There are tens of thousands of men and women across our country just like you who want to speak out about their recovery experiences while honoring the principles that have worked so well for so many. This pamphlet answers questions that people who want to speak out are asking as they think about how to share their experiences and make it possible for others to get the help they need. Here’s what one person has to say,

“I’m feeling better in my sobriety as I work a twelve-step program and am grateful for the blessings it has brought me. I want to reach out and help others who are still in the throes of active addiction or struggling in their recovery because of discriminatory policies and practices.

I hear the terms ‘advocacy’ and ‘anonymity’ all the time, but I’m not sure what they mean or how they apply to me. I do to help alcoholics and addicts who have not yet recovered? How can I increase the public’s understanding of addiction and recovery?

You can speak out publicly without compromising the principles of the recovery program in which you participate. By doing so, you will be reaching out to alcoholics, addicts, their families - providing them with new hope - and educating policy makers.

If you too are in long-term recovery, or are a family member of someone in long-term recovery and want to speak out about what it means to you and your family, this pamphlet will help you feel more comfortable with how you can do just that.

Anonymity...
The principle of anonymity was established to assure a safe place for people to recover and keep focused on their primary purpose of helping alcoholics and addicts to recover.

...at the level of the media, is the cornerstone principle of many twelve-step groups and recovery programs. It is an essential element of success because it gives the recovering person the protection he/she needs from scrutiny.

...also plays a crucial role in establishing personal humility, which is a cornerstone of the spiritual foundation of recovery.

Here are the traditions that lay out the principle of anonymity as it applies to many twelve-step groups.

Tradition 6
“A [twelve-step group] ought never endorse, finance or lend the [twelve-step group] name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.”

Tradition 10
“The [twelve-step group] has no opinion on outside issues; hence, the [twelve-step group] ought never to be drawn into any public controversy.”

Tradition 11
“Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.”

So, this means that you can speak about your own recovery and advocate for the rights of others, as long as you do not involve the twelve-step group by name.

Here are a few “portals” where you can find links to critical information and other organizations:

Faces & Voices of Recovery
www.facesandvoicesoffrecovery.org
202.737.0690
Faces & Voices is a national campaign founded by the recovery community in 2001. Faces & Voices is committed to mobilizing and organizing the millions of Americans in long-term recovery from alcohol and other drug addiction, our families, friends and allies to change public perceptions of recovery, end discrimination and keep a focus on the fact that recovery works and is making life better for millions of Americans.

Johnson Institute
www.johnsoninstitute.org
202.662.7104
The Johnson Institute has pioneered intervention, treatment, and recovery strategies for more than 40 years. It has stood for honoring recovery - not hiding it. The Johnson Institute was founded by Dr. Vernon Johnson, an Episcopal priest and recovered alcoholic. As one of the oldest service non-profit organizations in the addiction recovery field, the Johnson Institute is composed of and serving people in recovery with offices in Washington, D.C.; Austin, Texas; and Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Join Together
www.jointogether.org
617.437.1500
Since 1991 Join Together, a program of the Boston University School of Public Health, has been the nation's leading provider of information, strategic assistance, and leadership development for community-based efforts to advance effective alcohol and drug policy, prevention, and treatment. Through extensive online information resources and national policy panels, Join Together helps community leaders understand and use the most current scientifically valid prevention and treatment approaches.

National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD)
www.ncadd.org
212.269.7797
Founded in 1944, NCADD is dedicated to increasing public awareness and understanding of the disease of alcoholism and drug dependence. NCADD’s leadership and advocacy on policy issues at the national level has changed the course of alcoholism and addiction treatment in America. The NCADD network of state/local Affiliates provides education, prevention, information/referral, intervention and treatment services and has helped hundreds of thousands of individuals and families into recovery.

Marty Mann, NCADD’s founder, was a recovering alcoholic with long-term sobriety, and was dedicated to three basic principles: alcoholism is a disease and the alcoholic is a sick person; the alcoholic can be helped and is worth helping; and, this is a public health problem and a public responsibility.

Additional copies of this pamphlet are available from any of the organizations listed above.

National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month
www.recoverymonth.gov
An annual September celebration of Recovery Month that takes place in communities across the country. The observance celebrates people and families in recovery from addiction who have overcome stigma, discrimination, and other barriers to treatment and recovery support services.
Here are some questions that may help you think about how you can tell others what recovery means to you and your family.

Q: It sounds like we can be advocates as long as we don’t mention our twelve-step groups. Isn’t that still harmful?
A: Absolutely not. There is a long and rich tradition of people in recovery speaking out as advocates. It’s one way to let our friends and neighbors put a face on recovery. In fact, Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob were on the founding board of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD), the nation’s oldest advocacy group. Bill Wilson remembered this important event in a 1958 Grapevine article:

Then came Marty Mann (NCADD founder). As a recovered alcoholic, she knew that public attitudes had to be changed, that alcoholism was a disease and that alcoholics could be helped. She developed a plan for an education and to organize citizens’ committees all over the country. She brought the plan to me. I was enthusiastic. . . .

Q: How do I start?
A: As with most activities in our lives, you will need to get comfortable by seeking support and guidance from people you trust. If there’s not a recovery community organization in your area yet, it may make the most sense to join together with a few others and map out a strategy for getting started. That way, if you are new to public speaking for example, you can practice with each other and then move out into the community.

Q: Where should I speak out?
A: Start by talking with one other person, a friend or neighbor or a small group. As you become more comfortable, expand your audience. As you gain more experience, you may want to speak publicly or privately with your city council, state legislators or other public officials. You can coordinate your advocacy work with others.

Q: What are some of the most important points to make and the language that will get your story across?
A: Focus on recovery and on barriers that prevent people from getting treatment and sustaining their recovery. Here are a few pointers for you to use when you talk about your recovery and what it means to you:

1. Make it personal.
2. Keep it simple and in the present tense, so that it’s real and understandable.
3. Help people understand that recovery means that you, or the person that you care about, are no longer using alcohol or other drugs. You can do this by saying, “long-term recovery,” talking about stability and mentioning the length of time that you or that person have been in recovery.
4. Talk about your recovery—not your addiction.
5. Help people understand that there’s more to recovery than not using alcohol or other drugs, and that part of recovery is creating a better life.

The most important thing is to get started. Here are some common sense things to think about as you move forward:

• No recovering person should advocate publicly if his or her sobriety, job or financial well-being will be put into jeopardy.
• No recovering person should advocate at the level of public media unless he or she has two years of recovery.
• You may disclose your identity and speak as a person in long-term recovery so long as your membership in a particular program of recovery is not revealed.

Here is another thought from Bill Wilson to keep in mind as we proceed together:

So let us hasten to work alongside those projects of promise to hasten the recovery of millions who have not yet found their way out. These varied labors do not need our special endorsements; they need only a helping hand, when, as individuals, we can possibly give it.