CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS AWARENESS WEEK 2017
Suggested COA Awareness Week Activities

During COA Awareness Week you – or your organization – can be a part of a grassroots national, and international, awareness and advocacy campaign spreading the word that children living with alcoholism/addiction in the family need the support of caring adults.

During this week we join our voices and connect our activities to collectively raise awareness for children whose parents struggle with alcoholism or addiction. We encourage and support them with reassurance that there are safe people who understand, and can help. By raising our voices together, we can encourage adults to be there for the children who suffer silently.

We can also reach kids and teens with important information. Children living with addiction in their family need to know that it is not their fault when a parent struggles with alcoholism or a substance use disorder. They need to hear the message, “It’s a disease; it is not your fault, and there are safe people who can help.” We work together to break the chains of the unspoken rules: “Don’t talk. Don’t feel. Don’t trust.”

During this special week, choose to speak out, to reach out, to get the word out that all too often, it’s the children who are hurt the most when parents are addicted. These children are often the first hurt and the last helped. The right message from caring adults, or being included in an educational support group, can make a world of difference for them. Join NACoA partners, affiliates and friends during this important annual celebration.

Your own passion, experience in your community, or organizational goals will guide how you can have the greatest impact.

www.nacoa.org
Here are some suggestions on how to make a difference during COA Awareness Week 2017:

• **Speak out as an organization and as an individual.** Advocate for the children and families affected by alcoholism or substance use disorders. 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 affected by or exposed to a family alcohol problem. The needs of these kids and teens often go unaddressed for a variety of reasons – some emotional, some financial, and all very persistent. It doesn’t have to be that way!

• **Review the Social Media Toolkit and resources list to find ways to share information** in your community. Share with family and friends, pediatricians, teachers, guidance counselors, therapists, social workers, faith community leaders, drug court professionals, or anyone else you believe has the opportunity to touch the life of a child or teenager in a meaningful way.

• **Share information through Social Media** Follow NACoA on Facebook, Twitter, and Linked In and get more involved. Share articles, infographics and memes that 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, and how they can help.

• **Host a Drugs Over Dinner event with your family, friends, or community.** Visit [www.drugsoverdinner.org](http://www.drugsoverdinner.org) for ideas on how to arrange a time over a meal to focus on this important issue. Some resources on the site focus specifically on children, who rightfully deserve a seat at the table and a role in the conversation. Supplement the site’s materials with COA Awareness Week and other NACoA materials.

For parents who wish to introduce the family’s history of alcoholism/addiction as a disease in a loving and caring way, consult Claudia Black’s book: *Straight Talk from Claudia Black: What Recovering Parents Should Tell Their Kids About Drugs and Alcohol.*

• **Ask Churches and Other Faith-Based Organizations to join in Children of Alcoholics Week.** Something as simple as recognition in the bulletin and newsletter would be a start. Suggest that they make available to young congregants the pamphlet *It Feels So Bad* and to adult members *Alcohol and Drug Addiction Happens in the Best of Families...and it Hurts*. Ask that Children of Alcoholics Week be announced in the bulletin and that the *Children of Alcoholics Week 2017* flyer be on display from throughout the week. Have the topic of family recovery touched during homilies or host a discussion after services to discuss the issue at great length. Direct ministers to the Faith Community section of the NACoA website, offering an array of resources to help them to better understand how to serve families needing family recovery or working hard to strengthen it.

• **Stimulate a Proclamation.** Join with other groups in your town or state to persuade the mayor or governor or state legislators to make an official proclamation of Children of Alcoholics Week 2017. Announce the event with as much fanfare as possible, including a kick-off press conference and as much TV or radio coverage as you can attract. Work with the public affairs office that serves the official who will be signing the proclamation. Contact your local newspaper to provide basic information and local resources where families can turn to for more information and support. Include NACoA’s website as a resource.

[COA Awareness Week](http://www.nacoa.org)  
February 12-18, 2017

[www.nacoa.org](http://www.nacoa.org)
• **Distribute Prepared Materials.** Recognize the week with a simple information distribution campaign. Using material already developed, call and visit the offices of organizations whose work is like yours or otherwise well-suited to the messages of Children of Alcoholics Week. Ask them to display the *Children of Alcoholics Awareness Week 2017* poster and other materials in their public areas. Contact your community’s health care professional associations (hospital association, medical and dental society, nurses’ association) and managed care organizations. Bring the *Children of Alcoholics Week 2017* flyer and other educational materials to your own pediatrician’s office. Make a request for them to be shared on the office’s notice board. Suggest creating a parent education material table at any office who serves families.

• **Sell the Money-Saving Aspects of Prevention to City/County Managers.** Use basic statistics about addiction and its impact on families to dramatize the potential costs to local governments. Let the numbers convince them that it is money-saving, as well as compassionate, to speak up for and promote prevention programs such as youth mentoring; student assistance programs in schools; or to support programs in health clinics. Savings will come in reductions in health care, human services, and criminal justice costs avoided through investment in prevention.

  **It only takes one caring and supportive adult to change the trajectory of a child or teenager’s life.** Whether in your home, your neighborhood, your school, your congregation, or in your family hundreds of miles away, just by letting a child know you care, that you are available to listen, and by modeling healthy behavior, you can shine brightly in the darkness of fear and confusion that oftentimes can overwhelm.

  **Be present, be caring, be loving, give a smile or a complement. In the smallest of ways during this week – or anytime throughout the year – an adult can offer hope and support to kids in need.**