



# Recovery Science and Harm Reduction Reading Group: July 2021 Summary

## Article Summary

This article describes a range of tools widely utilized to support individuals experiencing substance use disorder, particularly throughout recovery. Additionally, the authors talk about what impact these new support institutions have on the community, such as an all-inclusive culture of recovery.

In discussing historical aspects of substance use disorder treatment and recovery, the authors highlight that traditional mechanisms of support include: social support, peer-based recovery organizations, and professional substance use disorder treatment. In this discussion, the authors emphasize the difference between the lived experiences of substance use disorder and clinical or epidemiological understanding of condition.

One important point the authors in this paper highlight is the very different cultures of substance use—as an informal network featuring values that encourage drug and/or alcohol use—and recovery, which encourages overcoming or managing substance use disorder in a healthy way. Though there are clear differences between the cultures of substance use and recovery, the authors describe how individuals in early recovery have a foot in each culture.

In the final section of this paper, the authors detail new “recovery support institutions”, which expand from a focus on treatment to emphasize continued recovery. New recovery support institutions may include: recovery community centers, recovery homes/sober houses, recovery schools, recovery industries, and recovery ministries.

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### **New Addiction-Recovery Support Institutions: Mobilizing Support Beyond Professional Addiction Treatment and Recovery Mutual Aid**

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*For more than 150 years, support for the personal resolution of severe and persistent alcohol and other drug problems in the United States has been provided through three mechanisms: family, kinship, and informal social networks; peer-based recovery mutual-aid societies; and professionally directed addiction treatment. This article: (1) briefly reviews the history of these traditional recovery supports, (2) describes the recent emergence of new recovery support institutions and a distinctive, all-inclusive culture of recovery, and (3) discusses the implications of these recent developments for the future of addiction treatment and recovery in the United States.*

**KEYWORDS** *recovery mutual aid, recovery community organizations, recovery advocacy movement, recovery homes, recovery industries, recovery schools, recovery ministries, culture of recovery*

#### INTRODUCTION

There is growing evidence that the central organizing construct guiding addiction treatment and the larger alcohol and other drug (AOD) problems

The authors would like to thank Pat Taylor of Faces and Voices of Recovery for her assistance in identifying resources identified in Table 2. This article was prepared as a briefing paper for the 2012 Betty Ford Institute/UCLA Annual Conference on Recovery.

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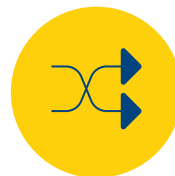
## Key meeting themes



Multiple paths to recovery.



Differences between collective and individual narrative—frustrating to ascribe to collective narrative.



Recovery movement is shifting.



Not all peers are created equal or relatable, not all professionals are either.

# DISCUSSION SUMMARY

The following themes came from the meeting discussion:



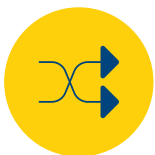
## Multiple paths to recovery

Group members discussed how it is common for individuals to believe that their pathway to recovery is the only pathway to recovery, though there are multiple pathways to recovery that vary based on the individual.



## Differences between collective and individual narrative

The differences between the collective narrative (or common experience) of individuals in recovery and individual stories of recovery were discussed by the group. Points were made that while collective narratives can be beneficial at times, they can also be frustrating as behaviors or choices in these stories may not match the experience of all individuals in recovery.



## Recovery movement is shifting

Group members discussed how the recovery movement has changed and is continuing to change. The movement seems to be shifting from a focus on pathologies and negative influences to focusing on strengths and abilities of individuals and the community.



## Not all peers are created equal or relatable, not all professionals are either

It was noted that there is diversity in the amounts and types of recovery capital peers may have. The experience and skills of one peer cannot be applied to all other peers. It was also discussed how many individuals in recovery who work in the treatment setting often act as peer recovery specialists, and help to reduce the differences in power between clients and treatment providers.



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