

**USING YOUR STORY TO TALK WITH DIFFERENT
GROUPS OF PEOPLE ABOUT ADDICTION, RECOVERY AND STIGMA AND
DISCRIMINATION**

Tip: No matter who you're talking to, make sure that they understand what recovery means – being free from addiction to alcohol and other drugs. There are many pathways to recovery – on your own, mutual help groups, professional treatment, medication-assisted treatment, faith – but regardless of the path, the people that you are talking to need to know that when someone is in recovery they aren't trying to stop using alcohol or illicit drugs, but are free from addiction.

Here are some messages that you can use to talk with different audiences:

Doctors, nurses and other health care professionals

- Addiction to alcohol and other drugs is a disease that affects as many as one in ten Americans.
- Addiction to alcohol and other drugs is a disease that can be identified and treated.
- Breaking the cycle of addiction is critical to a healthy society. It is easier and less costly to treat abuse before it becomes an addiction and to treat addiction in its early stages.

Appointed and elected officials

- Helping people achieve long-term recovery from addiction saves society money in the long term when the costs of health care, incarceration, crime, and the toll on family members are taken into account.
- Discrimination against people in recovery in employment, housing, education and health care is unfair and counterproductive as and it makes recovery even more difficult to achieve.
- Policies should help, not hurt, people who are in recovery and working to improve their lives.
- Millions of Americans are in long-term recovery from alcohol and other drug addictions and tens of thousands more get well every year. They are living proof that recovery is happening and that there is a real solution to the problem of drug and alcohol addiction.
- It's time to stop blaming the victim and start treating the disease of addiction.

Business sector

- Giving employees access to confidential screening, counseling and treatment for alcohol and other drug problems is likely to curb companies' health care costs and boost productivity.

- Discriminating against people in recovery in employment makes it even more difficult for them to turn their lives around and be productive workers and members of society.

General Public

- Recovery from addiction takes time, patience and support. There are many ways that people can get the help they need and we can never give up on helping family members and friends reclaim their lives.
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- Discrimination against people in recovery in employment, housing, education and health care is unfair and counterproductive as it makes recovery even more difficult to achieve.
- We should be helping, not hurting, people who are in recovery and working to improve their lives.