



# Building Recovery Capital in Families and Communities



In 2017, a study found that more than **22 million Americans** are living in recovery,<sup>[1]</sup> and about **75%** of people with a substance use problem report being in recovery.<sup>[2]</sup>



**Recovery** is a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.<sup>[3]</sup>

Best and Colman (2019)<sup>[4]</sup> described recovery from an addiction as a “dynamic interaction” between internal and external factors. In particular, they identified personal, social, and communal resources as crucial elements. **The personal and social elements start a recovery journey; communal influences sustain it.** The depth and scope of both internal and external resources available to support recovery and sustain wellness from addiction is known as **recovery capital**. Recovery sustainment depends on a community’s **inclusivity** – the mindset of several leaders and stakeholders who intentionally work to

“Eighty percent of the individuals who were in stable recovery **reported actively volunteering** in their local communities, which is twice the rate reported by the general public.”<sup>[5]</sup>

reduce messages and practices that may either stigmatize or exclude. When a community minimizes the barriers hindering its recovery population's reintegration, it starts to function as a “therapeutic landscape.” This process involves facilitating access to resources, transportation, reasonable housing, employment opportunities, culturally prescribed pathways to recovery, and visible and diverse recovery role models. This transformation is usually a slow process requiring small and steady steps. Yet, there are long-term benefits.

## Individuals who were able to attain stable recovery.<sup>[6]</sup>

### 1 Demonstrated specific personal or internal attributes

#### Personal Recovery Capital

- Physical health
- Financial assets
- Safe, affordable housing
- Educational and vocational skills
- Personal values
- Sense of purpose, future, and hopefulness

### 2 Drew upon particular familiar and social resources

#### Family/Social Recovery Capital

- Family members, including a healthy parent-child dyad
- Close personal relationships
- Social relationships
- Supported in relationships to build and maintain a recovery-oriented lifestyle

### 3 Resided within communities that promoted and supported recovery

#### Community Recovery Capital

- Attitudes, resources, laws, and policies
- Public examples of recovery journeys
- Community-based recovery support
- Communities that destigmatize SUDs
- Environments that encourage health and wellness

## How can a community move toward inclusivity?

Best and Colman discussed six steps to help move toward an inclusive community.<sup>[7]</sup>



1 Bring recovery stakeholders together



4 Define or re-define the city's mission and goals to support recovery



2 Assess existing practices for people in recovery



5 Implement those goals with identified actions



3 Highlight present-time disparities



6 Monitor and evaluate progress

Recovery for those affected is often a slow process; the Betty Ford Institute estimated "stable recovery" takes about five years.<sup>[8]</sup> However, the potential return on inclusivity can outweigh community members' fears and hesitancy with change. We can all take steps toward inclusivity regardless of our current roles. **YOU** are an important part of your community right now. **So how can you, your family, and your colleagues make it more inclusive for children, parents, and families affected by substance use disorders?**

*"Recovery capital tells more of the complex social, cultural, behavioral, and environmental story that will **drive better policies and systems change.**"*

- David Whitesock, 2021<sup>[9]</sup>

# Building Community Recovery Capital: Grant County, Indiana

Joining a community lets us feel that we're a part of something greater than ourselves. For families facing substance use disorders (SUDs) and in early recovery, finding acceptance creates a pathway for sustained recovery and safety.

Communities provide support, warmth, and most importantly, hope. The good news? Each one of us can advocate for inclusivity, embracing persons in recovery into the fabric of our communities. So can businesses, recreation programs, and as you see here, faith-based organizations.

A small church in central Indiana's Grant County has done just that. How? Members there practice this value: Although **positive human connection remains so much more complicated to offer than money, it's the most critical deficit for families struggling with addiction.**

Grant County Family Recovery Court (FRC) Judge Dana Kenworthy recently had a chance to form a partnership with those church members. They explained to parishioners that **human capital**—rather than dollars—stands as the greatest need for the FRC's participants, noting the value of a positive, welcoming family community. But as they spoke, the two noticed something interesting: several members began shifting uncomfortably in their seats; an older woman drew her pocketbook closer. Would these churchgoers really accept the judge's message—and challenge?

We know that stakeholders of an inclusive community include several people with specific missions. They include local church members, private and public treatment providers, judges, politicians (e.g., mayors, city council members), employers, housing authorities, property owners, friends, and family members. Their collective goal is to encourage the recovery population toward "stable employment and housing while making the recovery-oriented network visible".<sup>[10]</sup>

Fortunately, Judge Kenworthy made an impression that day. The church eventually selected FRC as a mission, opening their doors and—most importantly—their hearts to all families regardless of religious affiliation. Members visited court sessions and got to know the families' stories. The church began hosting FRC graduation ceremonies; sewing quilts to swaddle little ones; offering material relief, such as household items and clothing; and volunteering to host weekly parent education sessions.

This church has become an integral part of the FRC, while increasing awareness of recovery in the community and helping rewrite the narrative for families.

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**Individuals with histories of severe SUD who engaged more with their recovery community center reported higher recovery capital, and this was associated with better quality of life and lower psychological distress.**

(Kelly et al., 2021).<sup>[11]</sup>

## Additional Resources

- [Recovery Capital: A Primer for Addictions Professionals](#) discusses the paradigm shift for addiction professionals from a pathology and intervention focus to a recovery focus. This article defines recovery capital and explores how attention to recovery capital can be integrated into the service practices of front-line addiction professionals.
- The Peer Support Coalition of Florida's Recovery-Oriented Community Initiative program developed the [Recovery-Oriented Community Initiative Toolkit](#) to introduce a vehicle for everyday citizens to become involved in transforming the system of care to a recovery-oriented system of care. It provides foundational information on a community's role in recovery, a sample recovery-oriented community resolution, guidance on forming a recovery-oriented task force and a recovery-oriented action plan.
- [Guiding Principles and Elements of Recovery-Oriented Systems of Care: What do we know from the research?](#) from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) reviews the research related to the 12 guiding principles of recovery and the 17 elements of recovery-oriented systems of care developed through the National Summit on Recovery. It discusses the recovery-oriented systems of care conceptual framework and literature on recovery-oriented service and systems implementation.
- Minnesota's [Recovery Capital Scale & Plan](#) is an adaptation of William L. White's recovery and capital scale that includes a self-assessment instrument to measure recovery capital and a template for developing a recovery capital plan.
- [Including Family and Community in the Recovery Process](#) is a free webinar offered by the National Association for Addiction Professionals (NAADAC) that explains theories of recovery that are inclusive of family and community, the role of personal characteristics, community culture, and community recovery capital in predicting long-term recovery outcomes and various cultures of recovery.
- The Mental Health Coordinating Council's publication [Recovery-Oriented Language Guide](#) is a comprehensive guide on recovery perspectives throughout life. It offers general guidelines for language and communication, outdated words, key terms, guidance for talking to people at both ends of the age spectrum, and overarching guidelines for a trauma-informed recovery-oriented approach, including cultural diversity and talking about suicide.

[1] Kelly, J. F., Bergman, B., Hoepfner, B. B., Vilsaint, C., & White, W. L. (2017). Prevalence and pathways of recovery from drug and alcohol problems in the United States population: Implications for practice, research, and policy. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 181, 162–169. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2017.09.028> [2] Jones, C. M., Noonan, R. K., & Compton, W. M. (2020). Prevalence and correlates of ever having a substance use problem and substance use recovery status among adults in the US, 2018. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 214. [3] Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2012. SAMHSA's Working Definition of Recovery. [4] Best, D., & Colman, C. (2019). Let's celebrate recovery: Inclusive cities working together to support social cohesion. *Addiction Research & Theory*, 27(1), 55–64. [5] White, W., & Cloud, W. (2008). Recovery capital: A primer for addictions professionals. *Counselor*, 9(5), 22–27. [6] *ibid.* [7] Best, D., & Colman, C. (2019). Let's celebrate recovery: Inclusive cities working together to support social cohesion. *Addiction Research & Theory*, 27(1), 55–64.

[8] Betty Ford Institute Consensus Panel (2007). What is recovery? A working definition from the Betty Ford Institute. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, 33, 221–228. [9] Whitesock, D. (2021, March 11). Recovery capital is the third leg of the addiction solution stool. *Recovery Capital Index*. Retrieved June 2, 2022, from <https://www.recoverycapital.io/the-index/recovery-capital-is-the-third-leg-of-the-addiction-solution-stool> [10] Best, D., & Colman, C. (2019). Let's celebrate recovery: Inclusive cities working together to support social cohesion. *Addiction Research & Theory*, 27(1), 55–64. [11] Kelly, J. F., Fallah-Sohy, N., Cristello, J., Stout, R. L., Jason, L. A., &