioid-related overdoses and deaths.
- **Stop Overdose** (<http://stopoverdose.org/>): Contains information for both professionals and non-professionals on opioid use disorders and overdose, including police-directed resources.
- **Suicide Prevention Resource and Training Center** (<http://training.sprc.org/>): Provides resources for training in preventing suicide and emergency response.

This list is not exhaustive of all available resources. 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.

¹ Vivolo-Kantor AM, Seth P, Gladden RM, et al. Vital Signs: Trends in Emergency Department Visits for Suspected Opioid Overdoses — United States, July 2016–September 2017. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2018;67:279–285. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6709e1>