

An Overview of the Recovery Coach Programs¹

Recovery coach programs are formalized supports directed toward individuals who have entered addiction treatment programs or have been screened for treatment and are in need. A primary goal of recovery coach programs is to help individuals in treatment gain access to resources, services, or supports to help them achieve recovery from substance use or other behavioral health issues.

Recovery coaches help individuals address multiple life issues that have been impacted by their substance use or behavioral health disorder. Recovery coaches assist individuals in their journey through the addiction treatment continuum (i.e., from detoxification to aftercare). A significant focus of coaches is to help individuals sustain their recovery after the formal addiction treatment component has been completed through consultation and skills training.

What is a Recovery Coach?²

Recovery coaches serve the following roles according to London and Marybeth (2018):

- **Supporter**
 - Coaches provides hope and support to individuals diagnosed with or identifying as having a substance use disorder throughout their recovery process to achieve sustained recovery.
- **Motivator**
 - Coaches encourages individuals to take actions to regain control over their lives and recovery, guide the development of self-determination and recovery skills that work for them, and relate recovery in a positive manner through coaching, role modeling, and mentoring to help individuals develop skills to achieve recovery goals.
- **Problem-Solver**
 - Coaches make connections to services and pathways chosen by the individual; helps individuals develop skills to achieve self-directed recovery goals and overcome barriers presented by often fragmented and bureaucratic addiction treatment and health care delivery systems.
- **Facilitator**
 - Coaches assist individuals with navigating the transition to and from services and settings and from a professionally directed service plan to a self-directed recovery plan.

¹ Loveland, David, and Boyle Michael. *Manual for Recovery Coaching and Personal Recovery Plan Development*. July 2005.

² London, Katharine, and Marybeth McCaffrey. *Recovery Coaches in Opioid Use Disorder Care*. Dec. 2018, <https://www.rizema.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/UMass-Recovery-Coach-Report.pdf>.

- Advocate
 - Coaches serves as an advocate for individuals in the program and help them develop self-advocacy skills.

Surry County Recovery Coach Programming Status

The Surry County Substance Abuse Recovery Office currently implements an Early Intervention Program staffed by Certified Peer Support Specialist employed by Daymark Recovery Services. The Early Intervention team is funded by local and state funds and serves as a primary outreach and support effort for citizens and families impacted by substance use.

As an ancillary effort, Surry County Staff coordinated a Recovery Coach Academy Training in late 2020 with the statewide group Recovery Communities of North Carolina. The action was intended to support private citizens hoping to volunteer, serve as recovery coaches and build local recovery capacity.

The purpose of this document is to highlight common organizational and system concerns when developing a volunteer recovery coaching program.

Documented Recovery Coach Programming Issues

While conducting preliminary research on recovery coach programming best practices, the following issues commonly appear in national publications:

Volunteer Retention

The Corporation for National and Community Service³ reports that 1 out of 3 volunteers who volunteer in one year do not volunteer the next year, a 66 percent retention rate. To sustain the Surry County Volunteer Recovery Coach Recovery effort, specific plans should be considered to recruit, support, and develop an effective coaching organization.

³ *Issue Brief: Volunteer Retention*. The Corporation for National and Community Service, 2006, https://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/VIA/VIA_brief_retention.pdf.

Documentation

- Coaches will require specific training on HIPPA⁴ Compliance and 42 CFR⁵ and signed documentation indicating an understanding of the legal standards of confidentiality related to substance use clients and topics.
- Treatment providers will continue to use formal treatment plans for billing purposes and state and national standards. The existing treatment plan can be easily modified by staff to incorporate the inclusion of recovery coach services without altering the established structure of the plan. On the other hand, the recovery plan is a more dynamic, client-directed, and comprehensive document that is developed collaboratively between the client and recovery coach and will not be easily incorporated into the existing planning process. (A note of caution on this option is that primary service providers should avoid the tendency to combine the two plans into one document or to rename the existing treatment plan as a recovery plan only. The two plans serve different purposes and should be treated as separate documents to maintain this distinction and to avoid confusion among staff members in both programs)⁶.

Common Recovery Coach Programming Conflict Areas⁷

Recovery coaches commonly find points of confusion and challenges related to, but not limited to, the following topics:

- The recovery coach program will be viewed as a new and somewhat radical innovation to established addiction treatment providers. All stakeholders will need extensive help in implementing the recovery coach program and adopting a conceptually different treatment and recovery model.
- Conflict between the treatment goals of the addiction treatment program and recovery coaches may occur and procedures must be in place to mediate possible conflicts.
- The likely possibility that a client will leave treatment against medical advice (AMA) or be administratively discharged for ongoing use of alcohol or other drugs but remain open and active with a recovery coach.
- Ideological conflict between the professional-based primary addiction treatment model and the strengths-based, consumer-driven model of recovery coaches.
- Rules within the outpatient programs that discourage working with other agencies or programs during hours of treatment.
- Changes in peoples' treatment need as a result of receiving recovery coach services during a waiting period.

⁴ "Health Information Privacy." *HHS.Gov*, 26 Aug. 2015, <https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/index.html>.

⁵ "Electronic Code of Federal Regulations (ECFR)." *Electronic Code of Federal Regulations (ECFR)*, <https://www.ecfr.gov/>.

⁶ Loveland, David, and Boyle Michael. *Manual for Recovery Coaching and Personal Recovery Plan Development*. July 2005.

⁷ Loveland, David, and Boyle Michael. *Manual for Recovery Coaching and Personal Recovery Plan Development*. July 2005.

Organizational Development⁸

Evaluation experts estimate that it takes between six months and two years to fully implement a multi-dimensional intervention, such as a recovery coach program. Therefore, it is also essential to treat the process longitudinally, rather than attempting to implement all the elements at once. Program evaluation processes and standards must also be developed initially and monitored for relevance and outcome tracking.

Conclusion

The preceding pages provide a general overview of common organizational and system challenges when establishing a recovery coach program. Additional foundational concepts such as procedural guidelines, professional/volunteer competencies, training, and supervision must be considered in order to develop and sustain effective community-based programming.

⁸ Loveland, David, and Boyle Michael. *Manual for Recovery Coaching and Personal Recovery Plan Development*. July 2005.