

RECOVERY

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



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FROM THE GROUND UP

by Founder and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Ernie Fletcher

Change can come from above, as in the top-down policies issued by governments and corporations. But it can also come from below, from everyday people who, against all odds and seemingly out of thin air, find the power to transform society from the ground up.

One example is the grassroots movement covered in this issue of our newsletter. Thousands of *Recovery Community Organizations* exist today, many led by people with lived experience who at some point wondered if they'd ever find the meaning and purpose in life needed to sustain recovery.

One of those people is Donald McDonald. As Technical Expert Lead with JBS International, Donald provides assistance to grantees of the Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP).

We thank Donald for sharing with our April webinar audience his insights from many years of working with RCOs and other grassroots organizers like himself who, in transforming their own lives, have transformed the world of recovery.

MANY FORMS OF AID

Research has documented the effectiveness of 12-Step programs. But many other forms of mutual aid achieve similar success, says Donald McDonald, Technical Expert Lead with JBS International. Here's his list of the major players.

12-Step Programs

The most widely available form of mutual aid follows a strict framework ("the steps"), assigns each new participant a sponsor, and usually requires the acceptance of a "higher power." Many such programs are drug- or process-specific, such as AA, NA, DAA, CA, MA, and SAA.*

Non-Secular

Not as prevalent but still widely available, the non-secular form of mutual aid is built upon a religious or spiritual framework, usually that of a particular religion. Examples include Celebrate Recovery, Recovery Dharma, and Refuge Recovery.

Secular

More popular in urban areas, secular programs focus on self-awareness—specifically one's thoughts, actions and behaviors—with progress completed individually or with the help of experienced mentors. Examples include SMART Recovery, SOS, and LifeRing.

All Recovery

Informal and non-denominational, this form of mutual aid embraces any pathway that creates connection and support. They can be found at many recovery community organizations and centers.

Physical Activity

Popular in urban areas, this form of mutual aid builds support through shared physical exercise. Its informality makes it complementary to other programs. Examples include Recovery CrossFit and Recovery Yoga.

Medication-Supported

The proven effectiveness of Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) and Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) can enhance the efficacy of any program, even those that object on moral grounds. Because of those objections, organizations like MARA and MARS provide peer-to-peer support for those using prescribed medications to assist abstinence.

* AA stands for Alcoholics Anonymous, NA for Narcotics Anonymous, DAA for Drug Addicts Anonymous, CA for Cocaine Anonymous, MA for Methadone Anonymous, and SAA for Sex Addicts Anonymous.



WATCH THE VIDEO

of our April 4 webinar featuring Donald McDonald.

[CLICK HERE](#)



Harm Reduction

Programs like Harm Reduction Works, Moderation Management, and HAMS provide mutual aid expressly for people uncommitted to complete abstinence.

Natural Recovery

Many people succeed without the benefit of formalized aid. McDonald suspects they draw from a relatively high degree of informal recovery capital found close at hand.

It's All About the Fit

Each person's journey is unique. That's why one of the best things any provider can do is help point clients in the direction of a group or program that aligns with their natural inclinations.

MANY PATHS TO RECOVERY

The best recovery community centers respond to local needs with imagination and creativity. To illustrate the point, McDonald recounts the numerous services provided by a recovery community center he recently visited in Indiana. Here's an overview of the programs, meetings, and medical/behavioral services your recovery community organization or center might want to emulate.

Harm Reduction

Efforts include a syringe service program, street outreach, HIV/HCV testing, safer sex supplies, Naloxone distribution, and 24-hour Naloxone vending machines. "There are many other vending opportunities besides Naloxone," says McDonald, "including small foodstuffs and basic essentials."

Transportation

Transportation using Lyft is funded through a variety of sources. "And it's not just to attend recovery meetings," says McDonald. "They use Lyft to go to job interviews, medical treatments, and behavioral health appointments."

Life Services

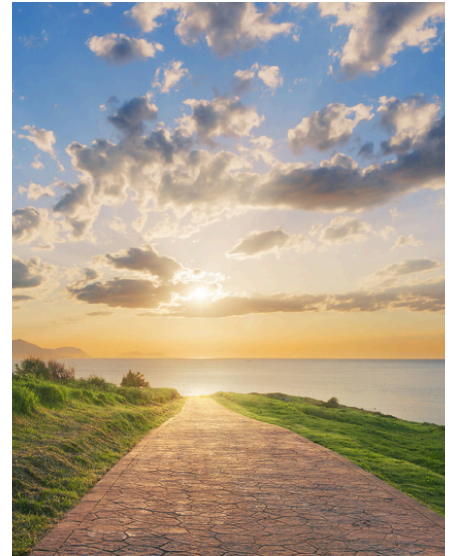
Amenities include shower and hygiene facilities; water, coffee, and food; an extensive clothing closet; and access to computers and printers for printing job applications and other essential documents. "That's not all," says McDonald. "They also do community education, help clients connect with the social services provided by local and state agencies, and have a great stigma-reduction program."

Peer Support

Numerous peer-led groups facilitate discussion on a wide range of subjects. For example, in addition to individual coaching, there's a men's group, a women's group, a grief and loss support group, and several healthy lifestyle groups.

Pro-Social Activities

Topping it off are open mic nights, poetry slams, live music, card games, storytelling, and bingo. "I can't overstate the importance of pro-social activities," says McDonald. "They're critical because they create the healthy, substance-free environment where people can come together, connect, have fun, be creative, and explore shared interests."



According to McDonald, pro-social activities lead to positive outcomes by helping individuals build a more complete life, including the social skills that deepen a sense of connection and make life more rewarding.

It's Working!

Taken all together, the facility in Indiana has, in McDonald's words, "successfully lowered the barrier to the holistic care people need to overcome a chronic illness and find a successful pathway to improved health and fulfillment."

The Funding Is There

Affording such extensive activities may not be as challenging as you think. "They can all be funded," says McDonald, "even the pro-social activities. Federal dollars are available for that and other services because of all the data supporting the effectiveness of recovery community centers and peer-based support services."

MANY VALUABLE RESOURCES

Recovery resources are more plentiful than ever before. Here are a few recommended by Donald McDonald.

Birth of a New Movement

William L. White—an inspiration to many, including McDonald—appears in this short video showing how SAMHSA's Recovery Community Services Program has helped people build effective RCOs.

<https://vimeo.com/89777865>

Resources for Recovery

This six-page guide from JBS International addresses a range of pertinent subjects, including the importance of harm reduction, the challenges involved in finding the right recovery home, and data supporting RCOs and mutual aid meetings.

https://mcusercontent.com/9301b50f34a6848e66ca5b747/files/40b45a41-e809-4e3a-3cf2-b602afd21adf/GHPC_eResource_Guide_Recovery_revised_Feb_2023.pdf

Recovery Community Organizations

Another guide from JBS International, this one shows how RCOs help people build recovery capital by providing training, improving access to resources, facilitating social connections, and hosting mutual-support meetings. Notable best practices at RCOs across the country are highlighted, from Seattle, Washington to West Palm Beach, Florida.

https://mcusercontent.com/9301b50f34a6848e66ca5b747/files/add50e4a-8173-6812-8ce6-066f43ec9926/GHPC_eResource_Guide_RCO_9.12.22_es_FINAL.pdf

Recovery Community Organization Toolkit

This handy document from *Faces and Voices of Recovery* describes the core principles and strategies of recovery community organizations. It includes a variety of helpful examples plus a step-by-step guide to creating an RCO from scratch. There's plenty of inspiration, too, including this introductory quote from William L. White: "Many of us have carried a message of hope on a one-to-one basis. This new recovery movement calls upon us to carry that message of hope to whole communities and the whole culture. It is time we stepped forward to shape this history with our stories, our time, and our talents."

<https://facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/RCO-Toolkit.pdf>

DONALD'S PODCAST

Donald McDonald's *No Thanks But Yes* podcast features others like himself who've overcome chaotic substance relationships.

[CLICK HERE](#)



Optimizing Recovery Funding

SAMHSA's Peer Recovery Center of Excellence website identifies best practices for optimizing funding plus an analysis of how states administer funds to support recovery services. The site showcases two videos: *Optimizing Recovery Funding, Volume 1* addresses funding barriers and *Optimizing Recovery Funding, Volume 2* outlines strategies for acquiring state funds to support recovery services.

<https://peerrecoverynow.org/products/optimized-recovery-funding-orf/>

CoARS Recovery Research Seminar Series

These seminars from the Recovery Research Institute address a wide range of topics, including the use of prescribed medications to treat opioid use disorder and the tools, products, and research materials that can support the building of recovery community centers.

<https://www.recoveryanswers.org/addiction-research-summaries/seminar-series/>