

# September Is National Recovery Month

BY ANTON MEDIA STAFF

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Mental or substance use disorders affect millions of Americans and directly touch the lives of individuals, family members, neighbors, and colleagues. Given the widespread impact and societal cost of these behavioral health conditions, it's important for communities to make prevention, treatment, and recovery support available and accessible for all who need them.

Every September, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) ([www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)), within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) ([www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov)), sponsors National Recovery Month ([recoverymonth.gov](http://recoverymonth.gov)) to increase awareness of behavioral health conditions. This celebration promotes the message that behavioral health is essential to health, prevention works, treatment is effective, and people recover from mental or substance use disorders.

The 2015 Recovery Month theme, "Join the Voices for Recovery: Visible, Vocal, Valuable!" highlights the value of peer support by educating, mentoring, and helping others. It invites individuals in recovery and their support systems to be catalysts and active change agents in communities, and in civic and advocacy engagements.

The concept encourages individuals to be vocal by starting conversations about the prevention, treatment, and recovery of behavioral health conditions at earlier stages of life and to depict the societal benefits of recovery. Recovery Month continues to celebrate and support communities, families, and individuals through continued outreach efforts, materials, and cross-promotion.

"We are well aware that the age of miracles is still upon us, as we observe daily those who struggle with substance use find their stride and work to develop healthy coping skills and recover a sense of order and spirit with their families, their schooling, their jobs, their mental health and ultimately, themselves," said Long Island Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (LICADD) Executive Director Steve Chassman. "Many carry forth the spiritual credo that 'we cannot keep it, unless we give it away.' If you know someone currently entangled in the struggle of a substance use disorder, please offer a helping hand."

## Why It's Important

The prevalence of mental or substance use disorders is high.

Nearly one out of every five adults in the United States, about 43.8 million people, has a mental illness, such as a diagnosable mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder (excluding developmental and substance use disorders). Approximately 21.6 million people age 12 or older were classified with a substance dependence or misuse disorder in 2013. In spite of high prevalence, most Americans believe that recovery from a mental illness or a substance use disorder is possible.

For many individuals, behavioral health treatment is an important part of the recovery process. However, in 2013, 22.7 million individuals aged 12 or older needed treatment for an illicit drug or alcohol use problem, but only

2.5 million received treatment at a specialty facility in the past year.

High school and college students, families, and peer recovery networks all play unique roles in society and have the power to support healthy lifestyles. Members of the recovery community can lead the charge to educate these audiences about how they can provide support, starting with the basics of recovery.

## For many people, recovery...

- Emerges from hope, which is fostered by friends, families, providers, colleagues and others who have experienced recovery themselves
- Occurs via many pathways, which



may include professional clinical treatment, use of medications, support from families and in schools, faith-based approaches, peer support and other approaches

- Is holistic, meaning recovery encompasses a person's whole life including mind, body, spirit and community
- Is supported by relationships with peers and allies and on social networks
- Is culturally based and influenced
- Is supported by addressing trauma, including physical or sexual abuse, domestic violence, war, disaster or profound loss
- Involves individual, family, and community strengths and responsibilities
- Is fostered by respect

The right support system can help ensure that those in need are addressing the following four key aspects of recovery.

- **Health:** The person learns to overcome or manage his or her condition(s) or symptom(s)—and make informed, healthy choices that support physical and emotional well-being.
- **Home:** It is also important to have a stable and safe place to live.
- **Purpose:** A person in recovery participates in meaningful daily activities, such as a job, school, volunteer opportunities, family care-taking, or creative endeavors, and has the independence, income, and resources to participate in society. In addition, relationships and social networks should provide support, friendship, love, and hope.

## Long Island Resources

**LICADD** is located at 114 Old Country Rd., Suite 114 in Mineola (516-747-2606) and at 2805 Veteran's Memorial Hwy., Suite 26 in Ronkonkoma (631-979-1700).

**Alcohol Drug Rehab Long Island** is located at 3290 Veterans Memorial Hwy. in Bohemia (631-406-4396).

**Long Island Center for Recovery** is located at 320 West Montauk Hwy. in Hampton Bays (631-728-3100).

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)** National Helpline 800-662-HELP (4357).

*Christy Hinko contributed to this article.*

## Study Shows College Students Start Using Substances During Summer

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A study by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has provided insight on substance use initiation patterns among one in every five full-time college students (aged 18 to 22) using illicit or potentially harmful substances. The study, which tracks initiation by month, shows the peak times for the initiation of substances including alcohol, marijuana, and inhalants.

"These findings show that college students are vulnerable to substance use at any time—not just when they are away at school," said SAMHSA Acting Administrator Kana Enomoto. "That means that parents, college counselors, faculty members, staff, mentors, and other concerned people must take every opportunity to talk with college students about the risks of substance use and where they can turn to for help."

For example, combined 2002 to 2013 data from SAMHSA's National Survey on Drug Use and Health find that 383,000 full-time college students used marijuana for the first time in the past year—which averages out to about 1,000 new marijuana users each day. However, in June the level peaks at about 1,500 full-time college student marijuana initiates a day.

Similarly, 450,000 underage full-time college students (aged 18 to 20) started drinking in the past year—about 1,200 a day on average throughout the year. Underage drinking initiation peaks among

full-time college students in June with an average of 1,883 underage college students starting to drink each day.

However, winter seems to be the peak season for full-time college students to start using prescription drugs, such as pain relievers and stimulants, in non-medical ways. Approximately 251,000 full-time college students started the non-medical use of pain relievers in the past year—on average 700 initiates a day. During December, however, this rate rises to 850 initiates a day.

Non-medical use of stimulant medication is also at its peak in November, December, and April. Each year about 137,000 full-time college students start using prescription stimulants non-medically (400 on an average day). During November, December, and April the average daily initiation rate climbs to above 500 (peaking at 585 in November).

Although the report is not designed to determine the cause behind the trends in initiation, the rise in the initiation of non-medical use of prescription stimulants coincides with the times of the year that many college final exams and midterm exams occur. This timing may indicate that some full-time college students start non-medically using prescription stimulants in the belief that it might benefit their academic performance. It should be noted that non-medical use of stimulants has not been proven to improve academic performance and can pose serious medical risks.