



Recovery

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Many people who have developed opioid use disorder get treatment and live successful and happy lives. Their stories show that long-term recovery from a substance use disorder is possible.

People in recovery (as many describe themselves) have been vocal advocates for new research, policies, and programs to support people with substance use disorders. Researchers, treatment providers, and public health experts in Colorado and around the world have devoted their attention to better understanding recovery and the elements that support it. Efforts on the part of these advocates have expanded scholarship about substance use disorder to include recovery as an important and critical component of the prevention, treatment, and recovery continuum. While elements of recovery can be explored in treatment, it is truly each individual who defines recovery for themselves.

In this chapter, you will find information about recovery, links to resources, and information about Colorado initiatives intended to promote and support recovery. Use this chapter if you are:

- Interested in recovery-related terminology and principles;
- Looking for national and state recovery resources; and/or
- Interested in Colorado efforts to expand and improve recovery support services.

About Recovery

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) defines recovery, whether from substance use disorder or mental illness, as “a process of change through which people improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and strive to reach their full potential.” Hope, the belief that challenges and conditions can be overcome, is the foundation of recovery. SAMHSA does not describe recovery as an end state, but rather as a process that is highly personal and characterized by continual growth and improvement in one’s health and wellness.

Relapse is often a part of recovery. Because setbacks are a natural part of life and can occur during the

management of any substance use disorder, resilience becomes a key component not only of treatment but, perhaps more importantly, of recovery. Complete symptom remission is neither a prerequisite for recovery nor a necessary outcome of the process.

Recovery can occur through many pathways, which may include professional clinical treatment; use of medications; support from families and in schools; faith-based approaches; individual and/or group-based peer support; as well as other approaches. The four critical dimensions identified by SAMHSA which facilitate reaching and sustaining recovery are:



- **Health** – Overcoming or managing one’s conditions and symptoms and making informed, healthy choices that support physical and emotional well-being
- **Home** – Having a stable and safe place to live
- **Community** – Relationships and social networks that provide support, friendship, love, and hope
- **Purpose** – Engaging in meaningful daily activities and having the independence, income, and resources to do so

Recovery Support

Recovery differs from treatment in significant ways. The best source for recovery support comes from individuals with lived experience who are engaged in their own recovery. Recovery support services can be provided to individuals and families throughout the prevention, treatment, and recovery continuum of care in the form of emotional, informational, and community support. Traditional recovery support services usually occur in an environment outside of the treatment setting.

Traditional recovery support services include: peer-led groups such as Narcotics Anonymous, Cocaine Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous, SMART Recovery, LifeRing, Secular Organizations for Sobriety, “Adult Children of Alcoholics,” Al-Anon, Co-dependents Anonymous and many other organizations. Recovery organizations are expanding the understanding of recovery to include more than traditional-style meetings. Organizations such as The Phoenix, Project Helping, and others offer activity-specific recovery activities including community service and volunteering, exercise, outdoor adventure, and art. Ultimately, these services facilitate the development of one or more of SAMHSA’s dimensions of recovery and can be delivered in a variety of ways, depending on the needs and interests of the larger community.

Although scholarship regarding recovery as a critical component of the prevention, treatment, and recovery landscape is in its infancy, peer-led support groups have supported people since 1935, when the first chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous was created. There is growing evidence in the treatment community that suggests



recovery support services are best delivered by a person with “lived experience.” In a traditional treatment setting, these individuals are often referred to as *peer- or recovery-support specialists*. These specialty-trained paraprofessionals represent a growing and valuable workforce. These positions can be volunteer or paid and are emerging in varied settings including hospitals, primary care, community and faith-based centers, schools, treatment settings, and more.

A recovery community organization (RCO) is an independent organization led and governed by representatives of local communities of recovery. An RCO can serve as a significant resource to individuals seeking recovery support services while embracing the “many pathways” principle. Typically nonprofit, these community-based organizations are able to provide individuals with a sense of belonging (community), service work (purpose), and also provide peer-based support to facilitate the development of health and home dimensions. Not to be confused with a treatment center, a RCO is not a licensed behavioral health facility and has no regulations or oversight to that end.

Resources

National

SAMHSA provides a substantial number of online resources related to recovery. SAMHSA’s Recovery and Recovery Support page includes their “working definition of recovery” and the four major dimensions of recovery, and is online at www.samhsa.gov/find-help/recovery. SAMHSA’s pamphlet on “The 10 Guiding Principles of Recovery” can be accessed online at: store.samhsa.gov/product/SAMHSA-s-Working-Definition-of-Recovery/PEP12-RECDEF.

SAMHSA’s Bringing Recovery Supports to Scale Technical Assistance Center Strategy (BRSS TACS) program provides technical assistance to programs, systems, states, territories, and tribes in their efforts to implement effective recovery support services for all individuals with mental or substance use disorders. The program’s website is www.samhsa.gov/brss-tacs.

The Office of the Surgeon General has published reports highlighting current substance use concerns and the importance of recovery support. The 2018 Spotlight on

Opioids can be found at addiction.surgeongeneral.gov/sites/default/files/Spotlight-on-Opioids_09192018.pdf. Chapter 5 of the Surgeon General’s 2016 Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health is dedicated to recovery, and is online at addiction.surgeongeneral.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-generals-report.pdf.

National standards and training protocols are evolving for the peer specialist workforce. Examples of these include the NAADAC National Certified Peer Recovery Support Specialist www.naadac.org/ncprss and the International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium’s (IC&RC) Peer Recovery Credential www.internationalcredentialing.org.

Additional national resources valuable to recovery-related research and programming include: The Recovery Research Institute www.recoveryanswers.org; Faces and Voices of Recovery facesandvoicesofrecovery.org; and William White Papers www.williamwhitepapers.com.

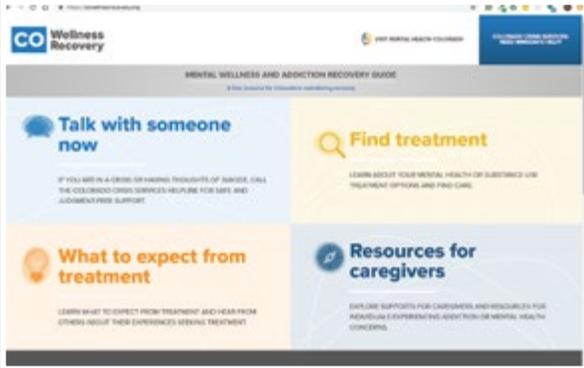
Colorado



Information about recovery and links to OHB partners can be found online at www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdhs/recovery-support-services

The Colorado Department of Human Services, Office of Behavioral Health (OBH) funds multiple Colorado-based programs to support recovery. Information about recovery and links to OBH partners can be found online at www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdhs/recovery-support-services. As of May 2019, those organizations include:

- **Colorado Coalition for the Homeless**, which primarily serves Denver and Boulder counties, though services are available in the entire metropolitan Denver area
- **The Empowerment Program**, which serves metropolitan Denver
- **The Phoenix**, which serves Denver, Boulder, and Colorado Springs and surrounding communities
- **South East Health Group**, which serves Baca, Bent, Crowley, Kiowa, Otero, and Prowers counties
- **Young People in Recovery**, which has chapters in Pueblo, Adams, Denver, and Arapahoe counties
- **Colorado Mental Wellness Network**, a statewide organization offering recovery support services



The Mental Wellness and Addiction Recovery Guide is online at cowellnessrecovery.org.

Mental Health Colorado and the Office of Behavioral Health have created a resource guide for substance users or their loved ones seeking information about treatment. The Mental Wellness and Addiction Recovery Guide also contains information about insurance coverage, patient rights, and more. The guide is online at cowellnessrecovery.org.

In 2017, OBH, the Colorado Mental Wellness Network, and other partners created the Recovery Support Services Program, integrating the use of peer support specialists and Wellness Recovery Action Plans (WRAP®) within the Denver Public Library. Its 2018 Program Evaluation and Playbook is online at drive.google.com/file/d/11JRO94d8mmoQISXHT6K1CXUXIF-uEmB/view.

In 2016, a coalition of Colorado organizations, government agencies, and peers created the Colorado Peer and Family Specialist Certification (CPFS), the state's official IC&RC peer credential. Information about the development and acquisition of the credential can be found at copeercert.com.



The Consortium's Recovery Work Group

The Recovery Work Group's purpose is to bring voices from the recovery community into the conversation about prescription drug misuse and substance use disorders. The primary goal of the group is to encourage engagement by Coloradans who are in or pursuing recovery to identify gaps and opportunities to develop recovery support infrastructure and services in every Colorado community.

To this end, the work group is intent on establishing meaningful ways to measure and track recovery-related data. In the current year, members of the work group have partnered with OBH in developing a statewide strategic plan for recovery support services, which will be distributed to the State Legislature by the beginning of the 2020 Legislative Session. With support from the Colorado Health Foundation, the work group has also designed a pilot program creating a recovery support specialist position in two Colorado emergency departments.

If you have an interest in this area or have questions about this topic, reach out to the Consortium program manager at pm@corxconsortium.org. If you would like to join or get more information about the work group, please visit www.corxconsortium.org/public-awareness-work-group. You can also join by emailing info@corxconsortium.org.

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