

Considerations for Publishing Testimonials about Opioid Use Disorder Treatment and Recovery

Approaching Participants

Be specific about the focus area or topic of the testimonial, how it will be used, and how you would like to receive their submission.

When approaching an individual to share their testimonial, communicate your specific area of focus and details about how their information will be used. If you require certain things to be in their testimonial (e.g., a photograph, quote, or specific detail about their treatment journey), explain your needs clearly. You may consider developing an outline to help guide the person in creating their testimonial.

For example:

- Are you trying to highlight how a particular treatment path benefited an individual, how the individual overcame barriers to treatment, or share advice for others who have not yet started a treatment journey?
- What type of materials or products will feature their testimonial, and where will they appear?
- Do you have an example that you can share with them?
- Do you want to receive their information via email, hardcopy in person, or through a third party (provider, recovery coach, etc.)?
 - If you will include photos/videos/audio, specify the file types, resolution requirements, etc. in advance.
- Are there specific word count or length limits for the product?

Discuss benefits, risks, and conditions of sharing their testimonial.

People with opioid use disorder may receive negative or stigmatizing remarks in response to their testimonial. It is important to discuss the risks and benefits of participating with the individual. Also discuss how they would like their information to appear—do they want their testimonial to be anonymous, to use their first name only, full name, or full name and a photograph.

Example benefits and risks to discuss in advance:

- The testimonial may be shared widely with people in your community, and we cannot guarantee that all records can be taken down/removed after dissemination if you decide to revoke your consent.
- You may feel a sense of satisfaction by sharing your testimonial. Your participation can help encourage others struggling with addiction as well as their families and friends.
- It is possible that strangers may recognize you from the testimonial when you are out in public.
- If your testimonial is posted publicly, it is possible that you could receive positive and negative comments about your participation from strangers, but also your friends and family.

- If the testimonial appears on social media, it is possible that people may leave both positive and negative comments on the posts that you and others may see.
- We will not use the images taken, or any other information you provide, for any other purpose outside of the HCS, but we cannot guarantee that the information will not be shared in other ways by entities not associated with the study.

Require signed media release to participate.

A media release is the best way to outline use of information and the risks and benefits to participating. It protects all parties involved. A sample Media Release Form has been included in this document on page 4.

Consider offering participants the option of submitting verbal testimonials in person, or via a phone call or audio recording.

Some participants may feel more comfortable providing a testimonial in a conversation or may not have access to a computer for submission. If taking a testimonial via a phone call or in-person, be sure to have some general questions ready to help guide the discussion.

Be clear about opportunities to review final products.

Some participants may not be comfortable with you editing their information without their input. You should be clear about what you will do with the information they share, when you will provide them with a draft to review, and when you need to receive their approval or edits to meet the production deadline. Participants should have the right of final approval prior to publication.

Developing Materials from Personal Testimonials

Consider your framing carefully.

Individual depictions of those with opioid use disorder can elicit engagement and emotion but may lead readers to blame individuals—as opposed to societal factors—for the problem or generalize an individual’s traits to the entire population affected. Note: research suggests that messages attributing responsibility for the problem to factors outside of affected individuals’ control can decrease stigma.¹

Recommendations:

- Use narratives that can blend individual depictions with contextual information about the structural factors influencing the problem at hand (e.g., previously limited options for MOUD treatment now being addressed by HCS).
- Depict people with opioid use disorder as engaging in treatment and recovery and emphasize positive traits (e.g., perseverance, determination in recovery) to inspire hope and potentially impact stigma.
- Depict opioid use disorder as a complex disease with many contributing factors.

¹ McGinty, E.E., Kennedy-Hendricks, A., Barry, C.L. (2019). Stigma of Addiction in the Media. In: Avery, J., Avery, J. (eds) *The Stigma of Addiction*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02580-9_11

- Emphasize health, economic, and social consequences that impact communities rather than individual consequences.


Avoid stigmatizing language.

Although the person providing the testimonial may use certain labels for themselves, these terms can increase stigma in the community. You should be careful to replace any stigmatizing language with non-stigmatizing language before publishing their testimonial.

Words Matter

Use these recommended terms to reduce stigma when talking about opioid use disorder.

Instead of...	Use...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addict • User • Substance or drug abuser • Junkie • Substance dependence • Former addict • Reformed addict 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person with opioid use disorder (OUD) or person with opioid addiction • Patient • Person in recovery or long-term recovery



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Sample Media Release Form*

The [organization name] would like to use (photos, videos, written testimonials, and/or audio files) representing your image, likeness, thoughts, or opinions for public health messaging designed to prevent opioid overdoses and promote the use of medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD). These images could be used in several communities across the state of [Kentucky, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio] and other locations. Please read the statements below carefully and decide how you would like your image, likeness, thoughts, or opinions to be used. All participants must be 18 years old or older.

Please place an **X** beside *Yes* or *No* to mark your choice beside each statement.

Person(s) in photos, videos, written testimonial, and audio files:

I agree to allow [organization name] to use photos, videos, written testimonials, and/or audio files representing my image, likeness, thoughts, or opinions that I submit to them and its project partners to promote the campaign in public service announcements, news releases, websites, social media platforms, printed materials, study reports, and exhibits. [Organization name] is entitled to edit, copy, adapt, or translate the contribution and to authorize others to do so in connection with this public health effort. I understand that I will be able to review the final images and edits.

_____ Yes, I understand and agree with the statement above.

_____ No, I do not agree with the statement above.

Given the nature of social media or other material capable of use or being transmitted and electronically shared beyond particular areas, we cannot guarantee that posts will not be seen or shared with persons outside our local community.

_____ Yes, I understand and agree with the statement above.

_____ No, I do not agree with the statement above.

I grant permission for my name to be published with my image, likeness, thoughts, and opinions in any associated campaign materials or publicity.

_____ Yes, I understand and agree with the statement above.

_____ No, I do not agree with the statement above.

We will not use the image, written copy, or video submitted, or any other information you provide, for anything other than the stated purpose above.

Name (please print):

Contact email address or telephone number:

Signed:

***This Sample Media Release Form was extracted from Playbook 8, Appendix C and slightly revised.**