

RECOVERY FRIENDLY CAMPUSES FOR CT



OVERVIEW

In 2019, the Recovery and Health Management sub-committee of the Connecticut (CT) Alcohol and Drug Policy Council created a program to inspire CT towns/cities to build recovery friendly communities. Soon after, recovery friendly workplaces also began to gain momentum through an initiative sponsored by the CT Department of Labor, Department of Public Health, and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. The sub-committee soon started to contemplate about what the concept could mean for our campuses in Connecticut at the same time news spread about similar efforts on campuses across the nation.

Colleagues from campuses across the state gathered to identify the key components that would make a college campus recovery-friendly. How could Connecticut campuses of all sizes foster an environment where students are comfortable asking for help instead of feeling stigmatized?

What do we know?

- Half a million college students identify as being in recovery from alcohol or other drug use,
- 30.4% of college students have received psychological or mental health services in the last 12 months,
- less than 5% of U.S. universities offer collegiate recovery support, and
- 7.5% of CT Youth aged 12-17 identify as having a substance use disorder in the past year (2020), and 15.6% of CT Youth aged 12-17 identify as having a major depressive episode in the past year (2020).

Schools who contributed to the conversation.



*This is not meant to imply that they have reviewed nor approved this policy brief.

Working together we can change how students in recovery today and those who begin their recovery journeys tomorrow experience our campuses.



"A supportive recovery environment (on our campuses) is paramount to support the mental health and emotional well-being of young adults."

Dr. Miriam Delphin-Rittman
Assistant Secretary of SAMHSA
April 8, 2022

Call for Action

Almost 23 million people are in recovery in the United States, of which 600,000 are college students.(NSDUH, 2021). In addition, there is a significantly growing need for recovery amongst those who have not yet found it. Substance use disorders and mental health disorders are often co-occurring. The drug and alcohol industries suggest their products as a method of coping with everyday stress and a requirement to celebrate anything.

Having one of these disorders can exacerbate the other. CT has almost 180,000 students enrolled in higher education. These students represent a wide array of needs and identities, it can be difficult to focus direction on one specific population. And sometimes the result of that conflict is no action at all. We can do better.

Young Adults in CT



Serious Mental Illness

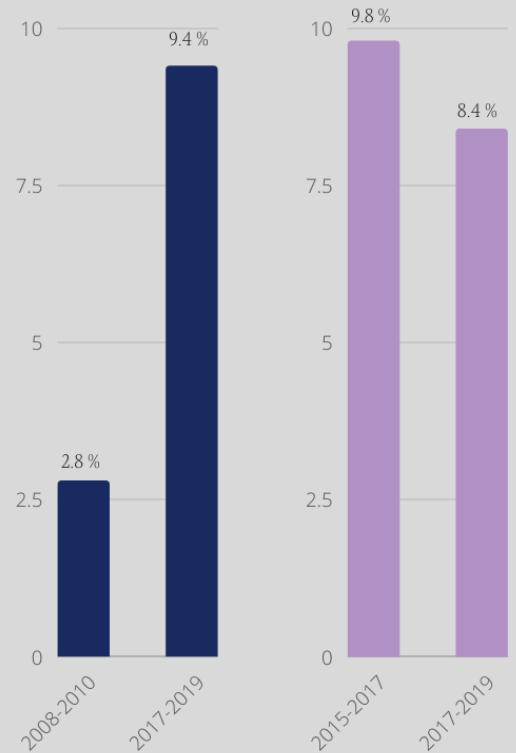
Changes in past-year Serious Mental Illness among Young Adults aged 18-25 in Connecticut.



Substance Use Disorder

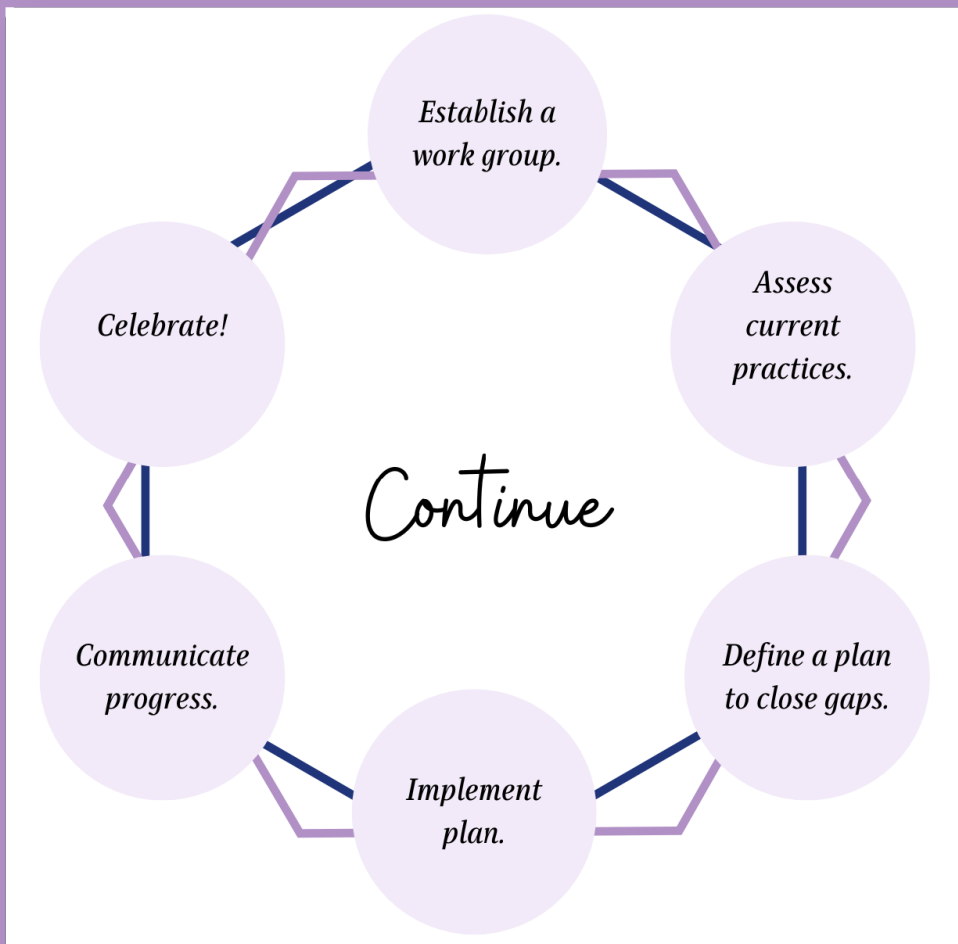
Changes in past-year substance use disorders among people aged 12 or older in Connecticut.

Figure 1



How do we begin?

The first step in the process is for college campuses, usually under the leadership of one or more recovery champions, to gather a community of peers and allies as well as trained and committed health professionals, staff and faculty. These folks are key to building recovery friendly campuses. The work group will use the suggested assessment to conduct a thoughtful, transparent look at the existing culture, and current practices. The group will then create a plan to close gaps, and deliver on it. It is important to celebrate success - small and large - along the way.



A major complication is that although students in recovery perceive higher education as a key part of the recovery process, the college environment is often hostile toward recovery efforts. (Perron et al, 2011)

What is a recovery champion?

A recovery champion is someone committed to supporting recovery from substance use and other mental and behavioral health conditions and who is willing and empowered to lead the campus-wide efforts necessary for becoming “Recovery Friendly” by convening campus leaders from student organizations; academic and service departments; and students in recovery on a routine basis to develop and monitor the community enhancements outlined in the RFC plan.



Four Key Components

1. Campus Leadership

- Student Government and University President agree to develop a recovery friendly campus.
- University identifies a recovery champion.
- Students in recovery are acknowledged as a marginalized community.

2. Key Department Buy-in

- Student Activities hosts recovery-friendly activities and events.
- Schools/Colleges adopt recovery-friendly language into their curriculum.
- Recovery Ally training and education around mental health and wellness, including stress reduction and positive coping skills is offered.
- Alternative Peer Group(s) in place for students in or seeking recovery.
- First responders are trained as recovery allies and are aware of local addiction and mental health recovery resources.
- Residential Life offers safe and stable substance-free housing.
- Residential Life staff are trained as recovery allies.
- Center for Students with Disabilities staff are trained as recovery allies and are aware of resources available to student in or seeking recovery.

3. Community and Campus Attitudes

- Campus departments are open to hiring people in recovery.
- Campus supports the admission of formerly incarcerated individuals.
- Co-located businesses are thoughtful about the timing and content of their advertising.

4. Community and Campus Resources

- Campus community know how and where to obtain naloxone.
- Student health and wellness staff are recovery informed and know how to connect students with recovery and/or mental health supports and services.
- Faith-based organizations are promoted as a recovery resource.
- Campus community knows how to access peer support and mutual aid groups, and are aware of the multiple pathways of recovery.
- Transportation is available to individuals seeking treatment or a support group.
- Campus physicians are supportive of medication assisted treatment and either prescribe medication or connect individuals with resources who can prescribe medication.
- Family education and support groups are available for caregivers and other family members who are connected to campus community.
- Resources related to grief and loss are known and promoted.
- Basic needs such as food, clothing, and other basic supports are available.
- Recovery Ally training is offered to build connection and community.
- Additional training around mental health and wellness, including stress reduction and positive coping skills is offered.

Recovery tools and practices are skills that support well-being for all students, not just those in recovery.



How will we know?

We will know we are a recovery friendly campus when:

- Students are comfortable asking for help instead of feeling stigmatized.
- Students, staff and faculty intervene with empathy when they encounter someone struggling.
- Recovery is understood, respected, and celebrated.



Resources to Explore

Association of Recovery in Higher Education, <https://collegiaterecovery.org/>

Colleges offer recovery programs for students battling addiction. Health News - U.S. News & World Report. (n.d.). Retrieved November 12, 2022, from <https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2022-08-03/colleges-offer-recovery-programs-for-students-battling-addiction>

Connecticut Recovery Friendly Workplace, <https://www.recoveryworksct.org/>

Is your campus recovery ready? SAFE Project. (2021, September 1). Retrieved November 12, 2022, from <https://www.safeproject.us/article/is-your-campus-recovery-ready/>

*NCHA-III SPRING-2021 Reference Group Data Report**WHO World Mental Health Surveys International College Student Project: Prevalence and Distribution of Mental Disorders (2018)***2020 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)

Perron BE, Grahovac ID, Uppal JS, Granillo MT, Shutter J, Porter CA. Supporting Students in Recovery on College Campuses: Opportunities for Student Affairs Professionals. *J Stud Aff Res Pract.* 2011;48(1):47-64. doi: 10.2202/1949-6605.622. PMID: 21765973; PMCID: PMC3134882.

Recovery Research Institute, <https://www.recoveryanswers.org/>

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Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Behavioral Health Barometer: Connecticut, Volume 6: Indicators as measured through the 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health and the National Survey of Substance Abuse Treatment Services. HHS Publication No. SMA-20-Baro-19-CT. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2020.