

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

**Amy A. Mericle**, Research Scientist in the Alcohol Research Group

**Chad Sabora**, Executive Director of MoNetwork

**Marc Johnigan**, Executive Director of Twin Cities Recovery Project (TCRP)

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RECOVERY  
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# Presentation Aims

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- 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<sup>1</sup> & the “Healing Forest”
- Sanctuary
- Healing
- Wholeness
- Recovery ready communities<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Moore, D. & Coyhis, D. (2010). The Multicultural Wellbriety Peer Recovery Support Program: Two Decades of Community-Based Recovery. *Alcoholism Treatment Quarterly*, 28(3), 273-292.

<sup>2</sup>Ashford, R.D., Brown, A.M., Ryding, R., Curtis, B. (2020). Building recovery ready communities: The recovery ready ecosystem model and community framework, *Addiction Research & Theory*, 28:1, 1-11.





# 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.

Haberle, B.J., Conway, S., Valentine, P., Evans, A.C. White, W. L. & Davidson, L. (2014) The Recovery Community Center: A New Model for Volunteer Peer Support to Promote Recovery, *Journal of Groups in Addiction & Recovery*, 9:3, 257-270.







# Potential Challenges

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- 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

Barry, C. L., McGinty, E. E., Pescosolido, B. A., & Goldman, H. H. (2014). Stigma, discrimination, treatment effectiveness, and policy: Public views about drug addiction and mental illness, *Psychiatric Services*, 65(10), 1269–1272.

Lloyd, C. (2013). The stigmatization of problem drug users: A narrative literature review, *Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy*, 20(2), 85-95.





# 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

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- 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

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- 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

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## 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

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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

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- 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

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- Contact the presenters:

Amy Mericle: [americle@arg.org](mailto:americle@arg.org)

Chad Sabora: [chad@monetwork.org](mailto:chad@monetwork.org)

Marc Jonigan: [tcrsc.recovery@gmail.com](mailto:tcrsc.recovery@gmail.com)

- Stay tuned for more on the topic:

Next Seminar: Friday, July 16<sup>th</sup> at 12 PM EST

