

Fletcher Group, NORC, and ETSU Launch Substance Use Recovery Tool

The Recovery Ecosystem Index Mapping Tool Enables Free County-Level Exploration of Data across the United States

CHICAGO, Sept. 14, 2022 –Today, NORC at the University of Chicago, East Tennessee State University (ETSU), and the [Fletcher Group, Inc.](#) released a **mapping tool** that enables users to measure the strength of substance use recovery ecosystems for every county in the United States and explore associations with overdose deaths and other sociodemographic and economic factors. The term “recovery ecosystem” is used to describe the factors in a community that support individuals in recovery from substance use disorder.

The Recovery Ecosystem Index Mapping Tool integrates the Recovery Ecosystem Index, overdose mortality rates, and data on poverty, education, and other demographic factors for counties in each of the 50 states. Users can compare county-level information to the rest of their state and to the nation. The tool allows community organizations, policymakers, researchers, substance use treatment providers, other decision-makers, and the general public to explore county-level maps and create data dashboards to understand these factors in their communities and where additional resources are most needed to provide support to individuals in recovery. Insights derived from this tool can be used to target resources and interventions to enhance recovery ecosystems.

“This will be a game-changer for recovery allies all across the country,” said Dr. Ernie Fletcher, Founder and Chief Medical Officer of the Fletcher Group. “Instant access to highly detailed information will help them work much more efficiently and effectively. That’s especially important because recovery ecosystems involve so many moving parts and rely so heavily on local resources. Recovery housing is the logical first step—that’s why we’re so dedicated to it—but many other resources and services must be in place as well. Having a quick, accurate, and detailed snapshot of what’s available—and what’s missing—will be a godsend, especially in the rural communities we serve.”

A strong recovery ecosystem reflects county-level efforts to provide supportive services and environments for individuals to help them maintain active recovery. The mapping tool incorporates the newly developed Recovery Ecosystem Index, which is a measure designed to reflect the strength of the substance use recovery ecosystem of a county. The tool is being released in observation of National Recovery Month, which is a national observance held every September to increase public awareness surrounding mental health and substance use recovery.

About the Recovery Ecosystem Index Mapping Tool

The Recovery Ecosystem Index Mapping Tool is the first-ever interactive data visualization

tool that measures the strength of recovery ecosystems across the United States. Developed by NORC, ETSU, and the Fletcher Group, Inc., the tool allows users to explore the Recovery Ecosystem Index and its underlying indicators. The index comprises 14 indicators that impact the strength of a recovery ecosystem, organized into three components: SUD Treatment, Continuum of SUD Support, and Infrastructure and Social Factors. The tool also allows users to create data overlays that show the association between the Recovery Ecosystem Index and factors such as overdose mortality rates and sociodemographic and economic factors, such as poverty rate, education, and race/ethnicity, among others.

“At NORC, we understand the power of data in the hands of local decision makers,” said Caitlin Oppenheimer, Director of the Public Health Research Department at NORC. “We also know that substance use disorder is one of the greatest public health challenges our nation faces. Combining data visualization expertise, community-based research capacity, and technical assistance experience, we have developed a tool that provides communities with important information about the strength of their local recovery ecosystem and will guide them towards strategies to better support individuals in recovery.”

“Located in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, East Tennessee State University is surrounded by unparalleled beauty, vibrancy, and diversity. And yet, our region has been disproportionately impacted by the opioid crisis,” said ETSU President Dr. Brian Noland. “This tool will help our community, and communities across the nation, to identify resources and services that will support individuals on their recovery journey. We are proud to have contributed the experience and expertise of our Addiction Science Center and our Center for Rural Health Research to such an important endeavor.”

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About Fletcher Group, Inc.

To help protect rural families and communities from the ravages of opioid and substance use, the Fletcher Group 501c3 not-for-profit researches and provides best-practice technical assistance to expand the quality and capacity of recovery housing as well as the evidence-based services needed for long-term recovery. To learn more about the innovative “recovery ecosystem” model and the technical assistance that may be available to you free of charge, visit www.fletchergroup.org.

About NORC at the University of Chicago

NORC at the University of Chicago conducts research and analysis that decision-makers trust. As a nonpartisan research organization and a pioneer in measuring and understanding the world, we have studied almost every aspect of the human experience and every major news event for more than eight decades. Today, we partner with government, corporate, and nonprofit clients around the world to provide the objectivity and expertise necessary to inform the critical decisions facing society.

www.norc.org

NORC is home to the Walsh Center for Rural Health Analysis, a research center dedicated to improving health and well-being in all of our nation's rural and remote communities. You can find more information on the center [here](#).

About East Tennessee State University

East Tennessee State University (ETSU) is a public university located in the Northeast Tennessee region bordered by Kentucky, North Carolina, and Virginia. With over 100 years of experience improving the lives and well-being of individuals and communities, ETSU has grown to be a national leader in addressing key health issues through education, research, and service. ETSU is home to a robust Academic Health Sciences Center—ETSU Health—and over 10 centers with diverse research and service interests, including the ETSU Center for Rural Health Research and the ETSU Addiction Science Center.

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