

Addiction Recovery Messaging and Advocacy Brief

I. Hi Senator/Representative _____,

I am (*your name*) and I live in (*city/location* – to establish that you are a constituent). I am here today to discuss addiction recovery, and the resources Georgians need to initiate and sustain long-term recovery from alcohol and other drug abuse. As you are aware, addictive disease prevention and treatment services were cut recent years' State budgets – more than any other disability or State service. **It is equally embarrassing that Georgia leads the nation in the number of adults under correctional supervision – 1 in 13, which is more than double the national average of 1 in 31.**

These two facts are not mere coincidences - most Georgians are in jail/prison or on probation or parole due to alcohol or other drugs.

II. People in Recovery:

I am a (*person/family member of a person*) in long-term recovery, which means that (*I/my family member*) have not used (*insert alcohol or drugs or the name of the drugs that you used*) for more than (*insert the number of recovery years*) years. I am committed to recovery because it has given me and my family new purpose and hope for the future, while helping me gain stable productivity in my life. I am now speaking out because long-term recovery has helped me change my life for the better, and I want to make it possible for others to do the same.

Recovery Allies: Family members, professional treatment/prevention service provider, other recovery collaborator (probation/parole officer, DFCS worker, etc).

I am a (*recovery ally, treatment/prevention provider, etc.*) with ___ years of experience seeing the success of (*prevention/treatment*) programs. I have experienced the miracle of recovery and I know that no one can do it alone. I am committed to recovery because it has given many people a new purpose, stable productivity and hope for the future. I am now speaking out because long-term recovery has helped change so many lives for the better, and I want to make it possible for others to do the same.

III. **My message is one of hope: real people, sons and daughters, friends, neighbors and co-workers are in long-term recovery from addiction and their lives, and the lives of their families are better because of it.** That is why it is so important to make recovery resources available for even more people to get the help that they need. Moreover, once people are in recovery, we need to remove the barriers that keep them from long-term recovery. I will contact you periodically during the session regarding legislation that influences Georgians' ability to initiate and sustain recovery. Do you prefer to be contacted by phone or email? I also am available to serve you as a resource for promoting recovery and reducing the barriers, stigma, and discrimination that many people in recovery face.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of assistance as you weigh the pros and cons of particular bills. *Here is a list of the issues that I will be following during the 2011 session (highlight one or two that you find particularly important).*

Thank you for your service to our community and State. I look forward to additional conversations with you.

Addiction Recovery Messaging and Advocacy Resources Brief (cont.)

What is *not* in the message and why:

- ⊗ ***“I’m a recovering addict (alcoholic).”*** The words “recovering addict or alcoholic” promote the idea of a revolving door; that you or the person in your family is still struggling with active addiction.
- ⊗ ***Information about particular pathways to recovery.*** Not mentioning a particular pathway (substance abuse treatment, 12-step fellowships, faith-based services, medication-assisted treatment, etc.) to recovery prevents the interjection of prejudices/biases that may impede the message of hope. This also addresses the anonymity concerns of anonymous 12-step program members.
- ⊗ ***A definition of recovery.*** Describe the behavioral indications/benefits of recovery but do not define it, so that the person you are speaking understands what recovery looks like, that you or your family member is in long-term recovery, and that others should have the opportunity to recover as well. You are not speaking as a physician who is diagnosing a person who needs treatment referral or as an insurance company deciding whether or not someone’s care should be covered.
- ⊗ ***“Addiction is a disease.” or “Addiction is a moral problem.”*** In our research, and as we are sure you know from your own experience, people believe there are many causes of addiction (it’s a disease, moral issue, behavior problem, etc.). Avoid this debate by focusing on the benefits of recovery and our message of hope: real people, their sons and daughters, friends, neighbors and co-workers are in long-term recovery from addiction and their lives, and the lives of their families are better because of it. That is why it is important to make it possible for even more people to get the help they need. Moreover, once they are in recovery, we need to remove barriers that keep them from long-term recovery.

Georgia Addiction Treatment and Recovery Collaborative & Sponsors:



For additional recovery messaging and advocacy training, contact
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