



A Community College approach to the Collegiate Recovery Movement

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ABSTRACT

The history of collegiate recovery programs in the United States attempts to connect two competing yet related activities. The First Movement is a treatment renewal movement whose goals are to reconnect treatment to the process of long-term recovery and rebuild relationships between treatment organizations, local communities and local recovery support groups. The Second Movement, the recovery advocacy movement, rose in reaction to the re-stigmatization, de-medicalization and re-criminalization of alcohol and other drug (AOD) problems in the 1980s and 1990s. The goals of this second movement included reaffirming the reality of long-term addiction recovery, by celebrating the legitimacy of multiple pathways of recovery, enhancing the variety, availability and quality of local/regional treatment and recovery support services, and transforming existing human services into recovery-oriented systems of care. The goal of the above approaches is to integrate a comprehensive social support network both on campus and in the community geared toward: (1) the elimination of stress on college campuses; (2) being attentive regarding environmental factors such as, stigma and discrimination; and (3) increasing employment opportunities (workforce Initiatives).

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Introduction

The development of school-based recovery support services at Brown University (1977), Rutgers University (1983), and Texas Tech University (1986) set the foundation for the collegiate recovery movement on undergraduate schools in the United States. Historically, Collegiate Recovery Programs (CRPs) were developed to meet recovering students' support needs in over 3,039 four-year degree programs and 1,685 two year granting community colleges [1]. In general, collegiate recovery programs are supportive environments within the campus culture that reinforce the decision to engage in a lifestyle of recovery from substance use. They are and continue to be designed to provide an educational opportunity alongside recovery support to ensure that students can attend college and not sacrifice their recovery [2]. Although CRPs vary in orientation, and type of services offered, they tend to be student driven, 12 Step based, and provide support and sober events while offering seminars and at times courses on recovery. The majority of CRPs students are male, almost all (91.3%) are Caucasian, and only 14% are employed full time [3].

The history of collegiate recovery programs mimics the treatment movement in the United States by attempting to connect two competing yet related activities. The **First Movement** is a treatment renewal movement led by front line service providers from across the country. The goals of this movement are to reconnect treatment to the process of long-term recovery and rebuild relationships between treatment organizations, local communities and local recovery support groups. In many ways

four-year educational institutions have embraced a collegiate recovery model of care that coordinates services on campus that provide recovery housing and in-house counseling services. The **Second Movement**, the recovery advocacy movement, rose in reaction to the re-stigmatization, de-medicalization and re-criminalization and penalization of alcohol and other drug (AOD) problems in the 1980s and 1990s. This second movement has been led organizationally by a coalition of the Faces and Voices of Recovery, the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, the Johnson Institute, the Legal Action Center, the City of Philadelphia, Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disabilities and the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment's Recovery Community Support Program. The goals of this second movement include reaffirming the reality of long-term addiction recovery, celebrating the legitimacy of multiple pathways of recovery, enhancing the variety, availability and quality of local/regional treatment and recovery support services, and transforming existing human services into "recovery-oriented systems of care" [4-6]. The recovery advocacy movement is more about healthy connections that foster safety and acceptance within a framework of building effective positive relationships.

Critical to the integration of the above two initiatives and the collegiate recovery movement is the undergraduate programs ability to distinguish "recovery," which is a personal, individual process, from "wellness". This process of trust and understanding must integrate traditional 12 Step community approaches and evidence-based practice guidelines that emphasize the student and community. A significant part of a student's college

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experience must buy into “wellness” for appropriate policy to be adopted [7]. Changing a part of the educational system to embrace a recovery “*student first person*” system based on the principles of recovery resilience and transformation require a concerted effort from: (1) students in recovery, (2) traditional professional allies in treatment and (3) faculty in educational institutions. The building of these alliances (partnerships) both on and off campus will define how community colleges contribute to the collegiate recovery movement. The guiding principle of collegiate recovery service at community colleges must be to provide students, early in sobriety, with a healing environment that enables them to maintain and strengthen their path to recovery and transformation both inside and beyond their college experience [8].

As we build community college recovery programs on campuses, students and faculty must be aware of the reality that recovery has become a political as well as a medical challenge. At the community college level, students must try to minimize the medical/psychiatric challenges on campus (The First Movement) and embrace a social model of recovery which is viewed as one manifestation of student empowerment. An empowerment model of recovery emphasizes that life conditions, such as, education, health, incarceration, poverty, unemployment, etc. (social determinants of health) are not necessarily permanent, and that other students have recovered from these experiences who can be role models [9]. One such model from the US National Empowerment Center proposes many principles of how people recover and identifies the characteristics of people in recovery [10]. Some educators working in the collegiate recovery movement believe that recovery should be more of a philosophy or attitude than a specific medical/psychiatric concern. The ability to change and to some extent heal from the trauma of addiction is often related to an individual's capacity to manage, adapt and integrate new knowledge, that facilitates a more positive productive view of one's past and how that past influences a person's recovery in the present [11].

The goal of the above collegiate recovery approach is to provide a comprehensive social support network both on campus and in the community geared toward: (1) the elimination of stress on college campuses; (2) being attentive regarding environmental factors such as, stigma, discrimination, housing, etc.; and (3) increasing employment opportunities (workforce Initiatives).

Elements of a Social Model of Collegiate Recovery

Recovery and transformation are a deeply personal process, as well as being related to an individual's community and society [12]. To be a successful campus recovery program must involve: (1) hope, (2) a secure base and sense of self, (3) supportive relationships, (4) empowerment and inclusion, (5) coping skills, and (6) a renewal of what it means to live a life of purpose. The social model of recovery has been explicitly adopted as the guiding principle of the collegiate recovery program at Community College of Philadelphia. It should be noted that the above social model of recovery emphasis does not diminish the importance of medical and/or psychiatric services but allows community college programs to prioritize a different perspective on college life. Success in college cannot focus solely on deficits in the absence of a thoughtful analysis

of strengths. A deficit perspective disregards the most critical resources an individual has on which to build his or her recovery. An essential component of person-first or community-first resilience is the focus on strengths and capabilities. People in recovery and their families have demonstrated incredible resilience to overcome the obstacles in their path to be where they are in their early recovery. The building of interpersonal skills, a sensitivity to cultural difference, knowledge gained from struggling with adversity, the use of interpersonal and environmental resources, the development of personal virtues and traits, caring for others, and having a sense of faith and spirituality are what constitutes a strength based perspective on life and recovery [13].

The goals of a successful strength-based recovery model at a community college should accomplish the following:

1. Help students transition into college from community based residential and outpatient treatment programs into community college.
2. Help students find employment (workforce sensitivity).
3. Help students complete their college experience.
4. Have friendships with both peers in recovery and those who are not.
5. Have meaningful social roles, such as parenting, being involved in intimate relationships, being a brother/sister, being son/daughter.
6. Engage in recreational and physical activities.
7. Participate as a citizen, including volunteering, engaging in the political process, and other aspects of civic life.
8. Engage in spiritual and religious activities.
9. Make choices about treatment and in all other areas of one's life to the same degree that other people can and do [14].

College students and student life services on two-year campuses are quite different from that of four-year institutions. For example, helping students transition to college from community-based treatment programs (item 1 above), and helping students find employment (item 2 above) must be an integral part of a community college recovery program [15,16]. Monty Sullivan,

Chancellor of Delgado Community College indicated that students at community and technical colleges

coming to campus is not about finding themselves, as the traditional college experience is typically billed, but instead it is about reaching goals higher education should teach people to do something, not just give them a degree [17]

Community College of Philadelphia Office of Collegiate Recovery (OCR)

To expand recovery advocacy (the second movement) and build on the colleges current recovery education capital, Community College of Philadelphia, and the City of Philadelphia, Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disabilities (DBHIDS) partnered to establish and support the Office of Collegiate Recovery (OCR) at Community College of Philadelphia.

In 2016, the establishment of the Office of Collegiate Recovery within Student Life facilitated the creation, implementation, and maintenance of peer-to-peer support services both on and off campus as well as a social network of recovery structures ranging from student organizations such as, the recovery club, specialized curriculum advising as well as community programs that support and emphasizes a recovery plan that combines treatment and education.

DBHIDS provides services through a network of agencies while collaborating with Community College of Philadelphia, the Philadelphia School District, child welfare and judicial systems, and other stakeholders.

The Pathway to Recovery at Community College of Philadelphia

Community College of Philadelphia offers over seventy (70) programs that prepare one for in- demand careers or transfer in the fields of architecture and construction; art, design and media; business and technology, health care; law and public service; liberal arts; science; behavioral health and human services; and technical trades like culinary arts and automotive technology. Day, evening and weekend classes are available for full-time and part-time students, and both credit and noncredit courses can be taken at the Main Campus, or our three Regional Centers, and neighborhood and corporate locations. Online and hybrid courses are also available to all students, and some programs may be completed entirely online. The College also offers comprehensive academic support, services for students with disabilities, plus an array of career and personal support services.

Building on the recovery capital of the Behavioral Health/ Human Services (BHHS) success the Office of Collegiate Recovery (OCR) and Student Life services the college provides management support to the recovering student in pursuit of higher education. The OCR is designed to address a gap in traditional recovery services offered to young people in recovery returning to college. The college OCR management program includes a minimum of thirty (30) minutes of life coaching per week with at least sixty (60) minutes of psychoeducational group per week. The life coaches focus on the management of stressors common to college students in early recovery. In this supportive environment, students learn self-advocacy skills and how to bolster the coping mechanisms necessary to stay drug and alcohol free while navigating the challenges of a college education.

While in treatment or community transitional housing, students are afforded the opportunity to attend classes at Community College of Philadelphia as a part of their clinical continuum of care (Recovery Plan). The Office of Collegiate Recovery (OCR) works in conjunction with a variety of community-based recovery services to help facilitate an individuals' transition into college.

The goal of this City/College partnership is to offer supportive educational services to assist students in making a new beginning or a speedy return to the classroom and ultimately the workforce.

All individuals referred into the college from the above service networks must be registered as CCP matriculating students.

Following their admission process all students are assigned a coach/mentor from the Office of Collegiate Recovery (OCR) who coordinate and supports a student's recovery plan.

Creating a personal, written recovery plan is important for several reasons: (1) it gives the student a blueprint to follow, and (2) It provides a structured, reliable source of good ideas to get or keep the student on track as he or she pursue their recovery goals. By writing out a formal, detailed plan that includes both a student's recovery and educational plan that supports their recovery it greatly improves one's chances of sustaining a lifelong recovery efforts.

The following benefits of creating a personalized, written recovery plan are:

- Identifies goals for achieving wellness.
- Specifies steps to take reach those goals.
- Considers both daily activities and longer-term goals.
- Tracks your progress.
- Identifies triggers and ways to manage them [18].

As a part of the college/community model DBHIDS works with Community College of Philadelphia to market and develop relationships with community referral networks through their web site and contracted service providers. While in treatment or community transitional housing (halfway houses or recovery residential facilities) or outpatient substance abuse treatment, students can attend classes at Community College as a part of their clinical continuum of care.

The OCR coach/mentor helps the student to initially register for an English course and complete the Recovery Leadership certificate and degree program. During the **Phase 1** process the student will become familiar with conflict resolution issues, addiction concerns and the role of faith and spirituality in recovery. Students meet with a college advisor and coach to finalize their educational plan of study. Depending on the student, **Phase 1** could be spread out over two to four semesters (one to two years of academic study). **Phase 2** culminates in a degree. Phase 2 usually occurs over an additional eight semesters for a total of about four or five years of study to complete their associate degree. Irrespective of the time spent in Phase 1 and/or Phase 2 the OCR coaches work closely with and support students as they proceed through their college academic process.

The OCR Philosophy of Service

The OCR is a resource for college information, friendship and socialization for individuals at Community College of Philadelphia in recovery. It also is an outreach program to engage the recovery community in the benefits of a college experience to strengthen and support an individual's treatment plan. All the services are non-clinical support activities focusing on navigating and at times removing college barriers to students in recovery by providing coaching and peer to peer support. All peer coaches are students who graduated from the college. All coaches are in recovery or allies and are now attending, or completed, a four-year college for their bachelor's degree. The OCR coaches help and support new students by sharing their experience and knowledge about how to successfully navigate

college life. The support offered is not meant to replace counseling/treatment or 12 Step meetings. The OCR is meant to help students with life's challenges by building resilience and coaching guidance in a drug and alcohol-free environment. The Office of Collegiate Recovery (OCR) is a place where life skills are shared, and new behaviors are reinforced. It is a place where faculty and students in recovery become friends and allies.

The CCP Collegiate Recovery Campus Action Plan

In addition, to the OCR case management services there are fourteen other CCP services that people in recovery must navigate and participate in to be successful at CCP. The Office of Collegiate Recovery (OCR) coaches coordinate with people in recovery a balance between school, family and community. Along with OCR student support the office conducts information workshops and facilitates discussions with faculty and staff from all fourteen student service centers at the college. The need to de-stigmatize college-based services is a major on campus goal of the Office of Collegiate Recovery.

Pathway to Recovery Leadership

In 2017, to compliment Student Life Services the OCR developed an academic proficiency certificate in Recovery Leadership. This proficiency certificate appeals to faith-based ministries, the collegiate recovery program and other people in recovery interested in improving the social, economic and health conditions in their neighborhoods. The certificate also provides continuing education credits (CEU's) for professionals such as social workers, nurses, psychologists, and other human service workers interested in leadership responsibilities in the addiction and recovery field.

It is anticipated that students ultimately taking the Recovery Leadership Proficiency Certificate will be both new behavioral health students, professional's working in the field, and individuals already enrolled in other academic programs at Community College of Philadelphia who want knowledge and leadership skills to begin or continue their personal recovery.

Through college credit courses the Recovery Leadership certificate provides students with a basic understanding of youth development, spirituality, recovery, resilience and transformation, leadership styles, and conflict resolution.

The CCP Collegiate Recovery Community Action Plan

In conjunction with the goal of de-stigmatizing students in recovery inside the college there are at least three interrelated community outreach activities to support the on-campus recovery program:

(1) Community referral network

OCR staff and behavioral health faculty coordinate with the City of Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbilities Services (DBHIDS) information workshops about OCR, college admission seminars, etc. and facilitate with the Welcome Center at the college all referrals from the following community service providers in the city:

- Halfway Houses
- Outpatient – Drug Free

- Medically Assisted Treatment Programs
- Intensive Outpatient
- Forensic Intensive Recovery Programs
- Family Court System

(2) Integration of educational planning into community treatment agencies

A programmatic effort to integrate educational plans and treatment/recovery plans with community service providers under contract with the Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbilities Services (DBHIDS). The Office of Collegiate Recovery Services (OCR) help students transition into college while they are still receiving substance use treatment, and/or recovery housing in the community (19).

(3) *Public Service Announcements (PSAs) to combat stigma in the college and community*

The stigma and discrimination associated with recovery from drugs and alcohol use is a major obstacle to any successful college-based program. Since 2011 Community College of Philadelphia in conjunction with DBHIDS, and the Major's Commission on Addiction and Recovery has produced ten (10) award winning recovery videos. The storytelling videos "**Recovery is Alive and Doing Well in Philadelphia**" are shown every semester both on campus and on the college's public TV station channel CCPTV.

George B. Vaughan in *The Community College Story*, states that *Most community college missions have the basic commitments to: (1) serving all segments of society through an open-access admissions policy that offers equal and fair treatment to all students, (2) comprehensive educational program, (3) serving its community as a community-based institution of higher education, (4) teaching, and (5) lifelong learning* [20]

Monty Sullivan, Chancellor of Delgado Community College believes that students at community and technical colleges come to school not to find themselves, as the traditional college experience but instead it is about reaching goals. Higher education is not just to complete a degree. Sullivan indicates a need for programs to be relevant to the realities of students, industry partners, and the economy [20].

The statements of Vaughan and Sullivan mark a transformational point for community colleges and signal a future where a shift from funding based on enrollment to funding based on the performance and relevancy of course and degree offerings. Program relevancy must expand to include both on campus course work and off campus community activities. The workforce goals of the collegiate recovery movement must connect education to the process of long-term recovery and rebuild relationships between health organizations, local communities and local recovery support groups.

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