



NEWS RELEASE

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SMART Recovery Adds Hundreds of Online Meetings **Both local and global meetings keep hope alive for** **people recovering from addiction and their families**

Mentor, OH, April 30, 2020—For people struggling with addiction, the Coronavirus pandemic almost certainly adds stress upon their recovery. Since physical distancing has nixed in-person meetings, recovery meetings have almost entirely migrated to the web—no easy task for any organization trying to make sure those that need help can get it in these challenging times.

Self-Management and Recovery Training (SMART) has responded with a major initiative to increase the number of its free weekly meetings online for people in recovery and for family members and friends who support them. SMART offers two kinds of online meetings, local and global, and this initiative has significantly increased the number of both.

Local online meetings started this year in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. In mid-March, SMART in the US, Canada, Australia, and other countries started introducing online meetings at the local level to replace those that were meeting in person. These meetings are attended by many of the same people who were gathering together before public health authorities instituted social distancing and stay-at-home measures. According to Bill Greer, president of SMART Recovery USA:

“When we realized in mid-March that online meetings must be our primary way to provide support, we took swift and robust action. So far, we’ve moved more than 400 previously in-person meetings to the web, and the number is growing almost daily. Our volunteer meeting facilitators are doing a tremendous job converting their in-person meetings to online meetings. And one of the best things about it is that people can see familiar faces at those online meetings, which adds to the positive experience and value.

People can find local online meetings through the locator at www.smartrecoverytest.org/local/ by entering their zip code or city and state.

Global online meetings have been around since 1998, and participants join via the SMART Recovery website. People can access more than 60 online meetings from anywhere in the world through www.smartrecovery.org/community. The weekly schedule of these meetings is posted at smartrecovery.org/community/calendar.php, and you must register to attend. People can

maintain their privacy by using screen names and not showing their face at video meetings. Also, these meetings are not recorded.

The movement to virtual meetings is a global trend with SMART in 12 countries are offering SMART online meetings, including Canada (50), the UK (15), and Ireland (8). Australia currently offers more 80 SMART meetings online and will soon introduce hundreds more with the help of a grant for \$400,000 (AU dollars) from the Australian Government Department of Health. People can find links to the UK and Canadian meetings on the USA website.

For meeting participants like Ted P., the ability to get support for his recovery online is a tremendous help:

I was worried when I realized I could no longer go to face-to-face meetings and felt stressed out. But once I tried a couple of online meetings, I felt much better. It's different, but I'd say equally valuable. I'm very hopeful that my recovery will continue to be strong during this [Coronavirus outbreak].

SMART offers a self-empowering approach to help individuals with all kinds of harmful behaviors, including addiction to substances (alcohol and other drugs) and to activities (gambling, eating disorders, sex, self-harm, excessive internet use, and other problems). SMART also hosts Family & Friends meetings for those caring for loved ones with addiction.

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SMART Recovery (Self-Management and Recovery Training) is a global, nonprofit organization that helps people overcome problematic addictive behavior through free in-person and online meetings. Participants use SMART to assume responsibility for their recovery using its 4-Point Program[®]. These foundational principles are: building and maintaining motivation; coping with urges; managing thoughts, feelings and behaviors; and living a balanced life.

Founded in 1994, the organization uses science-based techniques that have proven to be effective in helping individuals overcome addiction to drugs, alcohol, and harmful activities such as gambling. SMART has been endorsed by the leading government and medical authorities in Australia, the UK, and U.S. Learn more: www.smartrecovery.org.