**Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month (OCAM) Toolkit**

September is Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month (OCAM), which serves as an excellent opportunity to annually elevate ovarian cancer risk and recognize those affected. OCRA policy staff are doing their part at the federal level, reaching out to our congressional champions in U.S. House and Senate chambers, as well as the White House to ensure OCAM is recognized at the federal level. We are calling on our Advocate Leaders (ALs) to drive the process at the state and local levels.

The following provides instructions for how to go about these processes, as well as sample resolution and proclamation languages. In addition to reaching out to your elected officials, we also encourage you to post to your social media accounts and engage in other activities to help raise awareness and promote visibility of OCAM. Along those same lines, please like and re-post fellow advocates’ OCAM-related posts.

**Working with Your State- and Local-Elected Officials to Introduce OCAM Proclamations & Resolutions:**

Background:

*What’s a resolution? What’s a proclamation? What’s the difference?*

A Resolution is a declaration passed by a legislative body, like a City Council or a state legislature; a Proclamation is a similar declaration issued by an executive branch official, like a Governor or a mayor.

*What does OCRA expect from its Advocate Leaders (ALs)?*

Ideally, ALs will drive forward three efforts designating September as OCAM at the state-level:

1. A proclamation issued by the Governor;
2. A resolution issued by your state legislature’s lower chamber (called “state house” or “state assembly” depending on your state); and
3. A resolution issued by your state legislature’s upper chamber (state senate).

State legislatures are bicameral (except Nebraska) with an upper chamber and a lower chamber that operate independently of one another. Accordingly, each chamber may require a different process to obtain the resolution.

*Should I work by myself, or can I work with other Advocate Leaders (ALs)?*

If you are in a state represented by multiple ALs, we encourage you to coordinate among yourselves via email. The Advocate Leader email directory divided by state is posted in Basecamp accompanying this toolkit. This is important because, if possible, we would like to streamline requests and avoid redundant submissions to the same office or chamber. If you are the only AL representing your state and are feeling overwhelmed or confused, please don’t hesitate to reach out to OCRA staff if you need any help.

**OCAM Proclamations:**

1. Visit the website of your state governor (it should be a .gov website).
2. Do a search for "Proclamations" and you should find some kind of a submission request form with fields like those listed below. Use the form fields to input your desired date for the proclamation, its text, your name/contact information, and additional details. Please complete these fields using the information below.
	1. For “point of contact”: please use your personal information. If you are in a state with more than one AL, please deputize a single point person among yourselves.
	2. For “preferred date issued”: September 1 of this year (however, in some states there are deadlines that we may have already missed and if that applies to you, then please just input the earliest date in September that’s possible)
	3. For “organization”: Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance (OCRA)
	4. For “sample text”: Use the template italicized language below replacing highlighted/bracketed placeholders with state-specific information, as directed. Most states have character limits allowing for roughly 4-6 “whereas” clauses.
		1. For the clause referencing the American Cancer Society, see the last column titled “Ovary” of the 2023 American Cancer Society facts & figures report, link below, and replace bracketed “XXX” with appropriate figures for number of cases and deaths for 2024 for your state. Please note that in some states, this exact number is not provided in the ACS chart because it is less than 50. If that applies to your state, please delete the "including…" clause and omit state-specific info.

Link: [Cancer Deaths by State](https://cancerstatisticscenter.cancer.org/#!/cancer-site/Ovary)

Sample text:

*Whereas ovarian cancer is the fifth leading cause of cancer deaths of women in the United States and causes more deaths than any other gynecologic cancer;*

*Whereas in the United States, a woman’s lifetime risk of being diagnosed with ovarian cancer is about 1 in 78;*

*Whereas the American Cancer Society estimates 19,680 cases of ovarian cancer will be newly diagnosed in 2024 and 12,740 individuals will die from the disease nationwide, including [XXX] new cases and [XXX] deaths in [state name];*

*Whereas the five-year survival rate for ovarian cancer is 50 percent and survival rates vary greatly depending on the stage of diagnosis;*

*Whereas there is not currently an effective diagnostic tool for screening and early detection does not exist*

**See below for additional clauses**

1. If you have the time/bandwidth, please repeat this process at the local level for your mayor and/or City Council person. Follow the same process of searching for “proclamations” on the local government website and use the same sample language detailed above.

**OCAM Resolutions:**

1. Visit your state legislature’s website and do a search for “Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month” to see if a state senator/representative has previously introduced a resolution recognizing September as Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month.
	1. If your search turns up nothing (i.e., no past legislative engagement around OCAM turns up in the search catch), you don’t need to worry about continuity in leadership and can approach any member of your state assembly and senate and ask them to introduce. In this case, email your own state senator and assembly person using Template A in the pages that follow. If you don’t know who they are, there should be an option to plug in your street address and find your elected representative in both chambers. If you are in a state with multiple ALs, designate one person to email their own state senator/assembly person using the same Template A in the pages that follow. Please note that there is sample resolution language appended to the email language for Template A.
	2. If there is a resolution but it is not current (meaning it wasn’t introduced this year), note the sponsor (the senator/representative introducing the resolution). If this member is still in office, there should be an option within your state’s official .gov website to contact this member. Typically, you can click on the sponsor’s name and be directed toward to their profile, which should include an email address. Email their office using Template B in the pages that follow. Please note that there is sample resolution language appended to the email language for Template B (the resolution language is the same for Templates A&B). Again, if you are in a state with multiple ALs, please designate a single AL to take the lead and be the email point of contact.
	3. If an OCAM resolution has already been introduced for this year, please email the lead sponsor using Template C below.

**TEMPLATE A: Resolution NOT introduced (no legislative engagement around OCAM)**

Dear Senator [Last Name]/Assemblymember [Last Name]/Representative [Last Name],

As an ovarian cancer [survivor/advocate] and Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance (OCRA) grassroots Advocate Leader representing [state name], I am writing to request your support for [state name’s] ovarian cancer community during September, Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month. Specifically, I am hoping that you’ll consider introducing a resolution designating September as Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month. Sample resolution language [follows/is attached].

[I’ve cc’d my fellow Advocate Leaders in [State name] and want you to know that we are on hand to help rally support behind this resolution.]

Education and awareness regarding ovarian cancer are especially paramount because symptoms are often vague, or altogether absent, and there is no early detection test for the disease which makes diagnosis particularly difficult. Once someone is diagnosed, treatment options are often limited, and the cancer progresses quickly. Only 50 percent of women diagnosed with ovarian cancer live five years beyond their diagnosis, and mortality rates have not significantly improved in decades. This is unacceptable and yet it is the cruel reality for too many women.

For these reasons, any additional awareness you can raise by posting on social media using the hashtags #ovariancancerawarenessmonth or #ocam during the month of September would be deeply appreciated.

Please don’t hesitate to reach out to me with any questions, for sample posts, or anything else going forward.

Many thanks,

[Your Name]

[Your Address]

[Phone Number]

**TEMPLATE B: Resolution introduced in past years (BUT NOT IN CURRENT LEGISLATIVE SESSION)**

Dear Senator [Last Name]/Assemblymember [Last Name]/Representative [Last Name],

I am writing to you on behalf of the [state name] ovarian cancer community to request your support during September, Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month (OCAM). As the sponsor of past OCAM resolutions, we’re hoping that we can count on you again this year to introduce a resolution designating September as Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month. Sample resolution language [follows/is attached].

As an ovarian cancer [survivor/advocate] and Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance (OCRA) grassroots Advocate Leader representing [state name], your continued leadership would be particularly meaningful. [I’ve cc’d my fellow Advocate Leaders in [state name] and want you to know that we are on hand to help rally support behind this resolution.]

Any additional awareness you can raise by posting on social media using the hashtags #ovariancancerawarenessmonth or #ocam during the month of September would be deeply appreciated.

Please don’t hesitate to reach out to me with any questions, for sample social media posts, or anything else going forward.

Many thanks,

[Your Name]

[Your Address]

[Phone Number]

**TEMPLATE C: Resolution already introduced**

Dear Senator [Last Name]/Assemblymember [Last Name]/Representative [Last Name],

On behalf of those affected by ovarian cancer in [state name], I am writing to thank you for sponsoring a resolution designating September as Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month. As an ovarian cancer [survivor/advocate] and Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance (OCRA) grassroots Advocate Leader representing [state name], your leadership is particularly meaningful.

[I’ve cc’d my fellow Advocate Leaders in [State name] and want you to know that we are on hand to help rally support behind this resolution.] Any additional awareness you can raise by posting on social media using the hashtags #ovariancancerawarenessmonth or #ocam during the month of September would be deeply appreciated.

Please don’t hesitate to reach out to me for sample social media posts, or anything else going forward.

Many thanks,

[Your Name]

[Your Address]

[Phone Number]

**Sample Resolution Language**

*Note: please make sure to fill out the highlighted parts of this language to make it applicable to your state before sending. See instructions for filling these sections out at the bottom of the sample language.*

* Whereas ovarian cancer is the fifth leading cause of cancer deaths of women in the United States and causes more deaths than any other gynecologic cancer;
* Whereas in the United States, a woman’s lifetime risk of being diagnosed with ovarian cancer is about 1 in 78;
* Whereas the American Cancer Society estimates 19,7680 cases of ovarian cancer will be newly diagnosed in 2024 and 12,740 individuals will die from the disease nationwide, including XXX new cases and XXX deaths in [state name]; **[A]**
* Whereas the five-year survival rate for ovarian cancer is 50 percent and survival rates vary greatly depending on the stage of diagnosis;
* Whereas the five-year survival rate for ovarian cancer is over 90 percent for individuals diagnosed in early stages;
* Whereas while the mammogram can detect breast cancer and the Pap smear can detect cervical cancer, there is no reliable early detection test for ovarian cancer;
* Whereas, in June 2007, the first national consensus statement on ovarian cancer symptoms was developed to provide consistency in describing symptoms to make it easier for women to learn and remember those symptoms;
* Whereas Black women with ovarian cancer are more likely to have late-stage diagnoses, receive lower quality clinical services, and have lower five-year survival rates than non-Black women;
* Whereas women of color, low-income women, and women living in rural areas have more barriers to accessing standard quality of care and are more likely to receive care at a facility that has poorer adherence to National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) treatment guidelines;
* Whereas too many people remain unaware that the symptoms of ovarian cancer often include bloating, pelvic or abdominal pain, difficulty eating or feeling full quickly, urinary symptoms, and several other vague symptoms that are often easily confused with other diseases;
* Whereas improved awareness of the symptoms of ovarian cancer by the pubic and health care providers can lead to a quicker diagnosis;
* Whereas the lack of an early detection test for ovarian cancer combined with its vague symptoms mean that approximately 80 percent of cases of ovarian cancer are detected at an advanced stage;
* Whereas persistent issues collecting and reporting data related to ovarian cancer risk, treatment and outcomes are particularly pronounced and impede the development of effective policy;
* Whereas all women are at risk for ovarian cancer, but approximately 20 percent of women who are diagnosed with ovarian cancer have a hereditary predisposition to ovarian cancer, which places them at even higher risk;
* Whereas scientists and physicians have uncovered changes in the BRCA genes that some women inherit from their parents, which may make those women 30 times more likely to develop ovarian cancer;
* Whereas the family history of a woman has been found to play an important role in accurately assessing their risk of developing ovarian cancer and medical experts believe that family history should be taken into consideration during the annual well-woman visit of any woman;
* Whereas women who know that they are at high risk of ovarian cancer may undertake prophylactic measures, such as opportunistic salpingectomy, to help reduce the risk of developing this disease;
* Whereas guidelines issued by the National Comprehensive Cancer Network and Society of Gynecologic Oncology recommend that all individuals diagnosed with ovarian cancer receive genetic counseling and genetic testing regardless of their family history;
* Whereas studies consistently show that compliance with these guidelines is alarmingly low, with recently published National Cancer Institute-funded research finding that in 2013 and 2014, only one-third of ovarian cancer survivors have undergone such testing;
* Whereas according to a 2016 consensus report by the National Academy of Medicine, ‘‘there remain surprising gaps in the fundamental knowledge about and understanding of ovarian cancer’’ across all aspects of the disease;
* Whereas ongoing investments in ovarian cancer research and education and awareness efforts are critical to closing these gaps and improving survivorship for women with ovarian cancer;
* Whereas each year during the month of September, Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance (OCRA) and Community Partner organizations hold a number of events to increase public awareness of ovarian cancer and its symptoms;
* and Whereas September should be designated as ‘‘National Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month’’ to increase public awareness of ovarian cancer: Now, therefore, be it resolved, that the [state name] [legislative body] supports the goals and ideals of National Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month **[B]**

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***Directions corresponding with bracketed A/B:***

1. **Go to the American Cancer Society ovarian cancer statistics page [link below), scroll down to the “Estimated New Cancer Cases and Deaths By State” chart, and filter “Cancer Type” for “Ovary”. Replace bracketed “XXX” with appropriate figures for new cases and deaths for your state.**

<https://cancerstatisticscenter.cancer.org/#!/cancer-site/Ovary>

*Note, for a handful of states, there may be blanks because these numbers are fewer than 50. If that applies to your state, then there is no need to include the state-specific clause “including XXX in….” and you can delete that language such that the clause stops with “nationwide.”*

EXAMPLE:

* Whereas the American Cancer Society estimates 19,680 cases of ovarian cancer will be newly diagnosed in 2024 and 12,740 individuals will die from the disease nationwide, including *120* new cases and *70* deaths in *New Mexico*;
1. **Write state name followed by House, Assembly, or Senate as appropriate.**

EXAMPLE:

For State Senator:

* and Whereas September should be designated as ‘‘National Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month’’ to increase public awareness of ovarian cancer: Now, therefore, be it resolved, that the *New Mexico Senate* supports the goals and ideals of National Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month

For State House/Assemblymember:

* and Whereas September should be designated as ‘‘National Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month’’ to increase public awareness of ovarian cancer: Now, therefore, be it resolved, that the *New Mexico State House* supports the goals and ideals of National Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month
1. **Delete these directions, along with bracketed A/B letters, as to provide clean text to your state legislators.**