RCCs in Context: The Importance and Challenges of RCC Community Engagement

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Friday, June 11th, 12pm EST
Presentation Aims

• To review community influences on addiction and recovery

• To highlight the potential role of RCCs in seeding healing forests

• To describe inherent challenges to providing community-based recovery support services

• To present examples of RCC community engagement in action
  • Missouri Network for Opiate Reform and Recovery (MoNetwork)
  • Twin Cities Recovery Project (TCRP)
Community Influences

- Neighborhood disadvantage
- Crime & delinquency
- Stress & depression
- Substance use & relapse

- White Bison Wellbriety\(^1\) & the “Healing Forest”
  - Sanctuary
  - Healing
  - Wholeness
  - Recovery ready communities\(^2\)

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RCCs Role in the Healing Forest

- Community with a small c: by providing a recovery-oriented sanctuary, they provide psychological sense of community.

- Community with a capital C: RCCs are anchored within the heart of communities as visible beacons of recovery.

**TABLE 1** Key Features of Recovery Community Centers

A recovery community center...

- Is a recovery-oriented sanctuary anchored in the heart of the community;
- Is visible so local communities of recovery can actively put a face on recovery;
- Serves as a physical location for organizing the local recovery community’s ability to care, specifically through the provision of a variety of recovery support services;
- Provides peer-based recovery support services using a volunteer force to deliver a vast majority of these services;
- Attracts people in recovery, family members, friends, and allies to serve as volunteers, who in turn help those coming up behind them;
- Fosters the inherent nature of the recovery community (people in recovery, family members, friends, and allies) to give back;
- Functions as a recovery resource for the local community;
- Is a location where, sometimes, people still struggling with addiction will enter and will be assisted in navigating the local behavioral health system;
- Is a place to find workshops, training, and educational sessions to enhance one’s own recovery;
- Maintains a structured schedule of recovery-related workshops, trainings, meetings, services, and social events; and
- Hosts and promotes recovery social events.

Potential Challenges

• Stigma & misperceptions
  • Lack of understanding regarding addiction, recovery, and recovery support services
  • Potential for additional stigma depending on services provided and populations served
    • Engagement of individuals at all stages of recovery
    • Supporting all pathways to recovery

• Unfair and discriminatory practices
  • Excessive scrutiny/regulations
  • NIMBYISM

MoNetwork-A Snapshot

• History/Background
  • Founded in 2013
  • Served as an underground naloxone distribution program
  • Assisted PWUDS and families with support service navigation

• Services provided
  • ARCO Community Center
  • Hybrid model
    • Harm reduction entry point
    • Full continuum of wrap around services
  • Focus on policy reform and shifting understanding of SUD & PWUDS
MoNetwork-Community Engagement

- How the community is engaged (i.e., their role in the network)
  - Community Advisory Board
  - Mo Net Moms
  - PWUDS and those in recovery are involved in activities

- Specific activities to engage the community
  - Syringe service program and mobile outreach
  - Non-traditional support activities
  - Engagement of families into the legislative process
MoNetwork-Community Response

- Overwhelmingly positive
  - Contributions & donations
  - Local and state recognition
  - Policy drafting

- Examples of pushback
  - Threats of arrest
  - Threats from folks wanting to take matters into their own hands
MoNetwork-Helpful Strategies

• Factors that contribute to positive responses:
  • Dedication to breaking down stigma (explaining how this is not an opioid epidemic)
  • Education around historical context specific to drug policy and its systemic racist and patriarchal structure
  • Embodying integrity, passion, and truth

• Factors that help counter negative responses:
  • Giving folks time
  • Patience
  • Choosing battles
TCRP-A Snapshot

Signature Program

• Social Wellness (TCRP Social Club)
• Street Ambassador Outreach (Naloxone) Distribution
• One-to-One Peer Recovery Coaching
• Grief & Trauma Support Workshop
• Peer-2-Peer Recovery Development Academy
• GED Test Prep & Tutoring
• HIV Education & Testing
• Advocacy with Drug Court/CPS
TCRP-Community Engagement

- In 2020, TCRP served 3,705 community members
- Street Outreach
- COVID-19 Talk
- Teen Pulse Check-In
- Boots on the Ground conference
- South Minneapolis Resource Fair
- Meeting community needs in the wake of riots

- In 2021, TCRP has currently served 1,607 community members
TCRP-Community Response

Positive responses:
• Individuals who receive recovery coaching services have expressed a positive response, highlighting our “meeting them where they’re at”
• Recovery coaches being relatable - humanizing the people they’re working with
• Addressing racial disparities and creating access
• Specific needs are being met by having culturally responsive staff

Examples of pushback:
• Office is only open from 9-5
• Need for expansion to meet current growth and community needs
• Need of financial support to advance TCRP mission
TCRP-Helpful Strategies

Factors that contribute to positive responses:
- Building recovery capital through social wellness
- The value of lived experiences
- Familiarity with local resources/organizations
- Taking services to the community
- Creating access and Reducing stigma

Factors that help counter negative responses:
- Open to walk in appointments at any time
- Persistence in delivery the message HOPE
- Multiple internship opportunities for participants
- Advocacy efforts to address racial disparities
Common Themes & Strategies

• Common engagement strategies
  • Advisory boards
  • Active involvement in the community and outreach activities
  • Concerted efforts to reduce SUD stigma

• Common themes
  • Outreach is critical and pays off in expected and unexpected ways
  • Persistence is critical because barriers naturally arise when navigating uncharted territory
Questions & Discussion

• Contact the presenters:

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• Stay tuned for more on the topic:

  Next Seminar: Friday, July 16th at 12 PM EST