

FGI May Webinar Transcript SMART Recovery Initiative May 4, 2023

[00:00:00] **Michelle Day:** [00:01:00] Good afternoon everyone, and welcome to The Fletcher Group Rural Center of Excellence's webinar series. Today's session is scheduled to run from 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM Eastern Standard Time. My name is Michelle Day and I'm your moderator for the session, along with Janice Fulkerson and Erica Walker. A couple of brief housekeeping items and then we'll begin.

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Be advised that this meeting is being recorded and will be available to you on our website once it has been transcribed. You can access our website at [00:02:00] www.FletcherGroup.org. Also at the conclusion of today's session, there will be a short survey regarding the webinar content. Your participation in that survey is greatly appreciated and will only take a few moments to complete.

Today's presenters are Assistant Executive director Christi Alicea, Project Coordinator Brad Glaser, and Volunteer Support Coordinator Alena Kuplinski with SMART Recovery. Now in its 27th year, SMART Recovery uses evidence-based methods to help people find within themselves the power to change. SMART meetings are led by facilitators who complete a rigorous 30 hour training course, or by hosts who undergo less rigorous training and lead simpler meetings. The program has proven to be effective in correctional military facilities. Schools, hospitals and treatment centers around the world with tens of thousands of people gathering weekly at 3,500 SMART meetings in 26 countries, including more than 2200 in the [00:03:00] United States. Christi, Brad, Alena, the floor is yours.

[00:03:08] **Christi Alicea:** Hello everyone, and thank you so much for joining us today. My name is Christi Alicea, and I'm the Assistant Executive Director here at SMART Recovery. We're so happy that you've chosen to be here and learn a little bit about SMART Recovery and our Successful Life Skills Course for Recovery Homes. SMART Recovery is a 501 C3 nonprofit organization. We are worldwide and we are just about ready to celebrate actually our 30th year anniversary next year. Our headquarters, which supports the US and Canada is located in Mentor, Ohio. Um, and we, like I said, we support the US and Canada through meetings and our volunteers and any requests from participants or inquiries that [00:04:00] come in from people looking for information.

Our mission is to empower people to achieve independence from addiction problems with our science-based four point program. But we've also recently adopted a set of organizational values of empowerment, equity, inclusion, integrity, and accountability. And we're working really hard to ensure that, there, the foundation of our principles and policies throughout the organization. All of our meetings are run by trained facilitators, and a lot of them are run by peers who have benefited from attending SMART Recovery meetings. Um, all of our facilitators have to go through our training and some people are simply members of the community who wish to offer SMART Recovery meetings.

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They can be family members, friends, um, and oftentimes professionals [00:05:00] will also take our training and offer SMART Recovery meetings as well. We believe in an individual's power of choice. Um, we are meeting, teach people the skills to make healthier decisions and take responsibility for their own recovery journey. SMART Recovery works for any type of addicted behavior or substance, so you might be in a SMART Recovery meeting with individuals working to overcome addictions to drugs or shopping. They could be there for alcohol use or gambling all in one meeting, and it doesn't matter because SMART Recovery works for any type of problem that people are trying to overcome.

Our meetings are nonjudgmental and stigma-free. SMART meetings help address inaccurate or [00:06:00] unhealthy ways of thinking. And we help people to learn healthy ways of thinking about themselves, about other people and the world, and hopefully through what they learn at our SMART meetings, they ultimately will result in making better choices. We also don't require the use of labels such as addict or alcoholic. However, if a person finds this to be useful when describing themselves, then we certainly allow them to use that. We also, um, our meeting participants learn skills for coping with feelings of anger, frustration, anxiety, anything that's problematic for them.

We teach them tools and, um, they learn these skills, so they almost have a little invisible toolbox to pull from when they are struggling with some of these feelings. We meet people where [00:07:00] they are at in their recovery journey, and we welcome people regardless of where they are in their stage of change. So if somebody is in the pre-contemplation stage or contemplation stage of recovery, they're still welcome to come to our meeting. So by using our motivational interviewing techniques or the crosstalk that we include in our meetings, we're hoping that we can influence people to make healthier and better choices for their recovery.

We are science and evidence-based, but we support those who attend 12 Step or other faith-based programs. As a matter of fact, approximately 38% of our participants also attend 12 step meetings for their recovery. We know that both SMART and 12 step meetings are about equally effective. However, there's a study in 2018 from Adler University, Dr. [00:08:00] Les Waite, conducted and found that individuals who attended both SMART and AA for alcohol recovery showed more motivation to change than those attending just SMART or just AA meetings. So you can see the benefit of attending both SMART and a 12 step meeting. We also welcome individuals and we always have for the last almost 30 years, we welcome individuals who choose medication assisted treatment for their recovery, or those who are taking behavioral health medication, as long as they are prescribed by and taken as prescribed by, a medical professional. And finally, we offer over 1400 meetings in the US and Canada. We have online local meetings offered on Zoom. Those are smaller in [00:09:00] size, and you may recognize people in your community.

We offer face-to-face meetings in your community or some communities, and we also offer national online meetings on Zoom. Those are larger in size and people from all over come to those meetings. And with that I'm gonna turn it over to Alena for more information.

[00:09:22] **Alena Kuplinski:** So while the majority of our meetings are open to everyone, we also understand how important it is for participants to feel as though they are in a safe

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environment where their specific struggles can be understood. For this reason, we have a variety of specialized meeting groups. Um, besides the meeting groups shown on the list here, we also have a growing number of Spanish language meetings and specialty court meetings. We also have a smart app, which can be downloaded on the phone. And it provides meeting access as well as tools and other resources.[00:10:00]

[00:10:00] **Brad Glaser:** Good afternoon everybody. So SMART is built around a four point program that is the basis to our pathway to recovery. We call them points and not steps because while there is a rough order, they're things that we all, that we keep in mind throughout our recovery process. And it's certainly not unusual for us to be working on things in, in 0.4 and refer back to 0.1. So those points are building and maintaining motivation, coping with urges, managing thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. And achieving a more balanced lifestyle. You'll notice I put "more" in parentheses here. That's kind of my edit because I don't know what a perfectly balanced lifestyle looks like, but I work to achieve more and more balance in my life every day.

Our Successful Life Skills Workbook is based around these principles and we build on it to a number of exercises, um, on things like increasing motivation, coping skills, and managing, um, and managing our balanced life. [00:11:00] So the reason we're here today, and we're very excited about this, um, we have partnered, it says a, a new partnership here, but we've been working together over a year now. We are partnered with The Fletcher Group on this program to bring SMART programs, tools, and the Successful Life Skills Handbook and classes to 250 recovery homes across the country. A hundred of those are specifically rural recovery homes through our HRSA program. And then we have an additional program that has 150, uh, that has space for 150 homes focused in six states. And I'm going turn it back over to Alena who's going go through some of the details of these programs for us.

[00:11:37] **Alena Kuplinski:** All right, so SMART is currently working as part of two initiatives. One is funded by HRSA with a focus on recovery homes in rural communities. The other initiative is working with Elevance Health, and that was is with a focus on

recovery homes in non-rural communities in six target states. Both of these initiatives [00:12:00] include a research component that is aimed at gauging the effectiveness of evidence-based approaches, as well as identifying benefits and barriers. So now I'm going give a bit more background on The Fletcher Group HRSA initiative. It is fully funded by HRSA at no cost to the recovery homes, and it uses SMART Successful Life Skills Handbook and curriculum to provide a 12 session program, which is led by a trained smart facilitator for up to 15 participants. The homes are provided with any materials necessary, including books and technology.

These meetings can be held online or in person, depending on the specific needs of the home. We do require one representative of the home to complete complimentary online training. And like I said, this is provided. Um, we also, it also includes a research component in partnership with the University of Kentucky, which is working to gauge the effectiveness of [00:13:00] evidence-based recovery approaches in recovery homes. For participation in a survey recovery home will earn a \$1,200 stipend. And there are some differences between

this HRSA initiative and the Elevance initiative. More information about the Elevance initiative can be provided upon request.

So in both of these initiatives, we have a few goals. We want to help recovery homes increase their continuum of care for those who are seeking recovery support. We also want to help SMART Recovery bring their meetings and our meetings and tools to those in communities where they might have limited access to recovery support. And we want to fulfill both SMART, both SMART and Fletcher Group's shared mission to empower people with access to achieve independence from addictive and problematic behaviors. And by doing all of this, we would like to better understand our approach on rec, [00:14:00] to recovery outcomes and how this can help people in their recovery.

So now I'm going to give a bit of background about the Successful Life Skills Handbook. So it is a workbook that lays out a flexible 12 week program that is directed at making behavioral, behavioral changes by empowering participants to make better choices. It is presented in language that is easy to understand and uses tools that are user-friendly and based on scientific research and methodology.

The workbook has been successfully used in a variety of environments, including prisons, jails, recovery residences, and reentry programs. It is a workbook that is intended to be written on for personal use, both during and between meetings. So now I'm just going to give a bit of information on some of the discussion topics included in the workbook. So there are SMART Recovery tools for addiction management, and [00:15:00] in a moment, Brad will be giving you some specific examples of some of those tools. There also are ways to more effectively manage thoughts, feelings, and behaviors because the thoughts that we feel lead to our feelings and those feelings lead to our actions.

And while the workbook does focus on recovery, it also touches on some non-recovery topics, including job skills and financial management concepts. This includes something like a, um, mock job interview, and this is stuff that I personally think many, many people could benefit from, not just those in recovery, and it really helps provide people with more tools to have a more successful life. The book also goes over things like reaction versus response, and coping strategies for anger, stress, and depression. And as Brad said, it helps to achieve a more balanced life for the participants. [00:16:00]

[00:16:00] **Brad Glaser:** Alena, thank you so much. Um, so just quickly, uh, besides coordinating this program, I am a person in long-term recovery myself, and I have used SMART as my primary, uh, recovery pathway. So when I talk to you about these tools, they're things that not only I present regularly in meetings and in some of these, uh, Successful Life Skills classes, they're also things that I use in my own life. And we'd really like to share a couple of these tools. So you can get a feel for what these, um, classes and what the Successful Life Skills curriculum is all about.

So the first comes from 0.2, coping with urges. And I often think of this as our, uh, our most practical of the, uh, of the four points. The really, hey, how do we address these situations where we are feeling a strong urge or craving and need to make decisions on how to move forward in a, um, productive and positive manner. So, we have a list of about 10 to 12 of

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these that we go through [00:17:00] in classes, but it just highlighted a few of the big ones here. So, for instance, one way of dealing with urges would be to stay away from the situations, avoid. Um, stay away from sensations or people that may bring on an urge. So that can mean not just avoiding a specific place, but if, you know there are sounds or smells that, that tend to trigger urges to work to identify those.

One way to do that is to use an urge log, which is another thing we talk about in our class, and know to avoid those situations. The second one, and I will tell you all a big one for me, especially in my early recovery, is escape. If you find yourself in that situation where you're getting urges, get out of there, you know, figure out a plan in advance. Um, I tell people all the time that one for me still is if I'm going to be somewhere potentially triggering, I always have my car. Another means of transportation with me. Another one, and I think a huge one for so many of us in recovery and in the broader recovery community, is reaching out for support.

Have those [00:18:00] friends and, you know, texts, and phone numbers, and email addresses and any other way you might contact them, have them handy. Um, have them ready to, ready to go, so that when you find yourself in that urge oriented situation that you are ready to reach out. One thing that I practice myself and always use as a suggestion to others is make those connections even at times when you're not having urges. Text those people that are your accountability partners and your support regularly so that when you're in that big moment of an urge, it's almost second nature. Uh, I will tell you, I have two friends that, um, are on my constant contact list for exactly that reason. Even years into recovery.

Um, another one, and this is something that, um, We kind of suffuse throughout the Successful Life Skills program is planning for your time. So many people in early recovery, but really just many people in our lives, find ourselves in situations where we maybe have more time than we have, uh, things planned [00:19:00] to do. Now, this doesn't mean we need to be working or working on recovery every moment, but even planning for downtime, making sure we, you have productive activities, productive in a very broad sense of that word. We include fun in productivity, but making sure we have those in place really can help us, you know, to A, avoid urges to begin with. And B, when we're faced with that urge, say, well, you know, I don't have time to engage in any behaviors now cause I have plans to go hiking with my friend at three o'clock this afternoon and that's what I'm going to do. Urge or not.

Alright. And our second tool and one of my favorites developed by Joe Gerstein, who's one of our co-founders, is our Hierarchy of Values. And this tool is so simple, but so powerful to me. And essentially, to get into the Hierarchy of Values, we're just asking ourselves a simple question. What is most important to [00:20:00] me? What are the things that motivate me in my life and my recovery? Now, I threw an example in on the left hand side. Um, this can be a mix of tangible things and sometimes, um, value words. Um, so this is a version of my, my personal list, but Family is up there. Empathy slash compassion. I think of those two as very closely linked for me. Integrity, my Friends, independence.

Now officially, the Hierarchy of Value is five long, is five long, but as a proud Louisiana guy, I had to include my New Orleans Saints as the sixth of my Hierarchy of Values. But that

is kind of an extra one thrown in. So what I'd love to ask y'all and would love if, uh, we see some, uh, uh, some ideas on the chat here, what are some of your values? What's in that top five for you of, you know, things that are important in your life? I'll give y'all a couple minutes on this. If you're not comfortable sharing any in the chat, that's totally fine, but I would ask you to sort of think on it for a minute.[00:21:00]

[00:21:13] **Janice Fulkerson:** Brad, our folks are not shy about.

[00:21:16] **Brad Glaser:** Yeah, I see that. Yeah.

[00:21:18] **Janice Fulkerson:** You've got some good health, loyalty, authenticity, education, FAMILY in all caps. Yes.

[00:21:27] **Brad Glaser:** I like that Liddy. That all caps on family. I'm a little jealous now. Maybe I should have done that.

[00:21:32] **Janice Fulkerson:** Integrity. Yeah. Service work. You know that service is a big thing Brad. Service above self, servant, servant leadership. Yeah.

[00:21:42] **Brad Glaser:** And Janice, especially at this sort of event where I think all of us are brought together here by the service we do for, um, our recovery communities.

[00:21:50] **Janice Fulkerson:** Yeah, absolutely. That is so true. Empathy, gardening. Gardening, quiet time, willingness.

[00:21:58] **Brad Glaser:** I love the range of answers we're [00:22:00] getting here. Um, first of all, somebody said loyalty. I'm wondering if that should be on mine cause in our staff meeting we were talking about Star Wars characters and I was saying how much I appreciate Chewbacca because of his loyalty. So, uh, definitely an important one to me. I love seeing, I love seeing things in there like gardening and like quiet time, like things where people find enrichment in their lives um, from certain activities or certain practices. I see. Willingness is a big one in here. What a great recovery concept and skill.

[00:22:29] **Janice Fulkerson:** That's right. And freedom. Freedom is a good one. Reflection, yeah. I would add reading and that and, uh, people who know me well know I'm a sewer, sewing and an audio book. But look, there's music in there. Self-compassion.

[00:22:48] **Brad Glaser:** Music, uh, reading both things I like. I will tell you the biggest for me on that score is movies. Uh, a movie is a go-to for me, uh, as part of my life and part of my recovery, uh, process. [00:23:00]

[00:23:00] **Janice Fulkerson:** Yeah.

[00:23:00] **Brad Glaser:** Um, well look at this great look, list from Beverly. She gave us, uh, all of hers there.

[00:23:04] **Janice Fulkerson:** Yeah, that is fabulous. The, um, there's a theme about belonging too, in here.

[00:23:13] **Brad Glaser:** Absolutely. That sense of community, um, is so important to so many of us, reco in recovery and again, what draws us together. Merri Lee, I love that respect and not just respect of others, but respect of self as part of that as well. Unconditional acceptance, including self, others, and the world is a major theme we hit on in Successful Life Skills and something that, um, relates to so much. In fact, if we have time for a quick anecdote. In my local New Orleans area recovery meeting this past Monday night, we talked about the, um, the idea of, um, uh, unconditional acceptance of others. And one of our participants actually tied that right back to his Hierarchy of Values, that, that [00:24:00] empathy, caring, respect for others as part of that.

So if he's not able to exhibit that unconditional acceptance of others, he's not living up to his values from this very tool. So I really appreciate that being, uh, in there. So let me ask, and of course y'all could cheat a little bit on this one cause you could see the question. But for those of you who are in recovery, are any of your addictive behaviors on that list? And the reason we ask this question, is that probably for most of us now, if we're in this sort of meeting and we're in recovery, we're well into our recovery and we wouldn't have it there anymore. But I ask you to consider how we live in active addiction and where we would have to honestly put that value while we were in active addiction.

And I think for so many of us, I certainly put myself in this camp, at some point dur during my multiple addictions, it really became number one on that list. I won't say all [00:25:00] my other values disappeared completely, but I certainly was willing to compromise them for that addictive behavior. And so, you know, I just think that's something worth thinking about because very importantly, one thing I've replaced it with, and I intentionally left it out of my five here, though it is part of my shortlist anytime, is recovery.

You know, we think so much about our recovery process. And I believe recovery in and of itself can be a very strong value and a means to helping us fulfill these other values as we go and to put a focus on these other values. Um, so just very important to me. Um, I'll also throw in that, um, uh, Joe, that Joe Gerstein who created this, when he first did, he said he thought of it almost as like a magic trick to say, like is addictive behavior on your list.

But then as he worked with it over time, and we've all worked with it, we realized how powerful this Hierarchy of Values also is, is something to revisit and think about. Um, and I will tell you in my [00:26:00] personal copy of the Smart Handbook, I have so many, uh, scratch outs and circles and stars as my Hierarchy of Values has adjusted and changed over time.

Not really major changes. I mean, working from the same basic principles, but for instance, empathy and compassion. Moving so far up that list is one that's adjusted for me over time. Thank y'all so much for the answers there. That's, uh, it's really terrific to see this sort of engagement, especially in a meeting where we can't all see each other face to face.

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Uh, terrific to know that people are there and engaging in what we're talking about. So now I want to get into a little bit about the program. Some of our goals in this program in partnership with The Fletcher Group, and what we're seeing in terms of early results. Now, important to mention here, while we're working on two initiatives, the HRSA is our, is our longer existing of the two initiatives.

And all the results you see here, um, that, that Fletcher and the University of Kentucky, Kentucky team have gathered [00:27:00] so far, are from those rural HRSA homes. Um, so we have a number that have completed the program. We have more that are active right now, more waiting to launch. And of course part of the reason we're here is that we have more slots available. Um, so these are all rural homes as defined by HRSA. Um, and I see Erica has just posted for us the link to, um, see if your home is a HRSA designated, is in a HRSA designated rural community. So if you're not aware of that yet, that can be something to check to see if you're eligible to be part of that HRSA grant.

Worth knowing for other HRSA grants as well, which can be incredible supports for um, uh, for recovery, uh, institutions in general. Um, I apologize that second bullet point is from a different slide. Um, part of the, um, what the participating houses get is, uh, SMART, uh, Successful Life Skills Facilitator Training from up to two, for up to two staff, as Alena had mentioned.

So we follow up about that. Check on, you know, whether they've received books in [00:28:00] technology, how they've been able to implement those things, um, and uh, how they were matched with the facilitator, what they thought of the SMART facilitator. Often though, not always, there are options here. We provide that SMART facilitator for the first 12 sessions of Successful Life Skills, which by the way, when I say 12 sessions, that takes us all the way through a first run of the course. Uh, and then as those staffers train during that time with our online training, they are then ready to provide these sessions going forward. So to restart a SMART class, or in the case of some homes, they actually start a standard SMART meeting or both. So we really work with homes to have options and to, and to go forward on an ongoing basis. Um, to achieve this our participants and our homes, complete, chief, complete brief evaluation surveys, pardon me, um, at the, uh, commencement at the six week mark. So halfway through, um, and at the end of the, um, of the program.[00:29:00]

Okay. So, um, the evaluation component includes, uh, the brief surveys that I mentioned. Um, homes are matched with facilitators to deliver sessions remote, uh, remotely. Um, participating residents take that intake questionnaire Prior to the first class, they do a six session follow-up, a 12 session follow-up, so that's upon class completion. And a three month follow up where, where available. So if the participant's still part of the home or is available for a three month follow up, um, that is a component of the program as well. We'll know more results from those, obviously as we get further into the program and have more homes that are, uh, three months past their completion dates.

Um, the staff provides, oh, let me, let me go back for one second here. Um, very important to note. That all of these surveys are anonymous. They're Qualtrics links. They're shared with the house by, by links and QR codes. [00:30:00] We want people to be very comfortable with the idea that we are not taking their names in as part of this data. I will also note along with

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that, that even if that is the, that even with that proviso. If somebody does not feel comfortable participating in the survey, they are still more than welcome to attend the classes and participate fully. The last thing we would want is for somebody to be left out of Successful Life Skills, uh, because of their own preferences on participating in that element.

We do love the people to part, we do love people to participate in the surveys where possible, though. Um, the staff also does some surveys as part of the, uh, the program. So upfront they tell us about house characteristics. Any barriers that they see to implementation. And then follow up after the 12 sessions, um, with information about how the course went, and then a brief follow up interview with the Fletcher team as well to really get a feel for, Hey, how was [00:31:00] the, how was the information presented?

You know, did the facilitator work well with your group? What did you see outside of the kind confines of your class in terms of people, um, engaging with the SMART material and using the SMART material in their own recovery? We really want to develop an understanding here of not just how the 12 hours of class get, goes, because we know 12 hours in, you know, taken alone can't, you know, completely, uh, help someone towards change, but how they're implementing those things in their recovery, in their lives. Um, and then the study is reviewed and approved by the Western Copernicus Institutional Review Board, um, to make sure that all procedures are being followed correctly.

Okay. So, so far, um, since fall 2022, we've had 59 rural homes in 16 states enrolled. Um, you can see below, um, that, uh, the representation of those states. Um, these again, are [00:32:00] all rural homes as part of HRSA. Um, we have here the number of people that have participated in intake. The session six surveys, the session 12 surveys.

And the three month follow ups. Again, that three, three month follow up, uh, number is very low right now because we have not had too many, we have not had too many of the homes completed for three months already at this point. So let's talk a little about what our participants look like and what their, uh, experience is. So, um, as part of that survey, we ask them about some of their characteristics so we can get a feel of who we're reaching and see trends across data. So most of our residents, um, to this point are female. 59%. Of course, most of the homes that we're working with are either female and male in composition.

So this reflects the number of homes, which has been slightly over 50/50, um, that house women. Uh, most of our participant participants to this point are Caucasian. Most are employed at intake with an average [00:33:00] age of 38. And when we look at that, employ that intake. I think one thing that points out to us is that many of the people that start this program with us, they've been in a residence already. They are into their recovery. They have learned recovery skills. So very often we're not, uh, very rarely are we starting from scratch with anybody because of the great work that y'all do as recovery homes. They're coming in with a range of skills and ideas about their own recovery.

Um, participating residents have reported an average age of first use at 16. Um, and 45% report, report having overdosed at some point in the past. So, you know, unsurprising to all of us, certainly people that have had real battles in their addiction and, and working hard at their recovery experience. Most of our participants have reported that it was their first time

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residing in a recovery home, two thirds of our participants. So obviously a significant portion that have before lived in recovery residences, but that majority isn't their first [00:34:00] time in a recovery residence. Okay, so this is one of the slides that I absolutely love here. Some of the questions that we ask participants, um, as we go both at the uh, uh, the sixth session and 12 session mark.

Um, one of those, SMART is very important to my long-term recovery. Um, I should, I should go back. SMART is important to my long-term recovery. We don't actually say very important, but. Uh, our participants rate that as an average of 7.9 out of 10 at both the six session and 12 session marks. Um, just love that ability, uh, you know, that confidence that they have in using SMART as part of their recovery process. I'll also note here in this reflects what Christi said, said earlier. Notice how we phrase it that SMART is important to my long-term recovery. We're not for a moment asking anybody to supplant other things they are already doing that are successful in their recovery. We [00:35:00] want to be here to add, so if that person is using 12 step programs, is using, um, faith based programs like Celebrate, is using meditation based programs like Recovery Dharma.

We want to give them more tools, more concepts, more ideas to work into their recovery mix, not to supplant things that are already there. I am confident in my ability to implement the tools obtained from SMART. An even, even higher rating on this one, an 8.2 going up to an 8.4 after 12 sessions. Really, we really appreciate the idea that people are finding tools, that they can find a way to implement into their life and into their recovery. Um, I think Alina mentioned during her portion that, um, one of the ideas here is that these self-help tools are user-friendly, that they're easy enough to understand that people can work on them on their own. Or as I, as we often recommend, in partnership with others. [00:36:00] So sitting down together to, for instance, look at the Hierarchy of Values or look at a cost benefit analysis or a change plan worksheet and, um, you know, to really get that from collaboration with their peers.

Um, of course we have plenty of options, as Christi mentioned, for ongoing involvement in SMART Recovery between. Um, between national meetings, local meetings, of course, hopefully continued meetings within their home. So that should only serve to increase their ability to implement those tools and learn from those tools.

And then finally, and it may sound, si, may sound funny that this is my favorite one, and maybe because I'm pro, Program Coordinator, this is my favorite one. But for difficulty, of course, materials, Participants have rated that as only a 2.1 to a 2.3 on the scale. So they are finding the materials very easy to use. I know at least one of our, uh, co-authors, Charles True is with us today. Cause I, I've seen him in the [00:37:00] chat. And, um, I, I know that's something that they really focused on in writing this book and something that our facilitators focus on in presenting and sharing the materials with others is to keep that difficulty very low, which certainly helps in those above numbers of the confidence to implement those tools that people learn from

SMART. I also want to give a shout out at this point to our great volunteer facilitators. Um, a number of whom have run a number of these classes at this point. Um, their job, the great job they do along with the text, really helps in this. It may be worth mentioning here as well, that

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these classes are highly participatory. So, we are not coming in to lecture. We're not coming in to tell anybody, this is how did your recovery. We do reading aloud from the book, we talk together. Lots of conversations going into each person's recovery experience, places they might use these tools, and I think all of that reflects across these numbers, but [00:38:00] specifically in making these tools easy to use and keeping that difficulty well.

And then, um, finally, a hundred percent agree at session 12, that the course has increased their knowledge about recovery, met their approval, was implementable, that they have been using the skills obtained. I think a huge one there, and that they would recommend SMART to others. It's very nice that they would recommend SMART to others, but the things that I really love there are increased knowledge about recovery and using those skills they obtained.

One thing I often tell my groups that I run at the beginning is if you get three tools over these 12 weeks that you will in a genuine way use in your ongoing recovery, to me, that's a huge win for each participant. Look, I'd love if they grab the tool every session that works for them, but we understand that finding things that work in your recovery, even just adding a few more things to those recovery tool boxes, is so important and helps people with their long-term [00:39:00] positive outcomes and recovery so much. Also wanted to identify, um, what some of the barriers, uh, we, uh, we have found are. That's part of when we do doing this kind of work is, um, identifying not just successes, but also challenges. Um, so one barrier is conflicting priorities. Um, I'm sure you experience this in your recovery residences. Um, but you know, residents have jobs, as we mentioned, most have jobs coming into this program.

They have other meetings they may attend regularly. They have house meetings, other recovery meetings, they have house responsibilities like chores. Um, they may have, um, community service they participate in. I know that's very common among our residents and I know somebody mentioned that in the Hierarchy of Values as well. Um, so those can all be barriers for session participation. A few things we've, we've worked on to help this, with this barrier. Um, we try to have facilitators, um, available for almost any time. Groups may want to have a meeting. Um, we do tell them that if you wanna schedule at two o'clock in the morning, that might be a [00:40:00] little bit of a problem, but outside of that, we can almost always find a facilitator to match up with you.

I've ended up taking a few of the difficult times myself, I will tell you. Another thing, and this is, um, you know, maybe specifically a, a challenge for some of our rural programs. Um, we've had some technology difficulties at times. Not too many, but enough to identify as a barrier. One of those, and maybe the trickiest, is when we have internet connectivity issues. Um, we've worked with, uh, with homes on things like signal boosters to help with that. Um, some practical tips like making sure other devices are not on the wifi during meetings. Um, occasionally we have some issues with, uh, groups getting on to Zoom for the first time. Um, that's been less and less of a problem.

I think more, more and more people are familiar with Zoom. Um, we hold sessions. And then early on we had some challenges with, um, uh, with equipment, with microphones and cameras for groups. I always like to do a little Show and Tell when I present, so I will show you. Uh, we have switched and this is our cool [00:41:00] camera and microphone setup we

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use now. Uh, it is a plug and play little device. Fits right on the desktop, but is uh, um, is really terrific for, um, and I'm sorry, I flipped, I flipped onto the next slide there. But it's really terrific for, um, working with our homes and helping them overcome any of those technology challenges. Um, and then finally, something that's a little bit of a challenge is that we do not have as many SMART meetings in rural areas.

We do have an increasing number. Um, I'm in the New Orleans area. We now have a meeting down the road from me, which was in Buras, Louisiana, which if you can picture Louisiana in those fingers that go out into the Gulf of Mexico, Buras sits on one of those fingers. It's basically just one highway running down. So we do see increased meetings in rural areas, but we know that is still a challenge. And a particular challenge for people who have connectivity issues because of course one of the great thing with thing with the growing number of online meetings, both national and local online meetings, is that participants [00:42:00] can join remotely.

We have at a few homes for those connectivity issues have made that a little bit more difficult for the participants. So we work with those homes for the best solutions we can manage with each, uh, specific challenge. Um, and then a couple of other things that, um, that homes have found is we've increased the ability for residents to participate from locations of their choosing. In one of the classes I, I run, we had two residents who were, um, working at a restaurant. That were able to arrange their break between shifts for when we had the meeting, so they would join from one tablet together at the restaurant. Um, we have people that need to join from their own rooms, especially with Covid.

This has been an issue. Um, so we can let people join from their own devices if that applies to the home. We know in many homes people are not allowed their own devices, at least for a period of time. So we also can provide very basic tablets to just let them connect to these meetings, um, from their own room. And then for the common areas, as I [00:43:00] mentioned, we found great cameras, uh, great speakers. Um, we have ways we can work with homes on that. So people are all, you know, we have some where seven people are in one room, one's joining from their own room, another's joining from, uh, uh, their workplace. And we really have found ways to work with homes on that.

Um, and then just a little note from, uh, some of our facilitators and, um, facilit, both our volunteer facilitators and facilitators in homes, is doing things like posting reminders on the house calendar, sending out texts to participants, um, to make sure, especially in those early classes that people are there.

Um, another thing, and this has proven not really to be a barrier, but something that, uh, we, we do talk about a lot, is we welcome participants to join anywhere within the 12 weeks. Of course, the study is based on participants who have been there throughout, but we know recovery environments are ever changing with participants, with schedules, with ability to join meetings. So, we don't want somebody coming in at week six and feeling like, oh, I [00:44:00] have to wait for the next go round. While the course does build as it goes, it really is built to be modular enough that somebody coming in, um, can join and still get so much out of the course. We had one participant, participant come in at session 11 of a 12 session course and then give a detailed response about the things he had gotten out of the course

during that time, and detailed in a way that we knew he really was listening and we knew he had looked back some at the book.

Um, so just something I'd like to mention, because we know change is constant. All right. So a little bit about the sustainability and perceived impact from the homes. A hundred percent of the homes completed to date have agreed that residents have used their SMART skills to enhance their interactions with one another. Um, this is a major focus for The Fletcher Group and something that, uh, that Dave, uh, Dave Johnson, the CEO there, and I have discussed. I should say, we have discussed. It's not like it's just the two of us. We have a great team on both sides working on this. So we're [00:45:00] thrilled to see that feedback that people are using it to enhance their interactions.

Uh, 67% have also agreed that participation has improved peer mentor counselor interactions and the 60 and the 33% who didn't agree to that one were neutral on the question. So it seems like there is a positive effect there as people work with their counselors, their peer support specialists, um, they're more senior residents in homes, um, that the SMART tools are coming into play there and they're using it in their communication.

Um, a hundred percent agreed that there's a greater degree of trust in meetings, uh, between residents that participated in, in SMART and peer mentors and counselors. Um, you know, the, the hope is always that we are getting into recovery issues and talking to individuals about their recovery challenges in a way that's productive as all. So that's for all. So that's just heartwarming to hear that they, um, they find that greater degree of trust. Um, and then 83% agree that there's a greater degree of [00:46:00] shared agreement on recovery goals between residents that participated in SMART. The other 17% were neutral. Um, and when we say shared and, and we say shared agreement on recovery goals, this does not mean that we are saying that all residents should have the same recovery goals.

In fact, quite the opposite. Christi, uh, Christi mentioned empowerment very early in this presentation, and that's what we're talking about here is the working support each other in each of our recovery goals in empowering one another's in achieving those goals. So we love seeing that the homes are finding that, you know, all of these skills, um, further through, uh, through their residents participation in this program.

All right, so if you would like more information on this program, we have a few ways available to get in touch with us. Um, Johnna Allen at The Fletcher Group is, uh, my hip-to-hip partner in this program. She and I both talk with every home involved [00:47:00] from the, uh, the initial informational stage through setup and through implementation. So you can see Johnna's email there, um, as well as my own. These will be posted in the chat as well, so, uh, don't feel like you need to scribble them down from the screen, but we do, we did want to put them up. And then there's a great informational page available at The Fletcher Group's website as well for you to, uh, uh, to be able to see this, uh, this information.

And that is what we have for y'all today. Um, Janice, I know we've had some comments and questions throughout. Um, would you like to throw some of those our way?

[00:47:33] **Janice Fulkerson:** Yeah, I'd love to throw a couple of those your way. We've got lots of questions for you. The first one is, um, does SMART Recovery meeting attendance satisfy court or probation requirements?

[00:47:48] **Brad Glaser:** So that the answer first of all is yes, that it should pretty much anywhere. I do always encourage people to check in with their probation officer or court officer [00:48:00] to make sure they understand what SMART is and to, um, to accept that. Additionally, I'll say with that, Janice, that most of our online meetings can provide automatic verification for participants, so that can be a real help in that process for people coming to online meetings.

Face-to-face facilitators like myself are always happy to fill out, uh, paperwork for that as well. We have our own form, but often people have forms provided by the court. We're always, uh, happy to provide topics, signatures, and anything else that might be needed there to, uh, help people in that process.

[00:48:32] **Janice Fulkerson:** Fantastic. And you touched a little bit on this, but I think it does, um, help to, uh, maybe expand on it a little bit. The question is, Is one required to unlearn other doctrines or principles of recovery in order to allow SMART to maximize efficiency in personal development?

[00:48:53] **Brad Glaser:** Not in the least. Um, you know, Christi, Christi mentioned the results of the study about people participating [00:49:00] both in, uh, SMART and Alcoholics Anonymous. That was specific to that study that, you know, those two groups were chosen. But one thing I think, uh, we are learning across the board in recovery is that people having more tools in their recovery toolbox is supportive of their whole recovery process. Um, I will tell you anecdotally, um, from the, from the sessions I run, the vast majority of participants in these homes have another recovery tradition or traditions that they already use.

And so we work with them for SMART to be a great supplement to anything they're doing. And of course, it can be a primary pathway, as I mentioned early on, it's my primary pathway. But the last thing we want, is for anybody to unlearn anything that's working for them or really unlearn anything. Just to figure out what does work best for them in their own personal pathway to recovery.

[00:49:50] **Janice Fulkerson:** Fantastic Brad. We often use the term Yes/And, uh, when we're doing our work. So, you know, we see SMART Recovery as a **Yes**. [00:50:00] **And** there are other pathways, you know, other things to put in the toolkit.

[00:50:04] **Brad Glaser:** Janice, I, I, I so love that. I did a little bit of improv acting in my youth and Yes, and is like the mantra of, uh, improv acting. So I love that y'all use that.

[00:50:13] **Janice Fulkerson:** I did not know that. But thanks for sharing that today. Um, uh, we have an international flavor today. Um, we have people from all over the US as well as from Singapore today. Um, so there's a question about, uh, your reach and how far SMART Recovery goes in the world.

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[00:50:35] **Brad Glaser:** Um, So, uh, smart, SMART is international. There are SMART organizations, um, in countries throughout the world. Um, SMART Australia is very active. Um, uh, SMART in, uh, Indonesia is a growing community. Um, there are, there is SMART available anywhere. And then I will also say with the online component, people are welcome to join from, um, from anywhere in the world [00:51:00] at our local online meetings.

So this is just New Orleans area meetings. We have a regular attendee from Belgium and another from Ireland that just came across our meetings and have become great parts of our community. Um, so yes, in two parts, there are SMART organizations throughout the world, um, and we do welcome people to any meetings. Christi, anything additional that, uh, you'd throw in on that?

[00:51:22] **Christi Alicea:** Yeah, I think we in maybe 20 SMART Recovery in 26 countries. Possibly and, and we have handbooks translated into approximately that, that number of languages. So, um, if you need, you can always contact us in the United States at InformationSmartRecovery.org and we will help connect you with our international affiliates. Or if you would like to train to become a facilitator, we can also help you with the correct affiliate. Or it may be us, depending on the country, [00:52:00] um, to get you trained to run meetings as well. But, but we will help direct you if you need it.

[00:52:07] **Brad Glaser:** Um, and, Fadilan I hope I'm pronouncing that at least close to correctly. I, I see your message about speaking, uh, the Indonesian language. If you want to reach out to us, um, we can, uh, definitely connect you with someone, um, uh, in that organization, uh, to help to, uh, be whatever of whatever assistance they can.

[00:52:25] **Janice Fulkerson:** Great. And Brad, I did put in the chat that, uh, SMART Recovery has an app that can be used on tablets and phones. Do you want to talk a little bit about that? I hear the Daily Inspiration, um, is quite positive and engaging.

[00:52:41] **Brad Glaser:** The, the Daily, the Daily, Daily Inspiration is a great moment of affirmation, uh, during our days as, uh, as SMART participants for sure. Um, very important things, and I think Alena mentioned this briefly, but worth touching on again. Um, there is the SMART Recovery Meeting Finder, which can be accessed online, on the website, can also be [00:53:00] accessed via the app. Um, I will tell you, I myself use that as a participant sometimes if I say, Hey, you know what, it's, uh, it's 11 o'clock on a Saturday.

I don't really know a meeting to go to right now, but I feel like going to one, you know, I'll search and just see what's coming up. Sometimes intentionally search in different cities, um, just to join in with a group there. Um, additionally, uh, both on the website and on the SMART app, we have the SMART Toolbox. It doesn't include every single tool from the SMART Handbook, but I will tell you it includes a lot of them. So if you have the need for handouts for meetings, or just for you to learn a little bit more and see how some of the tools work, um, that information with, with great PDFs is available, um, on the website and through the app.

[00:53:45] **Janice Fulkerson:** Great. Thank you. Um, another question. Do you do hybrid in-person slash zoom combined hybrid meetings?

[00:53:54] **Brad Glaser:** It, it certainly is possible. Um, we did that for one home very early on. Um, I [00:54:00] will say it is generally not our preference because those are often a little bit harder for a facilitator to manage effectively. That doesn't mean we rule it out though. If it's something that will work well for a home, um, we will work hand in hand to make it work. And Janice, that maybe gets, gets to a broader point here as well. That this is not a cookie cutter solution. While we're providing the course, we work with each home on what sort of participant setup is going to work for them, what sort of technology setup is going to work for them.

Um, some homes even have requests like, um, uh, you know, the, um, the gender of their facilitator, you know, some women's homes have requested specifically having a woman as facilitator. We work with them on all these things to make sure we're really building the program in a way that works for their home.

[00:54:47] **Janice Fulkerson:** That's terrific, Brad. I, I really appreciate the focus on what the need is and what the request is and trying to meet people where they're at to make sure that the tools are, [00:55:00] uh, appropriate and best for them. That's super great. Um, back to the app, there's a question now, is there a subscription fee?

[00:55:09] **Brad Glaser:** There is not.

[00:55:10] **Janice Fulkerson:** It's free to them.

[00:55:12] **Brad Glaser:** Yes.

[00:55:13] **Janice Fulkerson:** Remote recovery. That is fabulous. All that we can do to put tools in the hands of people.

[00:55:20] **Brad Glaser:** Easiest question I've gotten today.

[00:55:24] **Janice Fulkerson:** That's great, Brad. Well, I am, uh, combing through the, um, questions and answers and it looks like there's, maybe we might be coming to an end on the questions. Um, there is a question about the cost of the SMART program and I would encourage people to reach out to SMART to reach out to Fletcher Group. You may find us at FletcherGroup.org. And we can evaluate with you, um, if your recovery house, uh, fits in one of our programs where, uh, Fletcher Group [00:56:00] has slots and can provide and help deliver the SMART Recovery program to your recovery house at no cost to the home.

Um, it is something that we're doing for a certain number of homes in rural communities across the US. Um, and, uh, one of the big requirements is they have to meet the HRSA rural definition. Um, and so we have an analyzer. Erica posted that in the chat earlier so that people

can search on their own. Or anyone in our webinar today is, uh, welcome to reach out to Brad or Johnna or, uh, any one of us via the Fletcher Group website.

[00:56:41] **Brad Glaser:** Thank you so much, Janice. That's, uh, that's great information to share with everybody and thank you for handling, uh, the, the questions and comments here.

[00:56:47] **Janice Fulkerson:** Yeah, you bet. Um, I think that is the end of all the questions. Um, this recording and the slides will be available next week on The Fletcher Group website. Um, it's, uh, this [00:57:00] one as well as all of the webinars we've done over the last two years are available for review and accessing. And Brad, Christi, Alena, thanks so much for being here with us today. I think you've delivered, I know you've delivered some great information to those who have been in attendance, um, and I look forward to talking to you again.

[00:57:23] **Christi Alicea:** Thank you so much for inviting us.

[00:57:25] **Brad Glaser:** Thank you.

[00:57:26] **Alena Kuplinski:** It was a pleasure.

[00:57:27] **Janice Fulkerson:** We'll have a, uh, quick survey for those of you as we exit out of the Zoom webinar today. If you take a minute to, uh, fill that out and let us know what you thought of our presentation today, that'd be terrific and thanks everybody. I hope to see you all next month when we do this again on a different topic.

Michelle Day: This concludes our webinar session. Thank you so much for joining us today. Also, please tune in on the first Thursday of each month from 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM Eastern Standard [00:58:00] Time, where we will be hosting subject matter experts from across the nation to bring you valuable tools and resources for rural recovery house operators and SUD professionals. If you would like information on technical assistance, you can go to our website again, www.FletcherGroup.org, which I have also copied in the chat and submit a technical assistance request. Lastly, please take a moment to respond to the survey questions once they become available on your screen.

Your feedback is very important and greatly appreciated. Thank you and have a blessed day.