



# Stand Up for the Children

**COA AWARENESS WEEK**

February 14 - 20, 2021

## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

During COA Awareness Week, you can be a part of NACoA's annual international awareness and advocacy campaign, helping to spread the word that children living in families that struggle with addiction need the support of caring adults. Through awareness activities we can inspire adults to be there for the children who suffer silently, and together we can reach kids and teens with important information.

Children living with addiction need to know it's not their fault when a parent struggles with addiction. They also need to understand that these parents have a disease, and learn how to separate the disease of addiction from the parent they love. During COA Awareness Week, do what you can to speak out, reach out, and raise awareness about the silent victims of addiction: the children. These children are often the first hurt and the last helped, but it doesn't have to be that way. You can make a difference with your support and attention during COA Awareness Week.

## HOW TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE DURING COA AWARENESS WEEK

- **Review the Social Media Toolkit and resources list to find ways to share information in your community.** Share NACoA's Social Media Toolkit with family and friends, pediatricians, educators, guidance counselors, therapists, social workers, faith community leaders, drug court professionals, coaches, boy scout leaders, dance instructors, daycare organizations, or anyone else you believe has the opportunity to impact the life of a kid or teen in a meaningful way.
- **Share information through social media.** Follow NACoA on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn and get more involved with COA Awareness Week. Through our platforms, you can find and share articles, infographics, images, and resources that can help raise awareness and offer strategies to families, professionals, and other caring adults in the community. By expanding the reach, we can continue to help more people understand the issues facing children of addiction and help them learn how they can help.
- **Speak out as an organization and as an individual.** You, or an organization you're a part of, can advocate for the children and families affected by addiction. 1 in 7 individuals today will experience a substance use disorder during their lifetime, and many of them are parents. An estimated 25 percent of all children in the U.S. (about 18 million) are living in a home struggling with addiction. The needs of these kids and teens often go overlooked, and unaddressed. Taking part in COA Awareness Week, you and your organization can join the Voice for the Children and help make a difference for these silent victims of addiction.

- **Ask churches and other faith-based organizations to join in COA Awareness Week.** Share NACoA's pamphlets and resources and suggest they make them available to their congregations. Request that the topic of family recovery be discussed during homilies, or host a discussion after services to discuss the issue at great length. Create an afternoon or evening children's workshop reflecting on gratitude or mindfulness, both great activities that build protective factors and resiliency in children living with addiction. Direct ministers to the Faith Community section of the NACoA website, which offers an array of resources to help them to better understand how to serve families needing family recovery.
- **Distribute NACoA's prepared materials.** Recognize the week with a simple information distribution campaign. Using material already developed by NACoA, call and visit the offices of organizations whose work is like yours or otherwise well-suited to the messages of COA Awareness Week. Ask them to display the COA Awareness Week poster and other NACoA materials, such as posters or infographics, in their public areas. Contact your community's health care professional associations (hospital associations, medical and dental societies, nurses' associations) and managed care organizations, and share information about COAs with them. Bring the COA Awareness Week flyer and other resources to your own pediatrician's or doctor's offices, and make a request for them to be shared on the office's notice board. You might also suggest creating a parent education material table at any office who serves families. In today's digital-savvy environment, send emails to professionals and attach important resources with an invitation for them to include on their website or reference in an upcoming newsletter. Follow up with them by phone and see if they received your email and resources, and if they wish to discuss what else they can do to help.
- **Sell the money-saving aspects of prevention to city and county managers.** Use basic statistics about addiction and its impact on families to showcase the potential costs to your local government. Let the numbers show those in decision-making positions that it is cost effective, as well as compassionate, to speak up for and promote prevention programs such as youth mentoring, student assistance programs in schools, or addiction-support programs in health clinics. Savings will come in reductions in health care, human services, and criminal justice costs avoided through investments in prevention.

By doing one (or many!) of these COA Awareness Week activities, you can make a difference in the lives of children. And remember: It only takes one caring and supportive adult to take action and empower a child of addiction.

Whether in your home, your neighborhood, your school, your congregation, or in your family, you can let a child know that you care and you are available to listen. And, by modeling healthy behavior, you can also shine brightly in the darkness of fear and confusion that oftentimes can overwhelm them. Your compassion is powerful. Use it to help empower children, the silent victims of addiction.