



Northwest (HHS Region 10)

**ATTC**

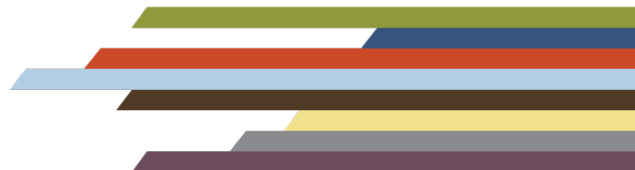
Addiction Technology Transfer Center Network  
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration



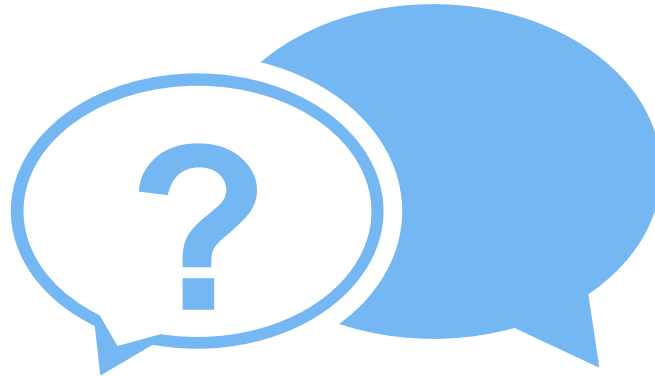
Northwest ATTC presents:  
**Harnessing Your Expertise: How the Addiction Workforce Can Work with the Media to Improve Reporting on Addiction**

**Thank you for joining us!  
The webinar will begin shortly.**

- **Participants are automatically muted during this presentation**
- **Got questions?** Type them into the chat box at any time and they will be answered at the end of the presentation.
- An ADA-compliant recording of this presentation will be made available on our website at:  
<http://attcnetwork.org/northwest>



**Questions? Please type them in  
the chat box!**



## Look for our surveys in your inbox!

**We greatly appreciate your feedback!**

Every survey we receive helps us improve and continue offering our programs.



It only takes **1 minute** to complete!



## Certificates of Attendance are available for live viewers!



### Viewing Groups:

Please send each individual's name and email address to [northwest@attcnetwork.org](mailto:northwest@attcnetwork.org) within 1 business day.

Your certificate will be emailed within a week to the address you registered with.



# Harnessing Your Expertise:

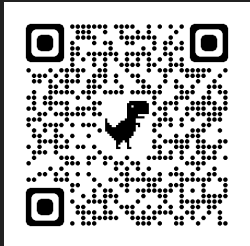
*How the Addiction Workforce Can Work with the Media to Improve*

# Reporting *on* Addiction

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Ashton Marra, MS  
Jonathan JK Stoltman, PhD

January 25, 2023



**Reporting  
*on* Addiction**

# Who We Are

Partnership of 100 Days in Appalachia and Opioid Policy Institute

Officially launched in September 2021 as part of national **Recovery Month**

## Creation of Resources:

- Guided by Focus Groups:
  - **February 2021 – Academic Experts**
    - Addiction scientists and treatment providers
  - **March 2021 – Community Members**
    - People with lived experience, peer recovery coaches, activists, federal judge with a drug court
  - **April 2021 – The Media**
    - Local, state and national journalist from across the country, including Pulitzer Prize winners, CNN, ABC

# Tribal Land Acknowledgement

In applying a lens of cultural humility to issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion, Northwest ATTC offers this land acknowledgement for today's event.

Our work intends to reach the addiction workforce in HHS Region 10: Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. This area rests on traditional territories of many indigenous nations, including tribal groups with whom the United States signed treaties prior to the granting of statehoods.

Please join us in support of efforts to affirm tribal sovereignty and in displaying respect and gratitude for our indigenous neighbors.



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**ATTC**

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# Creating a More Informed Discourse about Addiction

## Professionals

Journalists

Newsrooms

34 journalists worked with 1:1

7 Newsrooms



Year 1  
Impact

## University Outreach

Journalism Educators

Journalism Students

5 universities across the country

5 university student newspapers

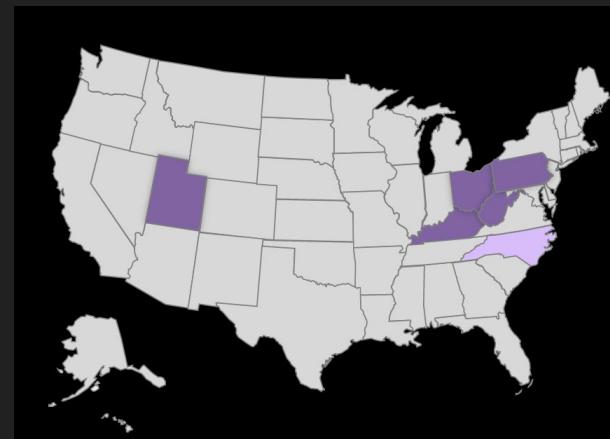
## Experts

Through Training

Through Experience

+80 experts available on our database

5 national training events



**Reporting**  
*on***Addiction**



# Our Goals

- 1) Improving language used by journalists
- 2) Improving themes/story narratives chosen by journalists
- 3) Improving images/video created by journalists

# About Stigma

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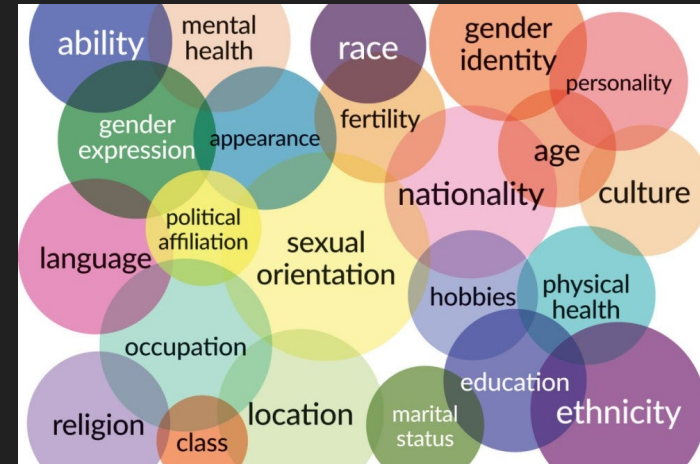
# Addiction Stigma and Discrimination

Addiction Stigma: the **pervasive belief** that addiction is a **personal choice** reflecting a **lack of willpower** and a **moral failing**

Public	
Stigma	<i>People who use drugs are dangerous, immoral, to blame for their behavior, criminal</i>
Discrimination	<i>THEREFORE, employers should not hire them, landlords should not rent to them, they should be shunned</i>

**Perpetuated by the media**

**Results in**



# Identify stigma in the media

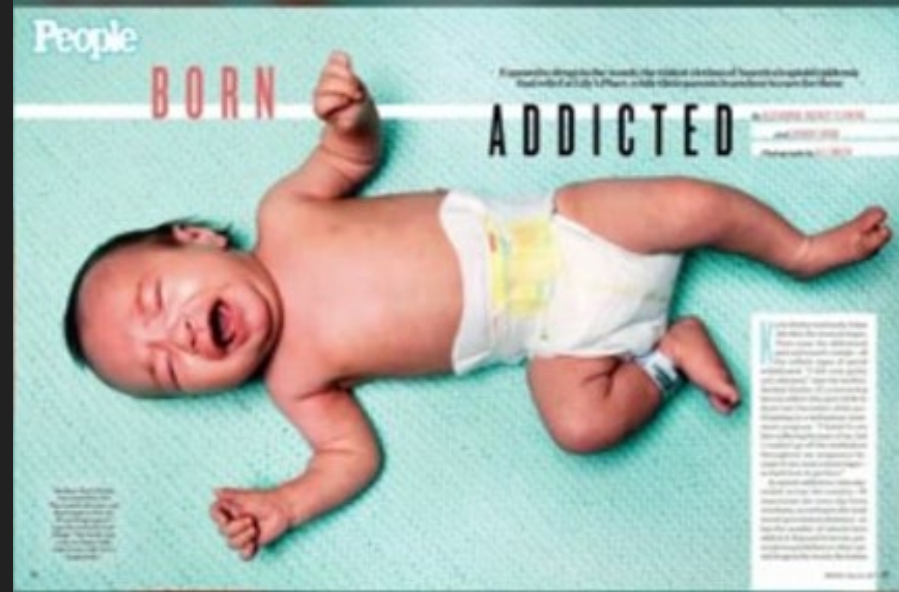
The Washington Post  
*Democracy Dies in Darkness* Try four w

Sections

Health Health Care Medical Mysteries Science Wellness

HEALTH

## Federal government allows program to pay substance abusers for staying clean



# Reducing Stigma by Shifting Language

## Language associated with stigma

*“Terminology used to describe persons with a substance use disorder can influence health professional and public perception.”* (Bessette et al., 2020)

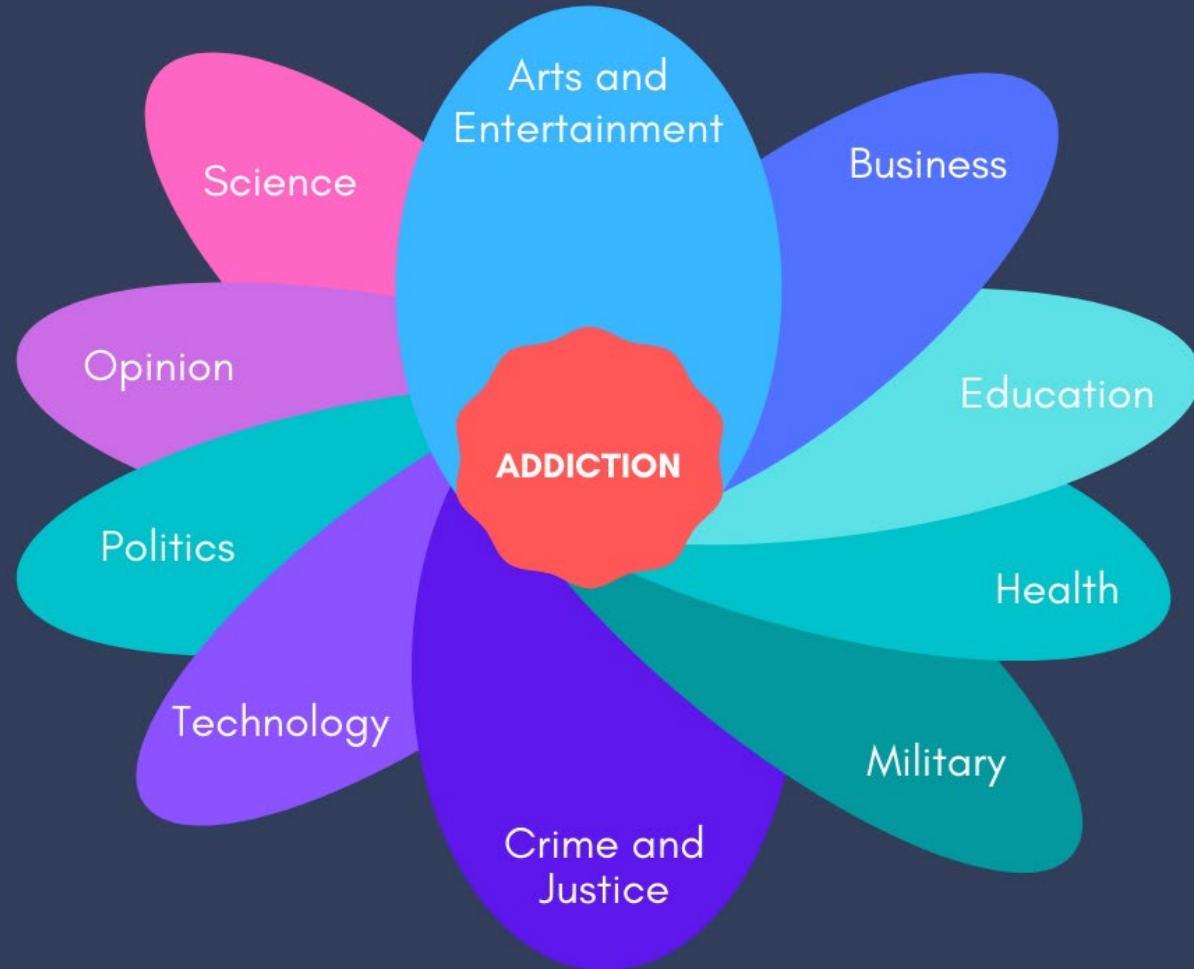
## Evidence - based approaches to reduce stigma

- Person - first language
- Emphasizing solutions
- Empathetic narratives that humanize people
- Emphasis of societal rather than individual causes of addiction

# Journalism 101

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# Addiction intersects with many elements of reporting



# Journalists *do not* want to harm their communities.

- Their jobs *aren't* easy! They cover many beats (topics), have tight (*tight!*) deadline, and very few resources to do in-depth reporting or research.
- They also have limited training related to harm reduction, addiction treatment, or recovery **so they often don't know the current science or how their reporting can be harmful.**
- Still...we know their work has an impact on our communities and on policy.

It's up to you as experts to help improve the Reporting on Addiction

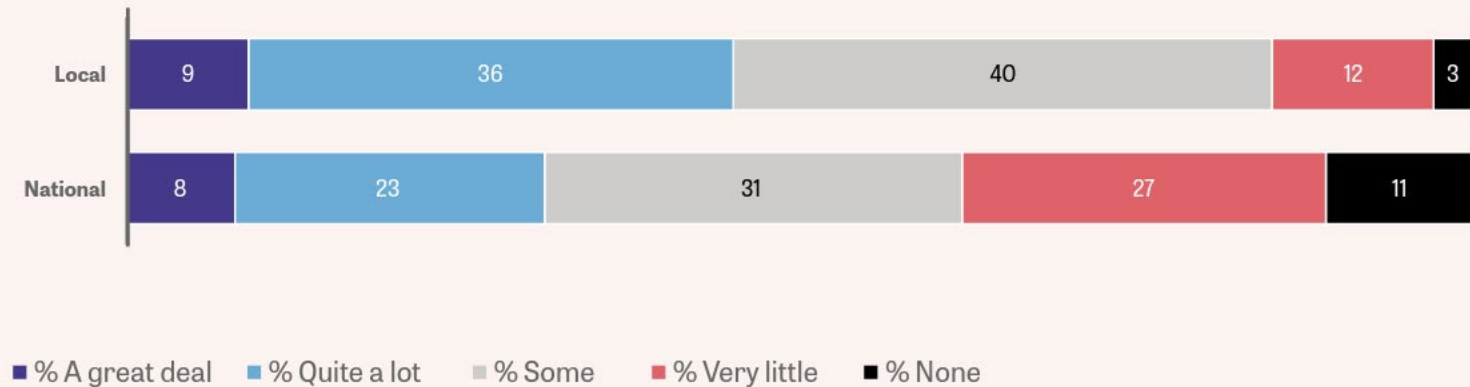


# Trust in News

FIGURE 8

## Trust in local vs. national news organizations

In general, how much do you trust [national/local] news organizations when it comes to reporting the news?



Note: "No answer" responses not shown.

Knight Foundation/Gallup June 13-July 22, 2019 (combined data from three surveys)

Source: Knight Foundation State of Public Trust in Local News report

# Why We Need Experts in the Media

## Embracing your expertise!

- You have the training and experience to contribute to the conversation
  - To a journalist, you are an expert
- You are valuable sources for **local, regional,** and national news
- **Journalists want to serve their community** – but lack training that helps avoid perpetuating stigma and discrimination in their stories

## Barriers?

- **Lack of media training for experts**
- You have just as much **demand on your time** as the journalists themselves

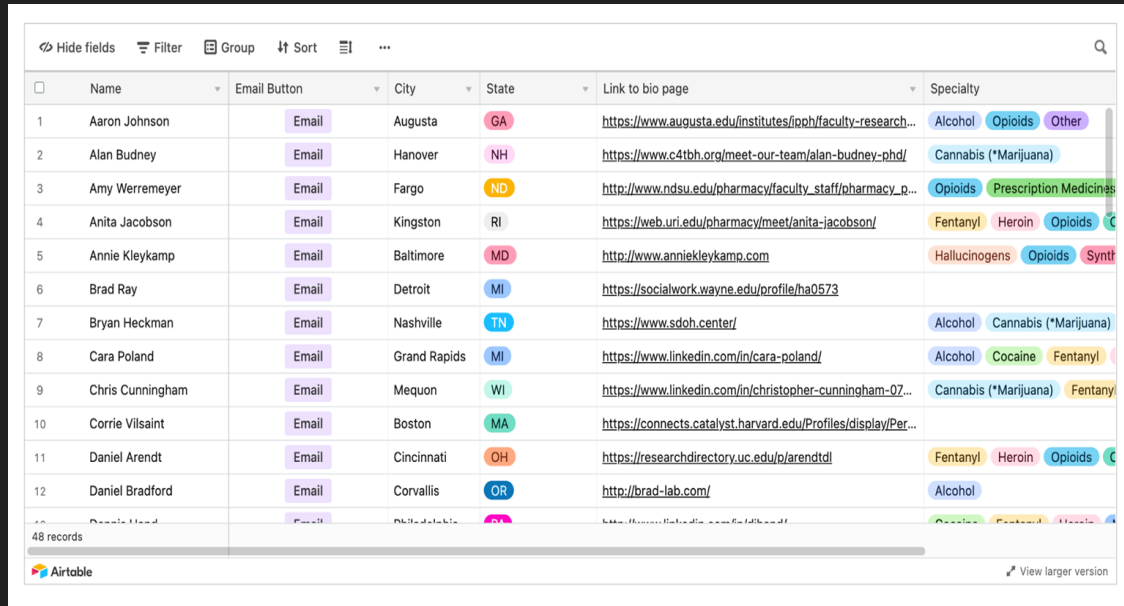
# The Value of Working with the Media

What is your motivation for working with the media?

- To help the media understand this topic you have dedicated your life to understanding
- Our responsibility to be a source of knowledge and science – if not, where are they left to get info for their stories?

# Expert Database

A database of experts who will actually respond! Sortable by location, but also areas of expertise.

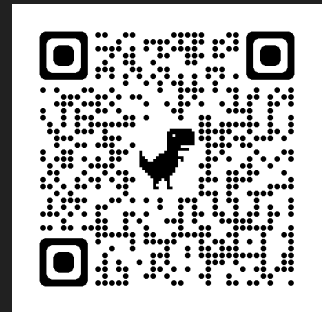


The screenshot shows an Airtable interface with a table of experts. The table has columns for Name, Email Button, City, State, Link to bio page, and Specialty. The data is as follows:

	Name	Email Button	City	State	Link to bio page	Specialty
1	Aaron Johnson	Email	Augusta	GA	<a href="https://www.augusta.edu/institutes/iph/faculty-research...">https://www.augusta.edu/institutes/iph/faculty-research...</a>	Alcohol Opioids Other
2	Alan Budney	Email	Hanover	NH	<a href="https://www.c4tbh.org/meet-our-team/alan-budney-phd/">https://www.c4tbh.org/meet-our-team/alan-budney-phd/</a>	Cannabis (*Marijuana)
3	Amy Werremeyer	Email	Fargo	ND	<a href="http://www.ndsu.edu/pharmacy/faculty_staff/pharmacy_p...">http://www.ndsu.edu/pharmacy/faculty_staff/pharmacy_p...</a>	Opioids Prescription Medicines
4	Anita Jacobson	Email	Kingston	RI	<a href="https://web.uri.edu/pharmacy/meet/anita-jacobson/">https://web.uri.edu/pharmacy/meet/anita-jacobson/</a>	Fentanyl Heroin Opioids
5	Annie Kleykamp	Email	Baltimore	MD	<a href="http://www.anniekleykamp.com">http://www.anniekleykamp.com</a>	Hallucinogens Opioids Synth
6	Brad Ray	Email	Detroit	MI	<a href="https://socialwork.wayne.edu/profile/ha0573">https://socialwork.wayne.edu/profile/ha0573</a>	
7	Bryan Heckman	Email	Nashville	TN	<a href="https://www.sdoh.center/">https://www.sdoh.center/</a>	Alcohol Cannabis (*Marijuana)
8	Cara Poland	Email	Grand Rapids	MI	<a href="https://www.linkedin.com/in/cara-poland/">https://www.linkedin.com/in/cara-poland/</a>	Alcohol Cocaine Fentanyl
9	Chris Cunningham	Email	Mequon	WI	<a href="https://www.linkedin.com/in/christopher-cunningham-07...">https://www.linkedin.com/in/christopher-cunningham-07...</a>	Cannabis (*Marijuana) Fentanyl
10	Corrie Vilsaint	Email	Boston	MA	<a href="https://connects.catalyst.harvard.edu/Profiles/display/Per...">https://connects.catalyst.harvard.edu/Profiles/display/Per...</a>	
11	Daniel Arendt	Email	Cincinnati	OH	<a href="https://researchdirectory.uc.edu/p/arendtd">https://researchdirectory.uc.edu/p/arendtd</a>	Fentanyl Heroin Opioids
12	Daniel Bradford	Email	Corvallis	OR	<a href="http://brad-lab.com/">http://brad-lab.com/</a>	Alcohol

48 records

Airtable View larger version



# How a Journalist Finds You

- *They do research and find your research.*
  - BUT they don't always want to talk specifically about that research and *may want to talk more broadly about addiction.*
  - Don't be a one-off source
- *Social media (Twitter/Facebook/LinkedIn)*
  - Use hashtags already being, don't reinvent the wheel
  - Use a **linktree** or other programs help organize your information so a journalist can vet you quickly (other interviews, podcasts, your own published work, etc.)
- *If you don't have time on their deadline, help them find another expert.*
  - Ask who else they've spoken with or plan to speak with
- *Help them spot red flags*
  - They may ask you for someone that disagrees
  - *Whether you provide this or not* , it is on you to give the **red flags**

# Vetting a Journalist ( Media Literacy 101)

- Who do they work for?
- Check social media (Twitter/Facebook/LinkedIn)
- Their media outlet should have:
  - An About page or Mission Statement
  - Bylines and dates on their stories
  - An address/physical location (\*with a caveat)
  - If still not sure, can ask for their editor's email/phone number

# The Interview

## A journalist's preparation (ideally and reality)

- *We hear: Journalists are dumb and unprepared!*
- *Medium (and deadline) dictates the approach.*
  - Might be a basic question but..they need audio or video of you saying it
  - People on tight deadlines have less time to prepare
  - Sometimes assigned the story moments before
- *Help them with their story*
  - Especially if they are on a deadline
  - You can set up another time to talk about the redirects/ other ideas
  - The *ultimate goal* is building the relationship
- *If opportunity presents itself...push them to solutions*
  - They will almost always ask: *Do you have anything else to add?*

# Pitching

- Read/watch/listen to their news first!
- Explain why their audience will *care* about this topic or how it *impacts* the audience they serve
  - Step down from the “ivory tower”
- Include information about your current pitch, but also a brief bio
- Taking national stories and helping the journalist localize it
  - Rainbow Fentanyl



# Before an interview

- Provide reporters with our condensed style guide *to help them prepare* for the conversation.
- Find the condensed style guide on our home page: [ReportingonAddiction.org](https://ReportingonAddiction.org)
- Practice distilling your message to accessible *soundbites*.
  - Stick to *3 main points and practice them*. It's ok to have them in writing.
- **RESPOND** to their requests quickly

## Best Practices and Recommendations for Ethical Reporting on Addiction

Reporting onAddiction

### Why Reporting on Addiction Matters

Addiction is a chronically-relapsing brain disease that affects more than 23 million Americans, but only one in 10 of them receive the treatment they need. Addiction is treatable. Recovery is possible. Addiction is *not* a choice, but the language we as journalists use to describe the disease is.

Media coverage often does not reflect the complexity of addiction and recovery, and rarely presents solutions. Coverage that does not have a medical and public health perspective perpetuates stigma and discrimination. The current reporting on addiction has been shown to negatively affect individuals, create barriers to treatment and during recovery, and lead to harmful policies for people who use drugs, are seeking treatment, or are in recovery.

Our goal is to help journalists understand what those harmful narratives are and to find better ways to **Report on Addiction**.

### Checklist for Responsible Reporting on Addiction

- Report on Addiction as a Public Health Issue and a Chronically-Relapsing Brain Disease.** Describe addiction based on the current science.
- Use Person-first Language.** Addiction is merely one aspect of an individual. Person-first language promotes accuracy and humanity in reporting, e.g. a person with a substance use disorder.
- Include Treatment Resources.** One problem with current reporting is the lack of referral to solutions like treatment hotlines and websites. Use our story tag (*listed in the sidebar*). Consider including other local evidence-based community resources.
- Emphasize Hope.** Including stories of hope, healing and recovery tell a more complete narrative and acknowledge the many barriers people face when seeking evidence-based addiction treatment.
- Ask an Expert.** Interview addiction medicine providers and experts that adhere to evidence-based approaches to treatment. Use our list of national resources (*listed in the sidebar*) to help support your reporting.
- Provide Context to Help Your Audience Understand the Difference Between Opinion and Fact.** If you must use an opinion (e.g. quoting a politician), provide facts from an expert, peer reviewed research, or government source immediately after to prevent further discrimination and harm.
- Be Thoughtful about Image Selection.** Avoid images that show drug use or drug paraphernalia because they may provoke negative emotions in people who are in recovery.
- Be Thoughtful about the Headline.** Use Person-first Language (*above*) to accurately convey the story and condition. Do not sensationalize.

Please refer to the table on page 2 for more details. [↗](#)

v 1.0 May 2021

### Story Tag

We recommend you include this push to resources at the beginning and/or end of your coverage when Reporting on Addiction:

*Recovery from addiction is possible. For help, please call the free and confidential treatment referral hotline (1-800-662-HELP), or visit [findtreatment.gov](https://findtreatment.gov)*

If limited space, use this condensed version:

*For help, call the free and confidential treatment referral hotline (1-800-662-HELP), or visit [findtreatment.gov](https://findtreatment.gov)*

Note: Please include the hyperlink to [findtreatment.gov](https://findtreatment.gov) when you can. In visual stories, please leave this story tag on the screen for at least 6 seconds.

### Find an Expert

RoA has compiled an Expert Database to serve as a source for journalists by curating a list of people with lived experience, addiction medicine and addiction science researchers located around the country who are all available to interview and consult your reporting. [View our sortable database here.](#)



Reporting  
onAddiction

# How to Approach the Interview

- Treat interview as a learning process, like interacting with a student or trainee
- Goals are not “perfection” from the journalist – one conversation likely won’t be enough
  - Editing process can introduce errors that are outside their control or are a knowledge gap
- Importance of humility
  - You know what you know, and what you don’t know
  - Help journalist understand those lanes
- Don’t have a responsibility to find other interviews *but:*
  - Can help ensure they’re speaking to **the right people**
  - Red flags
- Clarify “on-the-record” and “off-the-record”
  - Slow down and be conscientious

# During an interview

- *Keep it simple.*
  - Don't assume based on their question that they are underprepared.
    - Reporters are not dumb but remember their audience.
    - *Readers at a 5<sup>th</sup> grade level*
  - *What makes a good quote?*
    - *Expertise (beyond common knowledge)*
    - *Emotion*
- If you've introduced a complicated topic, it's okay to say, *"Does that make sense to you?"* and/or *"Do we need to boil it down more?"*
  - *This will reduce miscommunication and ensure your message was clear.*
- *Ask* the reporter questions.
  - *Make sure they are getting what they need from the interview.*

# After an interview

- **Offer** to review the article if you discussed complicated topics.
  - ***BUT offer, do not require it.***
  - *“I know some of what we talked about was confusing/complicated, happy to help read over any of it.”*
  - If they agree, expect to see your section of the article, not the whole thing
- **Follow - up with your three points**
  - **Additional info can be helpful – like your research**
- Thank them!

# Final Sentence

In order for journalism to be solutions focused and responsibly reported, we must include a push to available resources:

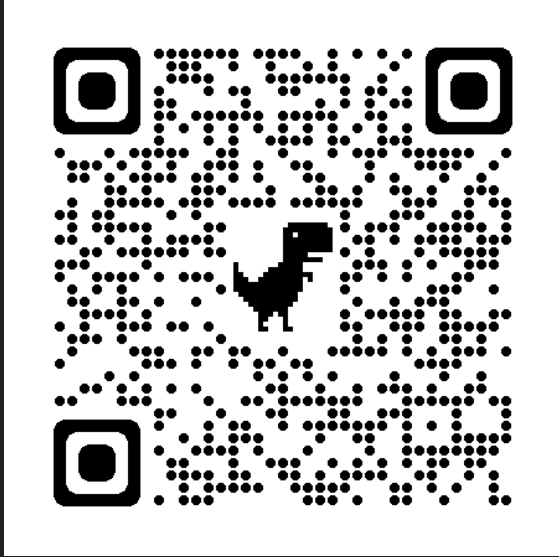
*Recovery from addiction is possible.  
For help, please call the free  
and confidential treatment referral hotline  
(1- 800 - 662 - HELP) or visit [findtreatment.gov](http://findtreatment.gov).*

# Takeaways

- **Stigma** is a problem in the media and serves as a barrier to harm reduction, treatment, recovery
- We all can work to **reduce this stigma** by interacting with our local and regional journalists
- **Calling-in (vs calling-out) and building collaborations** is the way forward
- **Help journalists find you!** We need to leverage experts from **your** community (including you!) and across the nation to help guide reporting to be more reflective of the current science.
- Talk to the audience – not past it.
- Shift to **Solutions Focused Narratives**
- Let people know **Recovery is Possible** and **Help is Available** through encouraging the inclusion of our simple story tag:

*Recovery from addiction is possible.*

*For help, please call the free and confidential treatment referral hotline (1-800-662-HELP) or visit [findtreatment.gov](http://findtreatment.gov)*



# Thank you!

*Let's Talk*

*Follow us and access our  
resources using this QR Code.*

<https://linktr.ee/reportingonaddiction>



**Reporting  
*on*Addiction**



**Reporting  
*on*Addiction**

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