



Join the Wellness Movement

GUIDE ON COMMUNITY ACTIVATION

What Is Wellness?

Wellness has a personal meaning to each individual and can therefore be defined in many ways. SAMHSA's Wellness Initiative defines it as the presence of:¹

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

Wellness also involves having valued roles, as an employee, volunteer, student, co-worker, parent, sister, brother, teacher, friend, or spouse. Each of them enhances our identity, drives our daily activities, fires our passions, and is critical to the recovery process.

Through its Wellness Initiative, SAMHSA pledges to promote wellness for people with mental health and substance use challenges by motivating individuals, organizations, and communities to take action and work toward improved quality of life, cardiovascular health, and decreased early mortality rates.

Wellness Matters

Wellness incorporates many dimensions of health, each of which is interconnected within an individual's total well-being (see Figure 1). Wellness has bearing on social factors that can lead one to or prevent them from achieving social inclusion. Experiences with trauma, poverty, unemployment and underemployment, and even education can define individual wellness. Left unaddressed, these experiences can impact a person's whole well-being. Similarly, wellness can significantly affect the ability to thrive in different areas of life.

Wellness is especially important for people who have mental health or substance use disorders, because it directly relates to quality and longevity of life.



USING THIS GUIDE

This Guide on Community Activation is meant to inspire action around wellness. Its tools and information support a variety of activities that enhance the wellness message and promote recovery from mental health and substance use disorders.

FIGURE 1:
Eight Dimensions of Wellness



Source: Adapted from Swarbrick, M. (2006).

¹ Dunn, H. L. (1961). *High-Level Wellness*. Beatty Press: Arlington, VA.





KICK UP YOUR HEELS, OR PAINT HOW YOU FEEL!

No matter how you shake or wiggle, dance is just plain good for you. It relieves stress, gets you moving, and prompts you to interact with others—three wellness dimensions in one activity!

In 2011, hundreds of people across the country got up and boogied as part of a **Line Dance for Wellness** during National Wellness Week; some groups even hosted a Line Dance for Wellness Party! Moving good is feeling good.

Then again, maybe you want to exercise a muscle of a different kind: your creative one. Artistic expression is great for supporting the intellectual dimension of wellness and could range from writing poetry to creating sculpture to practicing performance art. The point is to stimulate an area of your personality that can provide pleasure and satisfaction.

Consider participating in **Artistic Expression for Wellness** during National Wellness Week.

National Wellness Week and Beyond

In 2011, SAMHSA and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration/Office of Women's Health launched the first National Wellness Week as part of SAMHSA's Recovery Month (September) to inspire individuals and communities to incorporate the Eight Dimensions of Wellness into their lives. Given that individuals with mental health and substance use disorders represent a sizeable number of Americans who experience cardiovascular disease, SAMHSA aligned its Wellness efforts with Million Hearts™, with a shared goal of preventing 1 million heart attacks and strokes over the next 5 years.

SAMHSA also collaborates with national organizations; these partnerships are important, because these organizations engage their local chapters to get the word out about the Wellness Initiative activities and resources.

National Wellness Week is a way to engage individuals and communities to improve health behaviors, while also exploring their talents, skills, interests, social connections, and environment, and to explore and incorporate other dimensions of wellness. It is part of SAMHSA's Recovery Support Strategic Initiative and encourages persons in recovery and those who support them to take the Pledge for Wellness.

Getting Involved

National Wellness Week features a different focus every day. The first day focuses on all dimensions. The rest are:

Tuesday: Physical Dimension

Wednesday: Intellectual Dimension

Thursday: Spiritual Dimension

Friday: Social and Emotional Dimensions

Saturday: Financial and Occupational Dimensions

Sunday: Environmental Dimension

If you're already involved, be sure you're on the National Wellness Week map! Email us at wellness@samhsa.hhs.gov with details about your activity or event.

Five Ways to Integrate Wellness Year-Round

National Wellness Week is only one opportunity to educate a community, even those inside your inner circle, about wellness. Consider the following activities throughout the year:

- 1. Feature a wellness-related message article or case study** in each of your organization's newsletters, email communications, or on your Web site.
- 2. Bring the SAMHSA Wellness Initiative materials** to each meeting or convening activity, whether it's with a local official, a school, or another community leader.
- 3. Take 5 minutes** at the beginning of each internal meeting at work to share and solicit good news or experiences—whether it's a niece's birthday party, a compliment you received at work, or a great meal. The point is to reinforce those valued roles.

4. **Hold a contest with co-workers or friends** to determine who can get the most bang for their buck at the grocery store each week. How far can you make your dollar stretch?

5. **Create a learning forum** (via a webpage or email account) where members of your community can submit ideas or activities that advance wellness.

More than 3,000 individuals and national and community organizations are taking action for wellness. Be one of them!

Talking About Wellness

Early mortality. It's an ugly phrase, but it's the reality for people with mental health and substance use disorders.

People diagnosed with serious mental illness and served by the public mental health system die, on average, **decades earlier** than the general population.³ Did you know that this group also experiences:

- Higher rates of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, respiratory disease, and infectious disease?
- High rates of smoking, substance abuse, and obesity?
- An increased vulnerability due to poverty, social isolation, trauma, and incarceration?

SAMHSA's vision is that people with mental health and substance use disorders achieve optimal health, happiness, recovery, and a full and satisfying life in the community. One way to get there is to communicate consistently (and positively) about wellness and the health conditions that can be prevented.

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

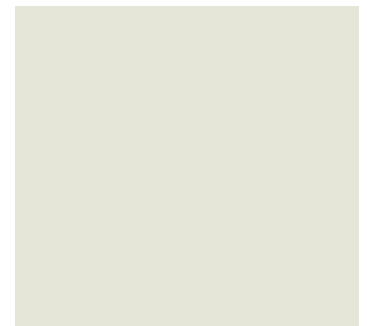
1. People with mental health and substance use disorders die decades earlier than the general population, mostly due to preventable medical conditions, such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes.
2. Wellness is especially important for people who have mental health or substance use disorders because it directly relates to their quality and longevity of life.
3. Wellness incorporates eight dimensions of health, each of which is interconnected within the framework of an individual's total well-being.
4. National Wellness Week (celebrated in September as part of National Recovery Month) is meant to move individuals and communities to improve health behaviors, while also exploring their talents, skills, interests, social connections, and environment to incorporate other dimensions of wellness.



APPLYING CULTURAL RELEVANCE

Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services in California took SAMHSA's Pledge for 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 look like for them (see Figure 2). Alameda County has been one of the most active in the country in advancing the wellness dialog, perhaps because the buy-in from the community has been there since day 1. Learn more at www.alamedacounty10x10.org.

FIGURE 2:
Alameda County's Dimensions of Wellness



³ 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.



PARTNERING FOR CREATIVE EXPRESSION OF WELLNESS

As part of National Wellness Week, Peerlink, the National Empowerment Center, and the other Consumer and Consumer Supporter Technical Assistance Centers—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 and persons in recovery 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.



PRESENTING ON WELLNESS? USE OUR SLIDES!

At your next wellness talk at a workshop or meeting, customize our “Bringing Wellness to the Community” PowerPoint presentation to inspire your community to improve its wellness. Download it at www.samhsa.gov/wellness.

Partnering to Build Wellness Communities Everywhere

Partnering with local organizations in your community is a valuable investment of your time, especially when you consider the needs of the people you’re trying to reach. For example, if your goal is to educate mothers, you may consider partnering with an organization that provides day care services to distribute materials about wellness.

Get Creative! Consider Unlikely Partners

Think outside the box when looking for 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.

School leaders, hospital and clinic administrators, faith leaders, physical fitness and nutrition practitioners, and local business owners may be interested in teaming up to promote wellness. Always consider partners that share your goals, represent your audience, or can reach the people you want to take action.

How to Develop Great Partnerships for Wellness

- 1. Create an “Action Team” to help identify and engage partners.** Engaging colleagues, friends, and community members interested in public education about wellness and enlisting their support can help get the job done while spreading the wellness message in your community. Your colleagues may also have connections in the community that can help you expand the reach of your partnership efforts.
- 2. Prepare materials for partner recruitment.** The first question most organizations or individuals will ask when you reach out to collaborate is “What do you want me to do?” Be prepared, and offer materials that describe the activity, as well as materials to describe how you’d like partners to participate.
- 3. Identify 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.

Targeting Outreach to Promote Wellness

To get the word out about the value of wellness, you have to identify your audiences, then select the most appropriate channels to get out the wellness word!

- Advocates
- Behavioral health providers
- Business and professional associations
- Faith-based organizations
- Local businesses (e.g., grocery stores, retail stores)
- Local school district or charter schools
- Musicians
- Non-profit organizations
- Parent groups
- Primary care providers
- Recovery community organizations
- Youth groups and organization

Talking with Community 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. These outlets take the lead in educating and informing the public on important issues that affect the community and are in a prime position to raise awareness about the value of wellness.

Learn Your Media Landscape

Learn about the main sources of news and information in your community. For example, 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, drop-in articles, calendar items for local events, op-ed articles and letters to the editor, and blog entries.

Tips When 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 opportunity for an important health story.
- **Be creative**—Consider the various perspectives and elements that a reporter could use to cover the story. Keep in mind 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 interested in covering your event if it is art-related.
- **Be compelling**—Stories of real people helping other real people 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 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.



GIVE MEDIA WHAT THEY NEED

Print media outlets need strong visual opportunities, such as activities and crowds

Radio media outlets need interesting sound opportunities, such as spokespeople to record for interviews or music and sounds at event.

TV media outlets are video-based and need motion to visually tell their stories.

Online media outlets need online materials, including links to relevant digital and social media resources and content.



STEPS TO GET A WELLNESS PROCLAMATION

1. Identify the best person/office, such as city councilmember, State representative, or congressperson, to approach for the proclamation.
2. Contact the government official's office to request the proclamation using formal request instructions on their Web site.
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).

Collaborating 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 take action and 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 Table 1) and start writing down names. Does your audience pay more attention to more traditional leaders, such as elected or civic leaders? Or perhaps your audience looks to people who are not in authoritative positions in your community, such as respected or networked leaders.

TABLE 1: Types of 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, behavioral health advocates

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

What to Ask Public Opinion Leaders

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

- **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**—Asking a public opinion leader to serve as your wellness event or program's honorary chairperson creates multiple opportunities for a high-visibility person to bring more attention to the issue of wellness in your community. They can speak at events, participate in media interviews, and even lead a wellness activity with your audience.

- **Byline an opinion piece or letter to the editor**—What appears in your 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.

Planning Wellness Events and Activities

One-on-one interaction is the most effective form of communication. The more you interact with people through events, community meetings, workshops, and other activities and allow opportunities for real conversations, the better they will understand how wellness fits into their lives.

Your Event Planning Checklist

While events vary in size and scope, and although your community event partners may be in charge of some of the elements below, it is wise to keep in mind this sequence of activities and consideration as you plan your next wellness event or community activity.

Up to 2 months out

- Hold initial organizing meeting
- Establish planning committee
- Secure commitments from participating organizations
- Appoint someone to coordinate all of the elements of the event
- Select the date, time, and duration of the event
- Obtain permission to use the event site (Be cognizant of possible union regulations)
- Design the overall event plan (What time will it begin and end? How many different activities will there be? Who will speak?)
- Develop a detailed budget (If a partner organization has agreed to cover your event expenses, it is still wise to anticipate resources including volunteer time, materials, audio/visual equipment, etc.)
- Begin approaching local organizations and businesses for funds/assistance
- Begin scheduling speakers and entertainment (if any)
- Acquire necessary permits and insurance
- Establish logistics and media committees
- Determine whether you need liability insurance

1 month out

- Write first news release announcing event
- Develop press list
- Design and distribute posters and fliers
- Send out promotional mailing to potential participants (organizations and individuals)
- Contact press for interviews, feature stories, and talk show appearances
- Follow up with press efforts to publicize event
- Send out announcements to community calendars



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR PROMOTING WELLNESS

For additional tools and resources to support your efforts to promote wellness in your community, visit the following organizations and Web sites:

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
www.samhsa.gov

SAMHSA's Wellness Initiative
www.samhsa.gov/wellness

SAMHSA's Resource Center to Promote Acceptance, Dignity and Social Inclusion Associated with Mental Health (ADS Center)
www.stopstigma.samhsa.gov

U.S. Food and Drug Administration Office of Women's Health (FDA/OWH)
www.fda.gov/womens

Million Hearts™
www.millionhearts.hhs.gov

Wellness Works Initiative
www.power2u.org/wellnessworks

The Wellness Institute
www.welltacc.org

3 weeks out

- Schedule volunteer crews (security, clean-up, stage, first aid professional)
- Confirm date with all the speakers
- Reserve stage risers, podium, and sound equipment
- Arrange for banners, background music, and other attractions at site
- Send out complete event update with speakers list, celebrities, activities, etc.
- Prepare talking points for media interviews
- Review talking points with volunteers and spokespersons
- Consult with APA PR department staff for guidance regarding planning challenges

2 weeks out

- Keep up press activities (Secure commitments for coverage, meet with editorial boards, do talk show interviews)

1 week out

- Confirm details with media and logistics committees, volunteers, and vendors
- Check in on publicity progress and redistribute leaflets and posters as necessary

Day of event

- Anticipate problems and think through possible solutions
- Double-check instructions with everyone
- Use volunteers to assist people navigating the space and event, making sure it is accessible
- Request feedback from participants about their experiences

After event

- Send thank you notes
- Assess and summarize participant feedback
- Debrief with staff and volunteers to discuss what went well and what could be better next time
- Share your successes with participants and the media

For more information and resources about wellness, visit SAMHSA's Wellness Initiative Web site at www.samhsa.gov/wellness.



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