

Children of Alcoholics



A Guide to Community Action



Children of Alcoholics Community Action Guide



Included in This Guide

“The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) urges Americans to get and share the facts about children in families with alcoholism. This new guide offers ways to communicate these facts and shows how to turn them into positive actions on behalf of our young people. SAMHSA is proud to join the National Association for Children of Alcoholics during National Children of Alcoholics Awareness Week and throughout the year in efforts to break the generational cycle of alcohol problems in families.”

—Charles G. Curie, M.A., A.C.S.W., Administrator,
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration,
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Using This Guide	1
Tips for Media Events	3
Talking Points	5
Fact Sheet.....	7
Feature Story Ideas	9
Connecting the News Dots	13
Drop-In Articles	15
Print Public Service Announcements	19
Radio Public Service Announcements.....	25
Pitch Letters	27
SAMHSA Media Resources	29
<i>Children’s Program Kit</i>	31
Reply Form	33

Notes

Introduction



Often, the people hurt most by alcohol abuse and alcoholism don't even drink; they are the children of alcoholic parents. These children are more likely to experience mental and physical problems and are at a greater risk of being neglected and/or abused. Children of alcoholics are two to four times more likely than other children to become addicted to alcohol themselves. Every community experiences the devastating effects of alcoholism on children. Together, we can break the cycle of alcohol problems in families.

To help you raise awareness in your community, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, along with the National Association for Children of Alcoholics (NACoA), has developed this Guide to Community Action. It includes talking points, a fact sheet, story ideas, drop-in articles, print and radio public service announcements (PSAs), SAMHSA media resources, a reply form, and details about ordering the *Children's Program Kit*, a comprehensive education tool for treatment providers.

The resources in this guide can be used throughout the year to help you raise public awareness about the effects alcohol abuse and alcoholism can have on children and families. If you already are using the *Children's Program Kit*, we hope you will use this guide to bring attention to and draw support for the great work you have done throughout the year. The activities suggested here also will serve as an appropriate cascade of events culminating in the annual Children of Alcoholics Week, observed each year during the week of February 14.

This guide can help you connect with others in your community and your local print and broadcast media. Together, we can help children—even those in families with parents who are alcoholics—lead healthy lives, free from the use of alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs.

Community Action Guide About Children of Alcoholics

What:

This easy-to-use guide can help you raise public awareness about family alcoholism and its impact on children.

When:

These materials can be used throughout the year and can be adapted for family-related holidays and observances. Children of Alcoholics Week is observed every year during the week of February 14.

Where:

Use these materials in your community to increase media coverage of how alcoholism affects families, especially children.

Who:

Use these materials to prepare media professionals for interviews, feature stories, and other activities.

Please take a moment to let us know what works and what does not work for you by completing and returning the reply form at the back of the guide.

Notes

Using This Guide To Raise Awareness in Your Community



The information and resources in this guide have been compiled to help you raise awareness about family alcoholism and its effect on children. Research shows that every community, regardless of socioeconomic status, experiences the devastation of alcohol abuse and alcoholism.

Talking Points: Use these talking points to help prepare for print or broadcast interviews. Consider sharing the talking points with prospective interviewers to provide a framework for your discussion.

Fact Sheet: The fact sheet can help you assist local media in their coverage of children affected by alcoholism. You also can use this information in your organization’s newsletter, reports, and other communications.

Feature Story Ideas: Write a pitch letter or call your local media outlet with one of these ideas. Your local newspaper and other publications can help you determine who on the editorial staff you should approach. Alternatively, you can contact your local radio station and pitch your idea to either the news director or public affairs director. Keep in mind that smaller stations may not have persons in these positions, so when appropriate, ask to whom to pitch your idea. Remember, each media outlet has its own focus and audience. Be sure to choose ideas consistent with the media outlets you are approaching.

Drop-In Articles: The public domain (copyright-free) articles included in this guide can be “dropped” into print publications without special permission or citation. These articles provide readers with information about children of alcoholics to enhance decision-making at the individual, family, and community levels. Include the articles in your organization’s newsletter or send them to local newspapers with a cover letter from your organization. Feel free to include your organization’s name and contact information in the articles.

Print Public Service Announcements (PSAs): Send these camera-ready PSAs to local newspapers or use them in your organization’s newsletter to raise awareness and promote support for children of alcoholics in your community.

Radio PSA Scripts: Send these radio PSA scripts to local stations “as is” or adapt them to include your organization’s contact information. Stations usually have specifications regarding PSA duration, and you may need to edit the scripts to meet their needs. Call each station’s public service director in advance to learn the guidelines for submitting PSAs.

“One particularly difficult feature of family alcoholism is that many of the children hide their suffering quite well. They have picked up habits of denial and social withdrawal that their parents have modeled for them. Too often, we do not approach them and offer them the information and support they need. But by pretending to ignore their situations, we send the message that their feelings and concerns are not real or important.”

—Sis Wenger, Executive Director, National Association for Children of Alcoholics

Sample Pitch Letters: These letters can help you convey to media outlets the importance of covering family alcoholism and its impact on children.

SAMHSA Media Resources: These resources contain a wealth of information to help you assist local media in covering alcohol abuse-related stories.

Children’s Program Kit: This comprehensive kit of program materials is designed to help treatment providers develop educational support programs for children of parents in treatment.

Reply Form: This easy-to-complete form can help us better meet your needs. Please complete it and send it to us using the designated fax number or mailing address.

Notes

Tips for Media Events



- **Know the media in your area.** Ask yourself the following questions: Who writes the local columns in the newspapers? Which radio hosts discuss local issues? What do parents and kids read? Who has covered this issue before? Which media personalities have a personal connection to family alcoholism? The answers will point you toward some of the most important people to “pitch” to with a phone call.

“Community coalitions that bring together multiple sectors of the community—including faith, education, law enforcement, social services, and criminal justice—and implement multiple prevention strategies can have a positive impact on children of alcohol-dependent parents, helping them lead safe, drug-free, and productive lives.”

*—General Arthur Dean, Chairman and CEO,
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America*

- **Invite a knowledgeable spokesperson to an event to address the needs of children of alcoholics.** Provide the spokesperson with the toll-free numbers for listeners/viewers/readers to get important resources. Also, provide the name of the event, location, and date to encourage the inclusion of this basic information in his or her answers to media questions.
- **Follow through by phone before and after you send material.** Don’t give up. If the first person is not interested, try another contact at the same media outlet. Some news may be more appropriate for a particular show or section than others.
- **Time your contacts.** Mail and call well in advance. Send a reminder with any updates by fax or e-mail about 2 days before the event.

- **Don’t leave multiple phone messages.** Try someone repeatedly until you reach him or her directly, but leave only one message. Ask when the appropriate person is usually in and call then. Also, find out if the media representative prefers to receive e-mail and contact him or her that way.

- **For weekend events, be sure to pitch to the appropriate staff.** Radio and TV typically have different staff members working on the weekend. Get their names and phone numbers ahead of time. Be prepared to call or fax the information early on Saturday morning, if necessary.

- **Always provide a contact at the top of all materials you send to the media, including an e-mail address and fax number.** If possible, use the name of the person who pitched the story to the media. Provide a “day of” telephone number.

“We need a community-wide strategy to reach and assist these children. As more and more focus is being placed on the influence of parents in the trajectory of their children’s lives, we need to recognize that, for children living in families with alcoholism, parents often are not the role model or supporter children need.”

*—James F. Crowley, President
Community Intervention, Inc., Minneapolis, MN*

Notes

Talking Points



- According to SAMHSA’s 2003 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), 16.3 million Americans aged 18 or older were dependent on alcohol or abused it in the past year.
- The 2002 NSDUH showed that nearly 5 million parents with an alcohol problem had at least 1 child under 18 living at home. These parents accounted for more than one in four of adults with alcohol problems.
- Children in homes in which there is alcoholism—children of alcoholics, or “COAs” as they are called—are more likely than children from homes without such problems to develop serious problems of their own. For example, COAs are two to four times more likely to develop an alcohol or drug problem than others.
- Research shows that a combination of factors account for the increased alcohol abuse risks for COAs, including the following: possible inherited genetic vulnerability to addiction; poor family communication; poor role modeling; and the stresses of living in a family lacking stability, predictability, and clearly defined, appropriate, and consistent roles for all family members.
- Many COAs respond to supportive interventions by caring adults and appear to be resilient. Despite their heightened risk, many do not experience substance abuse or other serious problems in their own lives, often because of such support.
- When a person who is an alcoholic receives intervention and treatment, other family members—particularly children—need help of their own. They should be referred to appropriate programs and services, either in conjunction with alcohol abuse treatment or independently. Resources exist in or near most communities.
- Even when a person who is dependent on or addicted to alcohol has not received the benefit of treatment, children and other family members can find help from a number of sources, such as Al-Anon or Alateen.
- Without formal training or special tools, many adults still can help foster resiliency among COAs. These adults include relatives, older siblings, and those who interact with COAs at school, in the community at large, through faith-based organizations, and through health and social services organizations.
- Help for COAs improves the likelihood they will grow up safe and healthy without repeating their parents’ alcohol abuse problems. Such prevention efforts also help break the cycle of alcoholism in families.
- The most important message for COAs is that they are not responsible for the problems of adults in their homes and that their own lives can be different and better than the lives of their alcohol-abusing parents/guardians. They also need to know help is available for them and how to get it.
- The American Association of Retired Persons estimates that 4.5 million American children under age 18 live in households headed by a grandparent, often because of alcohol- or drug-dependent parents who cannot take care of them. These grandparents should be encouraged to help their grandchildren benefit from supportive programs and to participate in Alateen.

Notes

Fact Sheet



How many children of alcoholics are there?

- More than 6 million children live with at least one parent who abuses or is dependent on alcohol or an illicit drug.¹

Why should we be concerned about children of alcoholics?

- Alcoholism tends to run in families. Children of alcoholics (COAs) are four times more likely than non-COAs to develop alcoholism or drug problems.²
- COAs are at higher risk than others for depression, anxiety disorders, problems with cognitive and verbal skills, and parental abuse or neglect. They are significantly more likely than other children to be abused or neglected by their parents or guardians and are more likely to enter foster care.^{2, 3, 4, 5}
- If not prevented, the difficulties faced by COAs can place increased burdens on State and local Governments. These include increased costs for health care, mental health services, child welfare, education, police and juvenile justice, and lost economic opportunity.

How are families with alcoholism different from other families?

- Families with alcoholism have higher levels of conflict than other families. Lack of adequate parenting and poor home management and family communication skills often leave children without effective training and role modeling.^{3, 6, 7}
- Families with alcoholism often lack structure and discipline for their children; as a result, the children often are expected to take on responsibilities normally assigned to older youth or adults.^{3,6}

How can we help prevent children of alcoholics from repeating their families' alcohol-related problems?

- Although they are at increased risk, many COAs do not develop alcohol or drug use disorders or other serious problems in their lives. Often, they appear to be resilient, bolstered by protective factors and the support of caring adults in their lives.^{3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11}
- COAs can be helped, whether or not the alcohol-abusing family members are receiving help. Prevention programs often help COAs reduce stress; deal with emotional issues; and develop self-esteem, coping skills, and social support.⁸
- Children who cope effectively with alcoholism in their families often rely on support from a nonalcoholic parent, grandparent, teacher, or other caring adult. Support groups, faith communities, and trained professionals also are available to help.^{8, 9}

What can others do to help children of alcoholics avoid alcohol abuse and other serious problems?

- Simple acts of kindness and compassion can make a difference for COAs. By making yourself available to listen, discuss feelings, share interests, and support their efforts to make friends, you can help COAs cope with their present situations and develop the resilience and skills necessary for their futures.¹¹
- Tell them they are not alone, that responsible adults are available to help them, and that millions of others have had similar experiences and have grown up to lead healthy, satisfying lives.¹²
- Remind them that their families' problems are not their fault and not their responsibility to solve. Their jobs are to be children and help take good care of themselves; learn the facts about alcohol, tobacco, and drugs; recognize their risks; and learn how to avoid repeating their families' alcohol abuse patterns.¹⁰
- Encourage them to ask for help. Assure them that getting help is a sign of strength. Offer your own examples and be prepared to help them connect with caring, trustworthy adults and with student assistance programs and other services designed to provide them with further skill-building and support.¹⁰
- Reach out to your community by participating in the annual Children of Alcoholics Week during the week of February 14. Help break through the barriers of shame, silence, and isolation to help these children live healthy, happy lives—despite their family problems.

References:

- (1) Office of Applied Studies. (2002). *Results From the 2001 National Survey on Drug Abuse*. (DHHS Publication No. SMA 02-3758). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.
- (2) Grant, B.F. (2000). Estimates of U.S. children exposed to alcohol abuse and dependence in the family. *American Journal of Public Health* 90(1): 112–115.
- (3) National Institute on Alcohol Abuse & Alcoholism. (2000). *Alcohol and Health: 10th Special Report to the U.S. Congress*. Washington, DC.
- (4) National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. (2004). *Criminal Neglect: Substance Abuse, Juvenile Justice and the Children Left Behind*. New York.
- (5) U.S. General Accounting Office. (1998). *Foster Care: Agencies Face Challenges Securing Stable Homes for Children of Substance Abusers*. Washington, DC.
- (6) National Institute on Alcohol Abuse & Alcoholism. *Alcohol and Health: 9th Special Report to the U.S. Congress*. Washington, DC.
- (7) Johnson, J.L. & Leff, M. (1999). Children of substance abusers: overview of research findings. *Pediatrics* 103(5) Supplement: 1085–1099.
- (8) Emshoff, J.G. & Price, A.W. (1999). Prevention and intervention strategies with children of alcoholics. *Pediatrics* 103(5) Supplement: 1112–1121.
- (9) Werner, E.E. & Johnson, J.L. (2004). The role of caring adults in the lives of children of alcoholics. *Substance Use and Misuse* 39(5): 699–720.
- (10) Nastasi, B.K. & De Zolt, D.M. (1994). *School Interventions for Children of Alcoholics*. New York: Guild Press.
- (11) Werner, E.E. & Johnson, J.L. (2000). The role of caring adults in the lives of children of alcoholics. *Children of Alcoholics: Selected Readings*, Vol. 2.
- (12) Dies, R.R. & Burghardt, K. (1991). Group interventions for children of alcoholics: prevention and treatment in the schools. *Journal of Adolescent Group Therapy* 1(3): 219–234.

Feature Story Ideas



Here are a few ideas that can work well as either feature articles or public affairs/talk show programs:

More than 6 million children live with at least one parent who abuses or is dependent on alcohol or an illicit drug.

(2001 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, SAMHSA)

Story Idea—All in the Family: How Alcoholism May Be Passed From Generation to Generation

Pitch a feature story about the genetic factors associated with the disease of alcoholism. Take a look at a range of families—famous families, infamous families, unknown families—to illuminate the effect of the disease as it passes from generation to generation. Speak with adult children of alcoholics (COAs), both those who became alcoholic and those who didn't, to learn how they coped—or didn't cope—with parental alcoholism. Talk about the toll it has taken on their lives. Be sure to highlight cases in which adults survived their parents' alcoholism and took steps to ensure it was not passed to the next generation.

Story Idea—Often Those Hurt Most by Alcohol Don't Even Drink

Highlight the effect of parental alcohol abuse on children—the silent victims who, according to experts, suffer as much or more than their alcohol-abusing parents. Conduct interviews with representatives of local social service agencies for real-life stories and anecdotes. Invite the comments of child psychologists about the stresses and personal development issues faced by children whose parents abuse alcohol. If possible, interview children who, with the help of a caring adult, are overcoming the impact of their parents' diseases or a student assistance counselor who helps these children.

Children of alcoholics often feel insecure, embarrassed, confused, and guilty, often believing themselves to be responsible for their parents' problems.

(National Association for Children of Alcoholics)

Children of alcoholics are at higher-than-average risk for developing substance use problems, mental health problems, and related behavioral and social problems.

*(Anda et al., 2002;
Lieberman, 2000)*

Story Idea—Why Do My Parents Hurt Me?: Alcohol, Child Abuse, and Neglect

The connection between parental alcohol abuse and child abuse is well documented. Suggest a feature story about the risks associated with being a child in a family in which alcohol is abused. Interviews with experts, parents in recovery, child welfare advocates, children, and extended family members will paint a portrait of the problem. Be sure to illustrate effective strategies for family recovery.

Children of alcoholics can be helped whether or not substance-abusing family members receive help for their problems.

(Emshoff and Price, 1999)

Story Idea—Alcoholic Families: A Breeding Ground for Childhood Problems

Hospital admission rates for COAs are substantially higher than for children from nonalcoholic families. COAs tend to score lower on tests that measure cognitive and verbal skills. They also are more likely to be truant, drop out of school, repeat grades, or be referred to a school counselor or psychologist. Interview student assistance counselors and other local experts to find out how efforts to address the needs of COAs are helping affected youth overcome these often troubling childhood problems.

Children of alcoholics are more likely to be the target of physical abuse and to witness family violence.

(Anda et al., 2002)

Story Idea—Adults Too Soon: How Some Children Cope When Parents Are Addicted to Alcohol

Many children living in alcohol-abusing environments often have to perform adult duties when their alcoholic parents are unable to do so. Pitch interviews with student assistance professionals and find out the impact of this unusual arrangement on childhood development. You also can interview local social service representatives, court-appointed special advocates, and other experts to help illuminate the problem.

Feature Story Ideas (Cont'd)

Story Idea—Resiliency: COAs Who Overcome Their Pasts To Create Successful Futures

Although children of alcoholics are more likely than others to develop problems, many of them have grown up to lead successful and productive lives. Suggest interviews with prominent local COAs to get their viewpoints about why they became who they are. Also, interview local professionals (e.g., teachers, substance abuse prevention professionals, social workers, psychologists) and others who encourage and promote programs that enhance and support COAs' resiliency.

Children who cope effectively with alcoholism in their families often rely on support from a nonalcoholic parent, grandparent, teacher, and other caring adults.

(National Association for Children of Alcoholics)

“A significant number of child abusers are alcohol abusers as well. Whether it be physical abuse, incest, neglect, abandonment, or emotional abuse, child abuse is a legitimate and compelling community responsibility. Physicians, clergy, teachers, the courts, and community coalitions all carry part of that responsibility.”

*—Donald Ian Macdonald, M.D., Board Chairman,
National Association for Children of Alcoholics; Author*

Story Idea—Children of Alcoholics Week in Your Community

Suggest a feature story about how your community and local organizations are celebrating Children of Alcoholics Week. Discuss the history of Children of Alcoholics Week, the significance of the year's theme, and how your community is working to promote awareness. Be sure to provide the calendar news editor with a list of events your organization is planning and contact information for participants and volunteers.

Notes

Connecting the News Dots



Just think about it. There's a children of alcoholics (COAs) story behind much of the news you hear every day. Most often, it's only a matter of digging a little deeper to find children of alcohol-dependent parents who suffer in fear and silence. Their stories, when told through mass media, can help educate the public and teach caring adults about ways they can address the needs of COAs.

You can help local mass media find the COAs angle in their coverage of breaking news in your community. For example, help local media connect the dots for these common news stories:

News Story

Unwritten Story

Drunken-driving crashes...	Many of those arrested for impaired driving crashes are alcohol-addicted parents. Sometimes, their children are in the car with them. Encourage media to tell the story of the effect alcohol has had on the lives of children—before and after such crashes.
Teens arrested for alcohol use...	The cycle of addiction runs through families. Often, the teens who are prosecuted for alcohol-related crimes are victims of a family history of addiction. Encourage media to cover the family environment and hereditary factors that might have contributed to the problem.
Child health problems...	Children of alcoholics suffer more injuries and poisonings than children in the general population and are more likely to suffer a variety of physical, mental, and emotional health problems. ¹ Encourage media to highlight the frequent connection between parents' alcohol problems and cases of child abuse and neglect.
Homelessness...	The link between homelessness and alcoholism is well established. What's often missing in news coverage is the effect of alcoholism on children and families. Ask local media to tell the story from the perspective of the children, their hopes, and emotional safety.

Call the assignment desk of local media outlets whenever you see stories such as these breaking in your community.

Reference:

¹ Prevent Child Abuse America. (2001). The relationship between parental alcohol & drug abuse and child maltreatment, study number 14, www.childabuse.com/fs14.htm.

Notes



BREAKING THE CYCLE OF ADDICTION

Childhood can and should be a time of wonder and discovery. But for children of alcoholic parents, life often is filled with shame, suffering, and fear. These children may find themselves trapped by the same disease that affects their parents unless there is outside intervention from caring adults.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, children of alcohol-addicted parents can suffer from physical illness and injury, emotional disturbances, educational deficits, behavioral problems, and alcoholism or alcohol abuse later in life. Perhaps the most troubling, however, is the fact that children of alcoholics (COAs) are two to four times more likely to become problem drinkers and continue the addictive practices of their parents.¹

SAMHSA Administrator Charles G. Curie urges every adult to learn about the needs of COAs and the simple actions they can take to help COAs develop into healthy adults. “We know that COAs are at greater risk for substance abuse problems in their lives. But we also know what to do to help them avoid repeating their families’ problems. We can break the generational cycle of alcoholism in families.”

That’s good news for the millions of children in the United States who live in households in which one or both parents have been actively alcohol dependent. Experts say COAs can be helped, even if the alcohol-abusing adults in their families don’t receive treatment. Adult

relatives, older siblings, and other adults who have contact with COAs at school, in the community, through faith-based organizations, and through health and social service agencies do not need formal training to be caring and supportive. Since research shows that one in four children lives in a family with alcoholism or alcohol abuse, many adults will not have to look far to find a child to help.

Curie said, “Perhaps the best way adults can help COAs is to provide them with accurate, age-appropriate information about alcoholism to help them understand their reality and to develop the skills needed to cope with their day-to-day challenges.” He added, “Accurate information helps COAs understand that alcoholism is a disease that has nothing to do with them—they are not to blame for the disruptions and other problems happening at home.”

According to the National Association for Children of Alcoholics, the life skills COAs need can be gained through educational support groups and healthy relationships with others, especially adults who show that they care about children. By providing these children with experiences in which they have opportunities to succeed, COAs can learn to respect themselves and cope with their situations.

Almost every community has resources to help make a difference. Services such as educational support groups and counseling are widespread across the country. Free publications, including *It’s Not Your Fault* and *You Can Help*, available from SAMHSA’s National

Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information, offer important information and resources for adults who want to help. For more information, call 800-729-6686 or visit <http://ncadi.samhsa.gov>.

Resources

SAMHSA

<http://www.samhsa.gov>

SAMHSA’s National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information

1-800-729-6686

<http://ncadi.samhsa.gov>

Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator

1-800-662-HELP (4357)

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

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov>

National Association for Children of Alcoholics

1-888-55-4COAS (2627)

<http://www.nacoa.org>

Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc.

1-888-4AL-ANON (425-2666)

<http://www.al-anon.alateen.org/>

Reference:

¹ Johnson, S., Leonard, K.E., Jacob, T. (1989). Drinking, drinking styles, and drug use in children of alcoholics, depressives, and controls. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*. 50:427–431.

Notes



CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS WEEK

Most people are aware of the devastating impact alcoholism has on the alcohol-dependent person. But many do not recognize the difficulties and harms faced by children who live in the destructive aftermath of parents suffering from the disease of alcoholism or drug dependence.

The Magnitude of the Problem

In 2001, more than 6 million children lived with at least one parent who abused or was dependent on alcohol or an illicit drug. Science shows that children in families affected by alcohol abuse are at increased risk for illness, injury, emotional disturbances, educational deficits, behavioral problems, and alcohol abuse later in life. Some face physical abuse or neglect. More often, they experience shame, confusion, or a vague sense that they are somehow to blame.

During Children of Alcoholics Week, observed each year during the week of February 14, individuals and organizations work to break through barriers of shame, silence, and isolation to help bring public awareness to the needs of these children and to encourage responsible adults to reach out to and support them.

“All too often, the silent suffering endured by children whose parents are dependent on alcohol or illicit drugs goes undetected,” says Charles G. Curie, administrator of the Federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). But Curie and other experts say the plight of these children can change dramatically if appropriate actions are taken by the caring adults in their lives.

Sis Wenger, executive director of the National Association for Children of Alcoholics (NACoA), says one particularly difficult feature of family addiction is that “many of the children

hide their suffering quite well. Well-meaning adults often compound the problem by saying nothing. But by appearing to ignore their situations, adults give children the message that their feelings and concerns are not real or important, increasing their sense of isolation and confusion.”

Support Groups Can Help

According to NACoA, an education and advocacy organization that speaks for children whose parents suffer from substance use disorders, support groups are one way to help. Such groups can be found through many of the following programs:

- Student assistance programs in schools
- Programs developed in affiliation with alcohol treatment centers for the children of clients
- Programs affiliated with religious institutions
- Youth mentoring programs.

These groups offer combinations of instruction, support, recreation, and one-on-one mentoring. They also refer children to professional help if more than education and support are needed.

One such group is Alateen, sponsored nationwide by Al-Anon, which helps families and friends recover from the effects of living with an alcohol-dependent individual. Each group has an Al-Anon adult sponsor, but the youth support one another by sharing their strengths and hopes. In Native communities, Talking Circles provide similar support.

SAMHSA and NACoA encourage everyone to raise awareness by observing Children of Alcoholics Week to help bring attention to affected children and highlight the hope and

healing that can come from caring adults and support programs.

Resources

SAMHSA

<http://www.samhsa.gov>

SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information

1-800-729-6686

<http://ncadi.samhsa.gov>

Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator

1-800-662-HELP (4357)

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

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov>

National Association for Children of Alcoholics

1-888-55-4COAS (2627)

<http://www.nacoa.org>

Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc.

1-888-4AL-ANON (425-2666)

<http://www.al-anon.alateen.org/>

Notes

Print Public Service Announcement



You Don't Have To Drink To Suffer From Alcoholism!



Every day, millions of children struggle with the confusion, shame, and isolation of living with a parent addicted to alcohol. They are at great risk for abusing alcohol themselves.

They don't have to suffer anymore. Help break the cycle of alcoholism in American families. Get the facts about alcoholism and find out what's available to help children of alcoholics in your community.

To learn more, call:

**SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse for
Alcohol and Drug Information
1-800-729-6686**

or visit:

<http://ncadi.samhsa.gov>



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
www.samhsa.gov

Cut here

Notes

Print Public Service Announcement



You Don't Have To Drink To Suffer From Alcoholism!



Every day, millions of children struggle with the confusion, shame, and isolation of living with a parent addicted to alcohol. They are at great risk for abusing alcohol themselves.

They don't have to suffer anymore. Help break the cycle of alcoholism in American families. Get the facts about alcoholism and find out what's available to help children of alcoholics in your community.

To learn more, call:

← Insert your contact information here



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
www.samhsa.gov

Cut here

Notes

Print Public Service Announcement



Use this camera-ready public service announcement during Children of Alcoholics Week, observed every year during the week of February 14. Be sure to insert the appropriate observation dates for that year.

A Celebration of Hope and Healing: Children of Alcoholics Week



The people hurt most by alcohol don't even drink; they are the children of alcoholic parents.

An estimated one in four U.S. children is exposed to a family alcohol problem. Everyone is responsible for the devastating effects alcoholism has on these vulnerable children. They need our help.

If you know such a child, reach out and offer support:

**Substance Abuse and
Mental Health Services
Administration's
(SAMHSA's) National
Clearinghouse for
Alcohol and Drug
Information
1-800-729-6686**

**National Association for
Children of Alcoholics
1-888-55-4COAS
<http://www.nacoa.org>**

← Insert date here

Cut here



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
www.samhsa.gov

Notes

Radio Public Service Announcements



Please air the following public service announcements (PSAs) to help educate your community and those adults in a position to help the one in four children hurt by alcohol abuse and alcoholism in the family. Feel free to adapt these messages to call attention to local or regional resources. These PSAs are not date sensitive and may be used at any time.

:30

Let's put an end to an old family tradition. The fact is, alcoholism tends to run in families, and letting children of alcoholics know that they aren't alone, that it isn't their fault, and that others are available to help them can help break the cycle of family addiction. Call (local organization's telephone number or 1-800-729-6686) for more information to help children of alcoholics. That's (repeat previous phone number).

Tag: A message from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, (insert your organization name), and this station.

:20

Let's end a family tradition. Alcoholism tends to run in families. Letting children of alcoholics know that they aren't alone and that others are available to help can break the cycle of family addiction. Call (local organization's telephone number or 1-800-729-6686) for more information. That's (repeat previous phone number).

Tag: A message from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, (insert your organization name), and this station.

:15

Break the cycle of family addiction by helping children of alcoholic parents. They deserve our attention and support. Call (local organization's telephone number or 1-800-729-6686) for more information. That's (repeat previous phone number).

Tag: A message from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, (insert your organization name), and this station.

:15

So your parents drink and you think it's your fault? Well, it's not. Lots of kids hurt from their parents' drinking. Stop the hurt. Find someone you trust and talk about it.

Tag: A message from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, (insert your organization name), and this station.

Radio Public Service Announcements



Children of Alcoholics Week

Please air the public service announcements below to observe and raise awareness about Children of Alcoholics Week during the week of February 14. Feel free to adapt these messages to call attention to local and regional resources.

:30

All too often, it's the innocent children who suffer when their parents abuse alcohol. The worst part is, these children can't help themselves. But you can help them. Observe Children of Alcoholics Week. Call the National Association for Children of Alcoholics or [name of local organization] for information about what you can do. The National Association's number is 1-888-55-4COAS. [Local organization] can be reached at [local phone number]. Call today.

:30

Often, the people hurt most by alcohol don't even drink. They're the children who suffer when their parents abuse alcohol. If you know children who may be suffering, show them you care. Give them the information and support they need for a brighter future. For more information, call the National Association for Children of Alcoholics at 1-888-55-4COAS or visit the Web site at www.nacoa.org.

:30

If your mom or dad drinks too much, you're not alone. It's not your fault. Across the country, there are millions of boys and girls just like you. There are lots of people who can help. Find an adult you trust and talk about it. Call the National Association for Children of Alcoholics at 1-888-55-4COAS or [local organization] at [local phone number] for more information. You'll be glad you did.

Sample Pitch Letter



[Date]

[Name]

[Title]

[Organization]

[Address]

Dear [Name]:

Excessive alcohol consumption can lead to serious consequences. However, some of the people hurt most by alcohol abuse and alcoholism don't even drink—they are the children of alcoholic (COA) parents.

[Organization] is providing you with resources to help you introduce your audiences to basic information about family alcoholism and its impact on children. These materials can help you break the cycle of alcoholism in families.

Here are a few suggestions:

- [For print media only]: Publish the enclosed drop-in articles and public service announcements (PSAs) in local newspapers, newsletters, or church bulletins.
- Use the fact sheet and feature story ideas to support news and public affairs coverage about ways any caring adult can help COAs.
- [For radio media only]: Run the enclosed PSAs throughout the year on local radio stations to increase awareness of the problems COAs face.
- Contact us for expert spokespeople to interview for stories that address ways to help COAs.
- Encourage your audience to call 1-800-729-6686 for more information.

We hope you find these resources useful in encouraging caring adults to take steps to make a difference in the lives of COAs in your community.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Title]

Sample Pitch Letter



Children of Alcoholics Week

[Date]
[Name Of Editor]
[Title]
[News Organization]
[Address]

Dear [Name]:

The public is generally aware of the potential harm of excessive alcohol use and alcoholism. But many people do not realize those hurt most by alcohol abuse and alcoholism often don't drink—they are the children of alcoholic (COA) parents.

Each year during the week of February 14, Children of Alcoholics Week is observed to call attention to these children's needs and to foster public dialog about the best ways to help them. [The name of your organization] is joining in the nationwide celebration by conducting a series of Children of Alcoholics Week events [in our own State, city, or county].

Enclosed are materials to help you introduce your audience to Children of Alcoholics Week and the issues of family alcoholism:

- A fact sheet that can be used to support news and public affairs coverage on how caring adults can help COAs
- [For print media only]: Drop-in feature articles and public service announcements (PSAs) highlighting the significance of the issues and suggesting solutions
- [For radio stations only]: A series of 30-second PSA scripts explaining the issues.

Contact us for expert spokespeople to interview for stories that address ways to help children of alcoholics and other drug-dependent parents. Encourage your audience to call the National Association for Children of Alcoholics (1-888-55-4COAS) for more information.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]
[Your Title]

SAMHSA Media Resources



SAMHSA Radio Newslines

1-800-272-7723

The SAMHSA Radio Newslines provide broadcast-ready substance abuse news and public affairs reports. The audio spots feature sound bites from nationally recognized experts in the fields of substance abuse prevention and treatment and the effect of substance abuse on families. Broadcast-ready newslines reports (usually 60 to 90 seconds) can easily be folded into radio news or public affairs programming or serve as a source of quotes and sound bites for your own news coverage.

SAMHSA Media Services Web Site

www.samhsa.gov/news/news.html

The SAMHSA Media Services Web site provides SAMHSA's latest news releases, statistics, fact sheets, data, and policy reports on mental health, substance abuse, prevention, managed care, and the workplace. The Web site also provides links to other SAMHSA resources.

Notes

Children's Program Kit



Program Materials To Help Treatment Providers Develop Supportive Education for Children of Alcoholic Parents

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), a part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has joined with the National Association for Children of Alcoholics to create the *Children's Program Kit*.

This Kit can help treatment providers ensure that:

- Children hear messages they need to hear—messages that they are not alone and that they are not to blame for their parents' addictions
- Children learn skills that they need—skills such as problem solving, finding safety, and seeking supportive services
- Children are put on a path to build their existing strengths and develop resilience
- Parents learn to understand their children's needs and are empowered to connect their children to supportive services
- Families are helped along the path toward breaking the intergenerational cycle of addiction.

Order this kit Now to help your organization develop and offer age-appropriate educational support programs for the school-age children of substance-abusing parents.

To order a FREE *Children's Program Kit*, fill in your information below and return to SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information, P.O. Box 2345, Rockville, MD 20847-2345, or fax to (301) 468-6433.

Name: _____ Title: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

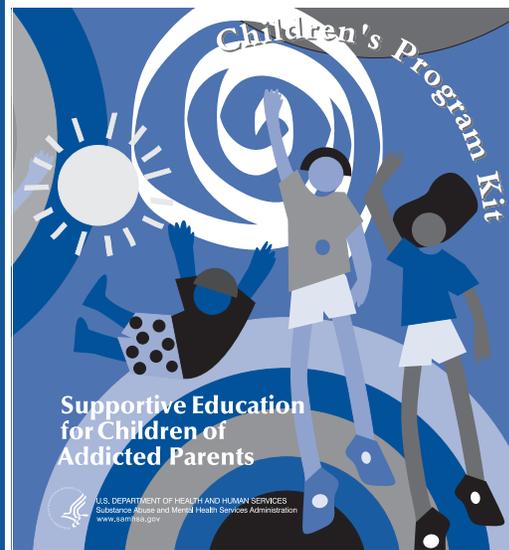
City: _____ State: _____ ZIP Code: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

The *Children's Program Kit* contains:

- Program manual
- Forty-seven age-appropriate lesson plans and activities
- In-service outlines and presentation materials
- Program start-up guidance
- Program evaluation materials
- Forms and letters to parents
- Four videos: One for adult education and three for use with program lessons
- Posters.



Notes

2004 Children of Alcoholics Community Action Guide

Reply Form

Dear Colleague:

Did you use:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Talking Points? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Fact Sheet? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Story Ideas? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Drop-In Articles? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Print PSAs? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Radio PSAs? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Sample Pitch Letters? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. SAMHSA Media Resources? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please rate the quality of the guide content: _____

Please complete the following information:

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Title: _____

Employer: _____

Address 1: _____

Address 2: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

Would you like to be added to our mailing list to receive future community action guides, drop-in articles, PSAs, and other media-related materials? YES NO

Please return this form to:

SAMHSA's NCADI

ATTN: NCADI Communications

P.O. Box 2345

Rockville, MD 20847-2345

Fax: 301-468-6433

Notes

Notes

Notes
