

# RECOVERY

*The official newsletter of the  
Fletcher Group Rural Center Of Excellence*



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## FINDING WORK...MAKES RECOVERY WORK

*by Founder and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Ernie Fletcher*

“I got a job!” are joyous words for people in recovery. Considering employment’s importance, two numbers jump out: 11 million unfilled job postings and 20 million Americans with an SUD for whom employment is critically important. Wouldn’t it be great if we could bring them together!

This month's newsletter describes how rural recovery homes can not only create a launchpad to meaningful employment but serve also as matchmaker, helping residents and employers build lasting, mutually beneficial relationships. The payoff can be high when employers satisfied with one hire come back for more.

The time is right, too. The nation's low labor supply enables workers to command better wages and promotions, negotiate flexible schedules, work from home, and enjoy expanded training programs.

Because growth is as essential to business as it is to recovery, the challenge is simple: bring the two together. Turn the page to find out how.

# ALL IN A DAY'S WORK



There's no denying the importance of employment to someone in recovery. Documented benefits include lower rates of relapse, less criminal activity, and fewer parole violations.

Those who succeed at long-term meaningful employment also feel a powerful sense of accomplishment precisely because the odds are so stacked against them. Research shows that 30 percent of those with an SUD are perpetually unemployed. And those who do find work are prone to losing it. For example, people with an Opioid Use Disorder typically miss 18 more days of work per year and only 58 percent keep their jobs for more than a year. The costs of absenteeism, healthcare, and lost productivity due to substance use exceed \$81 billion a year.\*

## Our Approach

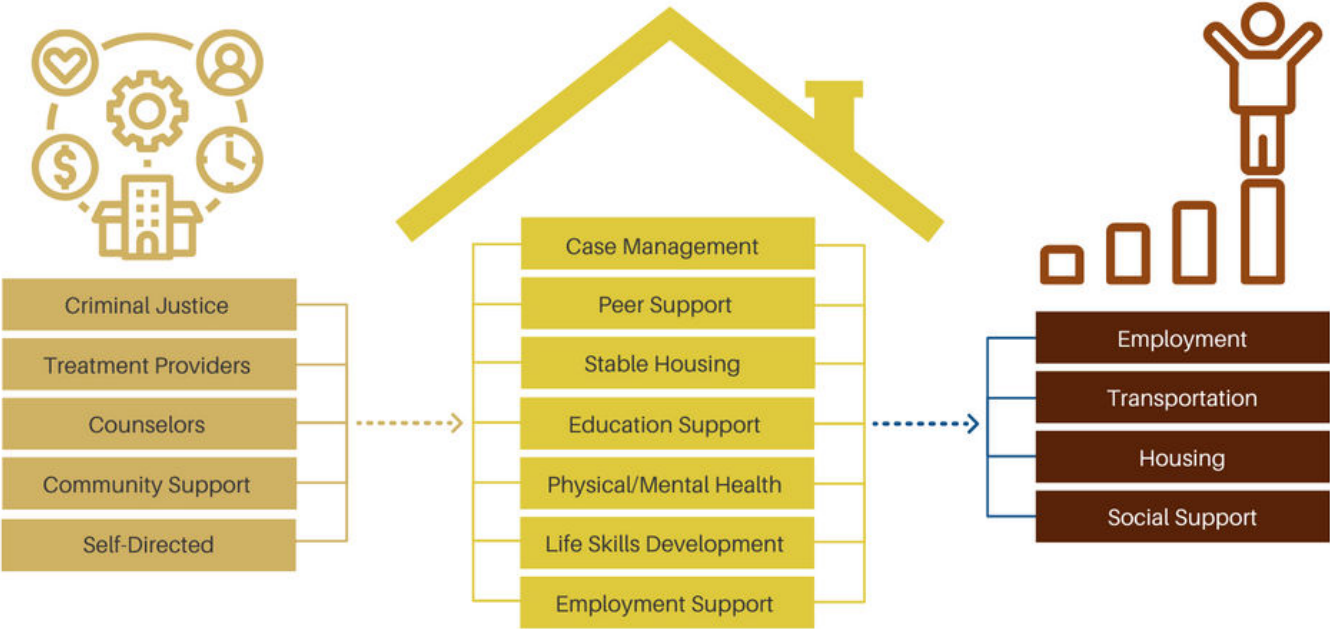
Such problems are acute in Kentucky where the Fletcher Group was formed to promote the recovery ecosystem model of recovery housing launched earlier during Dr. Ernie Fletcher's tenure as governor. A recovery model within a housing model, it provides a complete continuum of care from intake to employment, including MAR (Medication-Assisted Recovery), peer-to-peer support, workforce development, and social enterprise, all sustainably funded through partnerships with departments of corrections, housing authorities, and many others, including faith-based institutions and the private sector.

## Remarkable Success

The in-house workforce training provided through the Fletcher Group model produces employees who not only find work but excel in teamwork, loyalty, and work ethic. One program alone has resulted in 400-plus training certifications and over 300 hires.

On the following pages are lessons learned that rural recovery home operators and staff can use to help residents find the meaningful employment they need to maintain long-term abstinence and fulfill their potential as productive members of society.

# How A Recovery Ecosystem Creates Recovery Capital



• National Safety Council

# A WORK IN PROGRESS

Lori Baier, the Fletcher Group's Director of Employment Services, works to bridge the gap to meaningful employment for individuals in long-term recovery. The step-by-step guidance below is taken from her September 2022 Webinar presented with Fletcher Group Founder and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Ernie Fletcher. (To watch it, click the Play Button in the lower right corner of this page.)

Note that an environmental scan of potential resources and partners in your region should precede the following steps. That's because rural recovery homes are not always fully aware of local resources and many of those resources, including progressive employers, may not be aware of local recovery homes.

## Potential Resources and How To Use Them

- Invite the community into your residence
- Establish a community workgroup
- Know your regional employment gaps and what's unique to your region or state
- Know your clients
- Create individualized, obtainable, and meaningful pathways
- Think about barriers; successful employment isn't about job skills alone
- Facilitate the first step in your resident's dream

## Programs That May Be Able To Help

- GED/State Adult Education
- Local Community and Technical Colleges
- Local Career Centers
- Future Plans: Assessment, coaching, and soft skills courses
- Fair Chance Works: Virtual interview prep, coaching, and employee/employer education hubs
- Local Economic Development Groups

## How To Work With Employers

- Visit their site
- Appoint a dedicated point of contact
- What are their unique employment needs?
- What kind of training do they require?
- Start each resident's "launchpad" by creating a training plan
- Explore apprenticeship, OJT, job shadowing opportunities, and employer incentives including Work Opportunity Tax Credits and Federal Bonds
- Stay in touch!



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*Everyone has  
unique ideas,  
talents and  
skills. Tap into  
them with a  
detailed  
questionnaire  
and lots of  
questions,  
including the  
most important:  
'What's your  
dream job?'*



Click the play button above to watch the **Meaningful Employment Webinar** recently presented by Fletcher Group Founder Dr. Ernie Fletcher and Employment Services Director Lori Baier.



# IMAGINATION AT WORK

When it comes to creating employment opportunities, thinking outside the box is essential, says Fletcher Group Director of Employment Lori Baier, precisely because each community, recovery home, and person is so unique. One example is a very successful program Baier created by leveraging the Kentucky thoroughbred industry and the therapeutic effect of working with horses.

Baier reached out to *Taylor Made Farms*, a well-known thoroughbred farm that responded enthusiastically to her ideas. The result? The *Taylor Made School of Horsemanship* that now hires residents of local recovery homes to work as entry-level grooms following 12 to 16 weeks of training. “It was something we just dreamed up,” says Baier. “We met with the owners, kept the conversation going, and now have a well-established program that everyone’s happy with and benefitting from.”

Baier notes, however, that not everyone wants training in a specific career, especially self-starters and creative types. Case in point is the entrepreneurial training program she put together by partnering with the *Southeast Kentucky Economic Development Corporation* and the *Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program*. Following four weeks of online instruction, six teams from five different recovery homes developed original business ideas that they then pitched to a panel of judges.

“By exploring opportunities, setting goals and making plans, they learned what it takes to be an entrepreneur and small business owner,” said Baier. “It gave them something to get excited about and feel proud of and allowed them to give back to their residences by sharing the profits with them.”

Baier notes that some recovery house managers initially feared that starting an in-house business might be distracting or too expensive. “But I knew if they gave us a chance, they’d see that learning to run a business is an enhancement, not a distraction.”

As for replicating the training program elsewhere, Baier suggests that rural RH operators explore training options by contacting their local economic development agency, workforce board, small business association, or community college.



## The Final Step: Documentation

Continuous adjustment and improvement are essential.

To know how your doing:

- Set measurable goals
- Develop a tracking system
- Regularly survey participants, residents, employers, and work group members
- Surveys alone are not enough; maintain ongoing one-on-one conversations with everyone involved
- Monitor local data including rates of recidivism, unemployment, and unfilled jobs

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*Successful  
employment  
isn't about job  
skills alone.  
'Soft skills' are  
equally  
important.*