

National Recovery Month

Prevention Works • Treatment is Effective • People Recover

EVENT PLANNING

Checklist For Planning A Successful Event

Organizing an event for **National Recovery Month (Recovery Month)** is a great way to celebrate people in recovery, their families, and others throughout the community who make living in recovery possible. Events help unite those already in recovery and can broadly spread the message that prevention works, treatment is effective, and people recover.

Recovery Month events, no matter how large or small, can go a long way in promoting the benefits of recovery. Examples of **Recovery Month events in communities** across the country may provide inspiration on how to plan your event. The **Recovery Month Toolkit** also provides extensive information on event planning, media outreach, and other resources.

Following are resources and tips to help you plan a successful **Recovery Month** event.

Questions to consider before planning your event:

- What type of event do we want to have (e.g., walk/run, rally, BBQ, talent show, etc.)?
- How much money do we have to hold the event? (Refer to the [Fundraising: Tips and Tools Document](#) on raising funds.)
- Are there other organizations that we should partner with?
- When should we hold the event?
 - **Consider:** Keep in mind other events that may be happening at the same time. This way you can avoid competing dates, or perhaps collaborate with another partner to combine events.
- Where should we have the event?
 - **Consider:** Is the location convenient and what logistics are required? For instance, if your event is outdoors, you may need a tented area and portable restrooms. If you're hosting a benefit concert, you will need audiovisual equipment such as a sound board, speakers, and microphones.
- Do we need any special ordinances or permits?
- Will food be served?
 - **Consider:** Do we need access to a kitchen? How will we keep the food warm or cold?
- What activities will take place at our event?
 - **Consider:** Do we want a special guest speaker, entertainment, games, etc.?
- How will we promote the event?

Create a **Recovery Month** Event Timeline

Being organized and prepared are keys to planning an event. When preparing your event timeline, work backwards from the actual date of your event. Think through the activities and tasks that need to take place at each step, and develop milestones that are tied to select dates within your checklist. Remember, planning times vary depending on the size of your event. For instance, a small dinner may take a week to plan, while a 5K walk could take months to plan. Below is a two-month event timeline that you can tailor for your event.

Sample Event-Planning Timeline

At Least 2 Months Before:

- Brainstorm potential event partnerships
- Host teleconferences or in-person meetings to develop your partnerships
- Decide the role that each partner will have in planning, promoting, and executing the event
- Secure your event committee and hold meetings regularly to keep track of progress
- Determine the type, size, and theme of the event
- Create a budget
- Select event date and secure event location
- Create invite list of individuals and organizations
- Plan logistics (e.g., event activities, entertainment, audiovisual equipment, accessibility for individuals with physical disabilities, etc.)
- Determine if your venue can supply any of the items you will need (e.g., chairs and tables)
- Determine what materials and services you will need from outside vendors (e.g., food and beverages; signs and banners; decorations; restrooms; and attendee giveaways)
- Research vendors and get cost estimates for rented goods and services (Ask colleagues, friends, and family for recommendations)
- Secure and submit paperwork for any special permits or ordinances
- Identify and invite local officials, special guests, experts or performers who you would like to participate in or speak at the event
- Send out a "Save the Date" notice via mail or email
- Create promotional materials
- Reach out to potential sponsors for donations
- Develop a press release
- Create live-read public service announcement (PSA) radio scripts to promote your event and share them with local radio stations
- Decide what media, if any, you would like to invite to your event

4 Weeks Before:

- Confirm local officials, special guests, experts, or performers who will be participating in or speaking at the event
- Finalize and send promotional materials (e.g., flyers and pamphlets) to your printer
- Distribute invitations
- Begin promoting your event; use tools that are already in place, such as your organization's website and email lists, bulletin boards, and social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, etc.
- Post your event on the online **Recovery Month** calendar
- Secure catering service and determine the deadline to place your order (ideally it will be closer to the event when you have an estimated headcount of attendees)

3 Weeks Before:

- If you are seeking media coverage, draft a media advisory
- Remind local radio stations to begin broadcasting your live-read PSAs
- Contact guest speakers or entertainers to see if they need additional materials for their presentation/performance
- Continue promoting your event using social media, flyers, and word-of-mouth until the day of your event

2 Weeks Before:

- Send out a media advisory
- Finalize event logistics (e.g., parking, audiovisual, room layout, and place catering order)
- Create day-of-event schedule and agenda (including staff assignments)
- Develop and print special event signage and/or programs

1 Week Before:

- Finalize event agenda and share with staff/volunteers
- Walk your staff and volunteers through their event day assignments
- Follow up with local media
- Contact guest speakers or entertainers to ensure they have the correct time/location and an onsite contact for the event day
- Create name badges or special place cards for invited guests, committee members, and/or members of the organization
- Conduct a final walk-through at the event venue
- Hold a dress rehearsal for speakers or performance groups that will be part of the event

Week of Event:

- Distribute your press release
- Test technology and equipment for event (e.g., sound, lighting, video)
- Arrive early on the day of the event and ensure that staff/volunteers are at their posts (e.g., directing traffic, overseeing caterers, supporting VIP attendees, etc.)
- Hold your event and enjoy!

Week Following Event:

- Send thank-you notes to special guests, media outlets, and community partners
- Meet with committee members to evaluate the success of the event, and discuss any lessons learned
- Review and reconcile all vendor payments and invoices
- Upload your event outcome on the **Recovery Month** website, post pictures, video, etc.

Additional event-planning resources that may be useful include:

- [*"The Planning Your Recovery Month Event"*](#) document in the Recovery Month toolkit
- The North Dakota Department of Human Services, [*Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services' Guide to Planning Local Recovery Month Events*](#)

Special Topics: Speakers and Permits

Secure an Event Speaker

Having a guest speaker will add context and purpose to your event. The guest speaker should be able to articulate the importance of prevention and treatment of mental and/or substance disorders and understand the impact in your local area. When choosing a potential speaker, consider the attendees at your event, since you want someone who can connect with your audience on a personal level. You can start by making a list of 3-4 potential speakers based on the needs of your event, and rank each potential speaker in order of priority. Here are steps to take your list from "potential speakers" to a "confirmed speaker:"

- Draft a letter or email to extend the invitation to your first choice speaker and determine his/her availability:
- The letter or email should provide the speaker with the purpose and overview of the event, potential topics, his/her anticipated role during the event, and a contact person to speak with for more information.
- If the speaker confirms, schedule a phone call or in-person meeting to provide more details about your event and his/her involvement.
- Work with your speaker to make sure that he or she has a solid understanding of the goal and purpose of your event so the speaker can prepare an appropriate message.
- On the day of the event, designate an onsite contact to assist the speaker as needed.

Obtain Permits or Ordinances

For some events, such as those where you close a local street, have live entertainment, or serve food, you may be required to obtain special approvals.

Each city and town are different, so it is extremely important to check with your local government's Community Planning & Development or Administrative office to determine if you need a permit, license, or ordinance for your event. Obtain all of the necessary paperwork and be aware of submission deadlines and fees. It's critical to reach out to your local government's office early in the planning process, at least 4 weeks before your event.

For example, if you're hosting a **Recovery Month** event at a local park in Daytona Beach, FL you would:

- Visit the City of Daytona Beach [website](#).
- Click on the "Departments" link located within the "Government" section of the site.
- Select "Cultural Services" and then select "permits."
- Review the guidelines for securing the various permits for events in Daytona Beach.
- Complete the submission form for a community event, and mail it to the designated office, along with your payment within the specified timeframe.