

HARNESSING THE POWER OF VISUALS

TIP SHEET

Visuals go a long way in storytelling; people want to see an interesting illustration or be invited to interact with content. In fact, studies show that **when a relevant image is paired with information, people retain 65% of the information three days later.** ([Brain Rules](#))

Visuals should be an integral piece of everything you create.

WHAT CONSTITUTES A “VISUAL”?

We’re talking photographs, illustrations, social media graphics, GIFs, infographics, videos, and much more. Through these tools, you can really bring a conversation, an event, data, and more to life!

TAKE EFFECTIVE PHOTOS

Below are a few tips to make sure your image looks great and can be used for a long time:

- Go to your camera settings and be sure you are shooting at **maximum resolution** and that your picture quality is set at the highest setting.
- While in settings, check to see if your camera has an **image stabilization** feature. If so, make sure it is turned on. If possible, **use a tripod or table** to keep your camera still while taking photos.
- Take your photos in a **well-lit environment** (turn on the flash if necessary), but avoid bright reflections on glasses or objects in the picture.
- **Avoid zooming** in on your subject as it will lower the photo resolution. Use your feet to get closer!
- Find your subject and follow the **Rule of Thirds** (see page 2).
- **Clean your lens** often.
- When sending images via email to colleagues for posting or editing, make sure you **send the image at full size** (or “full resolution”).



PUT A FACE ON YOUR PROGRAM

People are more likely to connect with a message when they “see themselves” in the design. So as you work to tell your prevention story, be sure to **tell the story of the people behind it...**you, your neighbors, colleagues, those in recovery.

When engaging youth or young adults, use their images in your story as permission allows and elevate their voices. If you want to reach parents or caregivers, use their images.

When possible, **use photos and videos from previous activities or events** instead of stock images as permission allows. This will give more authenticity and relatability to your content.

If your supply of photos and videos is limited, low-quality, or uninspiring, several stock photography sites can help. Many of these sites also include video.

- [Pexels](#) (free)
- [Pixabay](#) (free)
- [iStock by Getty](#) (subscription)
- [Shutterstock](#) (subscription)

MAKE AN IMPACT

Facebook posts with images receive **2.3 times more engagement** ([INMA](#)).

[LinkedIn reports](#) that **video drives 5x more engagement** than any other kind of content.

FOLLOW THE RULE OF THIRDS FOR GREAT PICTURES

The Rule of Thirds says that if you **divide a screen into thirds** using lines, the points where the lines cross are focus points that the eye is naturally attracted to.

- Avoid filling all the squares. At most, fill 6 of the 9 squares.
- A person's head should only be in the top two horizontal sections.

USING VISUALS ON X, INSTAGRAM, FACEBOOK, AND LINKEDIN

Keep in mind that not all photos are created equal. Here are a few rules to follow:

- Only **post images that you have created** or that you have a right to publish. If your photo features people, be sure you have secured their written permission to use their likeness or have posted signs that they understand their photo may be taken.
- Mix up **different types of images** (e.g., banners, infographics, photos, memes, etc.).
- **Take impromptu photos** on your smartphone and post them in real time; think of these as behind-the-scenes shots for your followers.
- **Have fun!** Post "Caption This" photos or polls to interact with and engage your followers.
- **Avoid "selfies"** unless you're including someone that is integral to your messaging.

Using the Stories feature on these platforms allows you to share multiple snapshots and videos of your activity in real time. Be sure to add text, GIFs, stickers, hashtags, and even emojis to the images as well to make them even more engaging (and attention-grabbing). However, remember that a Story only lasts for 24 hours, so this shouldn't be the only way you showcase an event or activity.

Also, remember to use **#CommunitiesTalk** and any hashtags relevant to your organization or the specific activity so people can find your posts when searching related topics.

If you need help creating visual elements, several free programs can help:

- [Canva](#)
- [Pixlr](#)
- [Crello](#)

UTILIZING INSTAGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Instagram Highlights live permanently on your profile. They're curated collections of your previous Instagram Stories that your followers—both old and new—can tap into and watch any time they like.

The limit for one Instagram Highlight is 100 photos or videos, but you can create as many Highlights as you want. This could be a great place to save frequent questions and answers that you receive and respond to in your Stories or to introduce your followers to your organization's employees.

Don't save all your Stories as Highlights but definitely add Highlights to your overall social media strategy.

For additional resources from SAMHSA and other agencies to get your *Communities Talk* activity off the ground, visit www.samhsa.gov/communities-talk.