



# Recovery Science and Harm Reduction

## Reading Group:

### September 2021 Summary

## Article Summary

The authors of this article conducted a review of published studies focusing on collegiate recovery programming. Collegiate recovery programming is defined as a way to create recovery-friendly campus environments through peer support, mutual-help meetings, recovery/sober housing, alcohol/drug-free events, counseling staff, and student drop-in centers. In their review, the authors identified four key outcomes of collegiate recovery programming: 1) clinical, 2) recovery experience, 3) program characterization, and 4) stigma. The authors suggested that these four outcomes could serve as a framework to better understand and improve programming for vulnerable students in recovery.

A major finding of this review article was the lack of controlled research studies and implementation science studies examining collegiate recovery programming. Based on this finding, the authors note that it is important for future research studies to use rigorous research methods. Additionally, the authors noted the need of further research on collegiate recovery programming to focus on underserved groups such as students of color, women students, women students, low-income students, and first-generation students.



### College programming for students in addiction recovery: A PRISMA-guided scoping review

Noel Vest<sup>a,\*</sup>, Meg Reinstra<sup>a</sup>, Christine Timko<sup>a,b</sup>, John Kelly<sup>c</sup>, Keith Humphreys<sup>a,b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Stanford University School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, 401 Quarry Rd, Stanford, CA 94305, United States  
<sup>b</sup> Center for Innovation to Implementation, Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System, 3801 Miranda Ave (152-MPI), Palo Alto, CA 94304, United States  
<sup>c</sup> Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA 02114, United States

#### ARTICLE INFO

**Keywords:**  
Collegiate recovery program  
Scoping review  
College students  
Substance use disorder

#### ABSTRACT

**Background:** The health and well-being of students in recovery from substance use disorder are increasingly being recognized as a priority on college campuses. This scoping review maps the state of the existing literature evaluating collegiate recovery programming to highlight research gaps and inform policy.  
**Method:** We conducted a systematic search of articles related to collegiate recovery programming published before August 2020. The 15 extracted study characteristics included publication type, study design, primary outcomes, reporting of behavioral additions, mutual-help group attendance, sample demographic information, school size, ownership, and funding source.  
**Results:** The PRISMA-guided search strategy identified 357 articles for abstract review; of 113 articles retained for full-text review, 54 studies met criteria for inclusion. Primary outcomes were coded into four domains: clinical, recovery experience, program characterization, and stigma. Most (57%) used quantitative observational designs and 41% employed qualitative research designs. Government or foundation grants funded 11% of the studies.  
**Conclusion:** The domains identified offer a framework for healthcare providers, college administrators, and researchers to understand and improve programs, thereby better serving this vulnerable student group.

#### 1. Introduction

Approximately 600,000 college students describe themselves as in recovery from an alcohol and/or other drug use disorder (ACHA-NCHA II, 2019; National Center for Education Statistics, 2017; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2019). Colleges and universities are beginning to provide support services intended to improve health and educational outcomes among this student population (Reed, Almaguer-botero, Grizzell, & Watts, 2020). Collegiate recovery programs (CRPs) create a recovery-friendly campus environment through peer support, on-campus mutual-help meetings, recovery/sober housing, alcohol/drug-free events, counseling staff, and dedicated student drop-in centers (Bugbee et al., 2016).

CRPs are built on three critical foundations: the need for continuing care of substance use disorders (SUDs), the importance of recovery-oriented systems of care (ROSC), and the value of peer-recovery support services. Continuing care refers to the recovery stage of healing and may include individual check-ups as well as mutual-help meetings and involvement in drug-free social events (Laitman, Kichur-Karavites, &

Stewart, 2014). ROSCs are a framework for coordinating multiple systems, services, and supports that are person-centered and designed to readily adjust to meet the individual's needs and chosen pathway to recovery (Kaplan, 2009). ROSC staff and health care professionals are increasingly emphasizing expanded peer support for individuals with SUD (Tracy & Wallace, 2016). CRPs are one venue where peer support services are being implemented, via both peer recovery coaching and recovery housing support services (Laudet & Humphreys, 2013).

The rapidly growing and novel resource of CRPs has attracted surprisingly little research interest, despite intense national concern about substance use on college campuses. Examining health and related outcomes for students in recovery is important for at least three reasons. First, lowering the risk for relapse on campus may lead to better continuous enrollment outcomes among students (Atria et al., 2013). Second, embracing students in recovery on campus helps normalize substance-free lifestyles, which can have radiating benefits to colleges. Lastly, understanding the unique health needs of students in recovery may allow colleges and universities to design programming that will be responsive to the healthcare and educational needs of this student

\* Corresponding author.  
E-mail address: noelvest@stanford.edu (N. Vest).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2021.106992>  
Received 23 January 2021; Received in revised form 17 May 2021; Accepted 20 May 2021  
Available online 24 May 2021  
0306-4603/© 2021 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## Key meeting themes



Challenges engaging students in recovery programming.



Harm reduction is becoming more prevalent in collegiate recovery programming.



Need for facilitated activities for students who use substances and those who are abstinent.



Recovery can be abstinence or non-abstinence-based.

# DISCUSSION SUMMARY

The following themes came from the discussion:



## Challenges engaging students in recovery programming

Many students are not at the point in their recovery journey when they are ready to engage in recovery programming. It is also important to provide recovery services to meet the needs of all students and offer a range of treatment models in addition to the 12-step model.



## Harm reduction is becoming more prevalent in collegiate recovery programming

Harm reduction was discussed as being necessary in collegiate recovery programming to support multiple pathways to recovery and meet student needs. Harm reduction approaches are becoming more prevalent among collegiate recovery programs across the U.S.



## Need for facilitated activities for students who use substances and those who are abstinent

Group attendees noted a need for facilitated activities for students to attend regardless of whether they currently do/do not use substances. These experiences could promote exposure to other students and people in recovery.



## Recovery can be abstinence or non-abstinence-based

Recovery as a term does not only apply to people engaging in abstinence from all substances, but also applies to people who still use a substance (i.e. alcohol). Individuals are in recovery when they say that they are in recovery.



**BROWN**  
School of Public Health

Organized by RICARES and Brown University School of Public Health, and supported by the New England Addiction Technology Transfer Center.



New England (HHS Region 1)  
**ATTC**  
Addiction Technology Transfer Center Network  
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Visit us at our website: [brown.edu/go/recoveryharmrdx](https://brown.edu/go/recoveryharmrdx)  
Follow us on Facebook and Twitter: @recoveryharmrdx