

SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2025.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).


PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Henrico County
Program Title: Regional Recovery Day
Program Category: Health & Human Services

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

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Signature: 

Program Overview

In the summer of 2024, Henrico County's Empower Task Force determined additional substance use education for our community was vital to addressing the overdose epidemic. Because substance use and overdose rates continue to be high across our region, Henrico wondered if neighboring localities would be interested in partnering on just such an educational event. Henrico engaged neighboring localities to ascertain their willingness to participate. Four localities -- Henrico, Hanover, and Chesterfield Counties and Richmond City -- banded together to provide an educational event on substance use treatment and recovery. All four localities agreed that substance use continues to be a significant issue for the residents of the region and committed to working together to address it. On September 30, 2024, the first Regional Recovery Day event was held. During the event, 58 service providers participated in the vendor fair. In addition to the resource fair, speakers provided information on substance use and how it affects the brain and the dangers of vaping. A panel of individuals and family members with lived experiences presented. Revive training was offered and free Narcan provided. In addition, AcuWellness demonstrations occurred. An estimated 700+ people participated. Feedback from participants was extremely positive. Henrico County's Deputy County Manager for Public Safety, Michael Feinmel, stated:

"Hopefully, this event becomes an annual one. The cooperativeness of the regional partners, the building of public-private partnerships, and the connection to legitimate resources in the area will only serve to further save lives."

That hope has come true. The four localities have already begun planning for the 2025 Regional Recovery Day event which will occur on September 3, 2025. The localities are working to expand the event to include up to 100 vendors. A national speaker has been secured, and the plan is to again host a panel of people with lived experience. Other recovery related activities

will also be sponsored. This kind of event can be duplicated by other localities by leveraging partnerships among localities and private entities.

Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality

While the fatal overdose numbers in Henrico County and the surrounding area have been decreasing, there are still far too many people dying from drug overdoses in our communities. Too often government officials hear, “I don’t know where to get help.” They hear stories of isolation and stigma. The Empower Task Force, a Henrico County Task Force designed to address substance use, decided that a large-scale event would not only provide the opportunity to offer education and awareness to hundreds of people, but could provide a community of support for those dealing with substance use. It quickly became clear that partnering with the surrounding localities was ideal. Chesterfield County, Hanover County and the City of Richmond all answered the call to assist with the event. All localities identified the same need and were eager to collaborate with Henrico County. Michael Fatula, City of Richmond, previous Opioid Response Coordinator shared:

“We were honored to participate with our regional partners in the Regional Recovery Day event. Our collaboration is a statement that recovery is possible, and our community stands together to support it.”

How The Program Fulfilled Award Criteria

This project demonstrates the power of cooperation and collaboration among various entities to offer a valuable and much needed service to the residents of the region. For this project, four local governments collaborated to pull resources to sponsor a large-scale event for the public.

In addition to the local governments working closely together, various departments within each government collaborated. For instance, Henrico Recreation and Parks provided tables for the vendors, each of the Public Relations teams from the four localities worked together to develop and execute the PR plan. Additionally, this event required the cooperation of 58 vendors, two keynote speakers and six panel speakers. Everyone worked together to ensure that this vital information was available and accessible to our residents.

This event can be duplicated in other localities through a collaborative effort with sister localities and private partners. Moreover, the Virginia Opiate Abatement Authority (VOAA) process has provided an opportunity to secure funding for just such an effort. Localities have three options for VOAA funding. First, localities can join together to submit a collaborative application to the VOAA for funding to produce such an event. Another option is for a locality to request to utilize their individual allotment through the VOAA application process. Still a third option is for a locality to opt to utilize a part of their direct distribution through the Opiate Settlement funding for this type of event. There are endless possibilities when it comes to who to partner with. For instance, one of the speakers was from a local substance use treatment center. Hospitals, Health Departments, Schools, private treatment and recovery providers, in addition to localities, are just some of the options.

How The Program Was Carried Out

Regional Recovery Day was held on September 30, 2024. The localities began planning in summer 2024. There were three main objectives for the event:

- 1 – Strengthen the partnership between the four localities on the issue of substance use.

2 – Provide education to the public on substance use, it's treatment and pathways to recovery.

3 – Give those struggling with substance use and their families a one stop shop to learn about resources in their communities.

Initially, tasks were identified: secure the venue, hire the audio/visual services needed, coordinate resources, obtain speakers and panel and advertise. Each locality played an important role in planning and implementation. The venue was secured through a public/private partnership with the Henrico Sports and Event Center (www.henricocenter.com). Speakers were carefully selected. Dr. Andreas Bienert presented on substance use and how it affects the brain. Dr. William Lynch presented on vaping and the newest trends. Their presentations can be viewed at www.recovery.henrico.gov

The planning group, which included people with lived experience, believed that both the peer and family voice should be represented. This was accomplished through a panel discussion of individuals and family members with lived experience. The panel consisted of two peer recovery specialists, a physician who identifies as a person in long term recovery, a Henrico Area Mental Health & Developmental Services Board member in recovery and a family member of someone in early recovery.

The resource fair was impactful. A point person was assigned to be the contact for vendors. Each locality was responsible for reaching out to a specific number of vendors, but all vendors registered through the one point person. Through the hard work of each locality, over 58 resources attended the fair and provided information to participants. Vendors included treatment facilities, outpatient treatment services, sober living, vocational support and other

recovery supports. In addition, each locality highlighted the resources they provide for their residents and how to access them.

Attendees had the opportunity to participate in REVIVE training, a training course designed to educate people to recognize and respond to opioid overdose emergencies with Naloxone. Free Naloxone was provided to those who completed REVIVE training. AcuWellness experiences were available. AcuWellness is a 5-needle protocol, a specialized form of acupuncture; the needles are generally left in place for 25-45 minutes. This protocol helps ease stress, promote clarity and relaxation, and improve sleep patterns. AcuWellness can be utilized during treatment of substance use disorders and is often hailed as a way to reduce cravings to alcohol and drugs.

Finally, advertising was addressed. The public relations departments of all four localities collaborated to develop commercials to be used on television, radio and social media. The localities spoke with one voice, one message. The message clearly demonstrated the unity of the localities in working to overcome this issue.

Financing and Staffing

Funding was secured through local direct distribution funding from the Opiate Abatement Settlements. In addition, Henrico County utilized a portion of its Empower Task Force funding. Empower Task Force funding is appropriated by the Henrico County Board of Supervisors. The funding is designed to specifically advance the work of the Empower Task Force. The Empower Task Force's mission is to address substance use prevention, treatment and recovery needs in

Henrico County. Henrico County funded the largest portion of the event. However, each locality contributed \$1,800.00 used for advertising.

Henrico County invested the following funds for this event:

Henrico Sports & Event Center (venue)	\$2,975.00 (reduced rate given public-private partnership)
Funding for speakers	\$1,500.00
Audio Equipment/services	\$2,800.00
Advertising	\$1,800.00 per locality

All localities utilized existing staffing for this effort. Several localities utilized their Opioid Abatement Coordinators, other localities relied on the Community Services Boards staff for assistance.

Program Results

This event was extremely successful given it was the first of its kind in our area. The number of people participating is estimated to be over 700. Countless others were introduced to the information on television, radio and/or social media. It is hard to measure the impact. One vendor, Nar-Anon Family Groups said,

“Our Nar-Anon Family Group wanted to participate in recovery month. Our fellowship has been severely affected by COVID with our attendance numbers reduced to a third.

Regional Recovery Day was a great event! Well-attended by professionals and recovery

folks, all looking for resources. We were so busy at our table, we barely had time to walk around. Looking forward to next year!”

The most significant impact was perhaps on those experiencing substance use and/or substance use recovery. T.E. (a person in early recovery after a relapse) said:

“Recovery Day brought me closer to my family and gave my family a better understanding of what recovery really means. It was so powerful to hear the people in long term recovery share their stories; it offered hope. It also felt amazing to have the entire community’s support; everyone came together to help and erase the stigma.”

Another participant in recovery, F.B. said:

“It was so great to see everyone: police, treatment providers, peers, and the recovery community all come together to support those who struggle with substance use, including me. I felt like I belonged and wasn’t judged.”

This was exactly the point of the day.

An important part of the process was to obtain participants’ feedback. Each participant had the opportunity to share their opinion on the event via a survey accessed through a QR code. Here are the results (1 is poor, 10 is excellent):

- Overall experience: 9.86
- Experience with speakers/panel: 9.83
- Experience with the resource fair: 9.71
- 100% of respondents said they would attend a future event on this topic.

Regional Recovery Day also served to further solidify the partnership among the localities Dr.

James Worsley, Chesterfield Deputy County Administrator for Human Services said:

“Regional Recovery Day serves as a testament to the widespread impact of substance use on our communities...It also reminds us that with the right resources, recovery is possible. Chesterfield County is committed to providing support and life-saving treatment to members of our community who have been impacted by substance-use disorders. It’s because of our regional partnerships that we are able to pave a better, drug-free future for Central Virginia.”

Executive Summary

Regional Recovery Day 2024 brought together four local governments, 58 private substance use providers, and over 700 residents. The purpose of the day was to work to reduce stigma, provide education on substance use and its impact on the brain, offer opportunities to see that recovery is possible through the panel discussion with those in recovery, and alert the public to the resources that are available for treatment and recovery. As seen above in the quotes of several participants, the impact was significant on the attendees.

This is an effort that can be duplicated in other localities by leveraging local governments and private business partnerships and utilizing opiate abatement funding if other funding is not available. Our localities have already committed to hosting a second Regional Recovery Day. Some of the lessons learned include planning for transportation options for those in need, moving the event to the evening so that those that work traditional hours and students can attend, and beginning advertising earlier.

We are excited to grow this event year after year. We believe others can as well!

<https://www.12onyourside.com/video/2024/09/25/regional-recovery-day-september-30/>

<https://recovery.henrico.gov/learn/regional-recovery-day-2024/>



