



# Recovery on Campus Toolkit

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## What is Recovery on Campus (ROC) Alberta?

A Government of Alberta funded initiative that aims to engage, innovate, and inspire the creation of collegiate recovery programs (CRPs) at post-secondary institutions (PSIs) committed to supporting all pathways of recovery, building community, and reducing stigma on campus for students, faculty, and staff. An outgrowth of the UCalgary Recovery Community, ROC is changing the conversation about addiction and recovery so that campus members no longer suffer in silence.



## Why a ROC Toolkit?

This toolkit provides post secondary institutions (PSIs) the resources they need to develop collegiate recovery programs (CRPs) within their unique campus contexts.

## What is a Collegiate Recovery Program?

In the USA, CRPs date back to the 1970s, and there are currently over 150 programs across the USA. The movement has been slower to take hold in Canada—the first CRP only started in 2019 (University of British Columbia).

A CRP is a college or university provided, supportive environment within the campus culture that reinforces the decision to engage in a lifestyle of recovery from substance use and other addictive behaviors. It is designed to provide an educational opportunity alongside recovery support to ensure that students do not have to sacrifice one for the other (ARHE, 2021)

CRPs create a recovery-friendly campus environment through peer support, mutual-aid meetings, substance-free housing and events, awards, counseling staff, and dedicated drop-in centres (Bugbee et al., 2016)

“ROC embraces a whole-campus approach that intentionally includes programming for faculty and staff. In addition to substance use, we provide support for problematic behaviors, such as eating disorders and gaming. Everyone deserves the opportunity to pursue recovery.”

– Chelsie Graham, BSW, RSW – Program Coordinator ROC Alberta

# What is Addiction?

Substance use runs on a spectrum from helpful to harmful. Addiction refers to problematic use of a substance or behavior, that often includes the presence of the following 4 Cs:

- **CRAVING**
- **CONTROL** of amount or frequency of use
- **COMPULSION** to use
- Use despite negative **CONSEQUENCES**.

Addiction is not a choice. It is caused by a complex combination of factors, including genetics, demographics, trauma, drug/brain interactions and dosage, and the environment (e.g., norms, laws, etc.). (CAMH, n.d.)

## Recovery-Focused Definitions of Addiction:

Addiction is often a symptom of underlying issues, including trauma.

“Recovery is an odyssey that reaches back as well as forward. It weaves together childhood development, adolescent vulnerability, mental health, and trauma. It’s a complex and layered experience that cannot be understood by reducing the process to substance use or behaviour.” – Ross Laird, PhD

“Don’t ask why the addiction, ask why the pain.”  
– Dr. Gabor Maté



# What is Recovery?

Several definitions of recovery exist, including abstinence and non-abstinence-based approaches (Witkiewitz et al., 2020).

Recovery is a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and strive to reach their full potential. Recovery includes four dimensions: home, health, purpose, and community (SAMHSA, 2012).

Recovery is non-linear and there are many pathways, for example: Detox, mutual aid, therapy, medications, spirituality/religion, family/friend support, recovery coaching, etc.

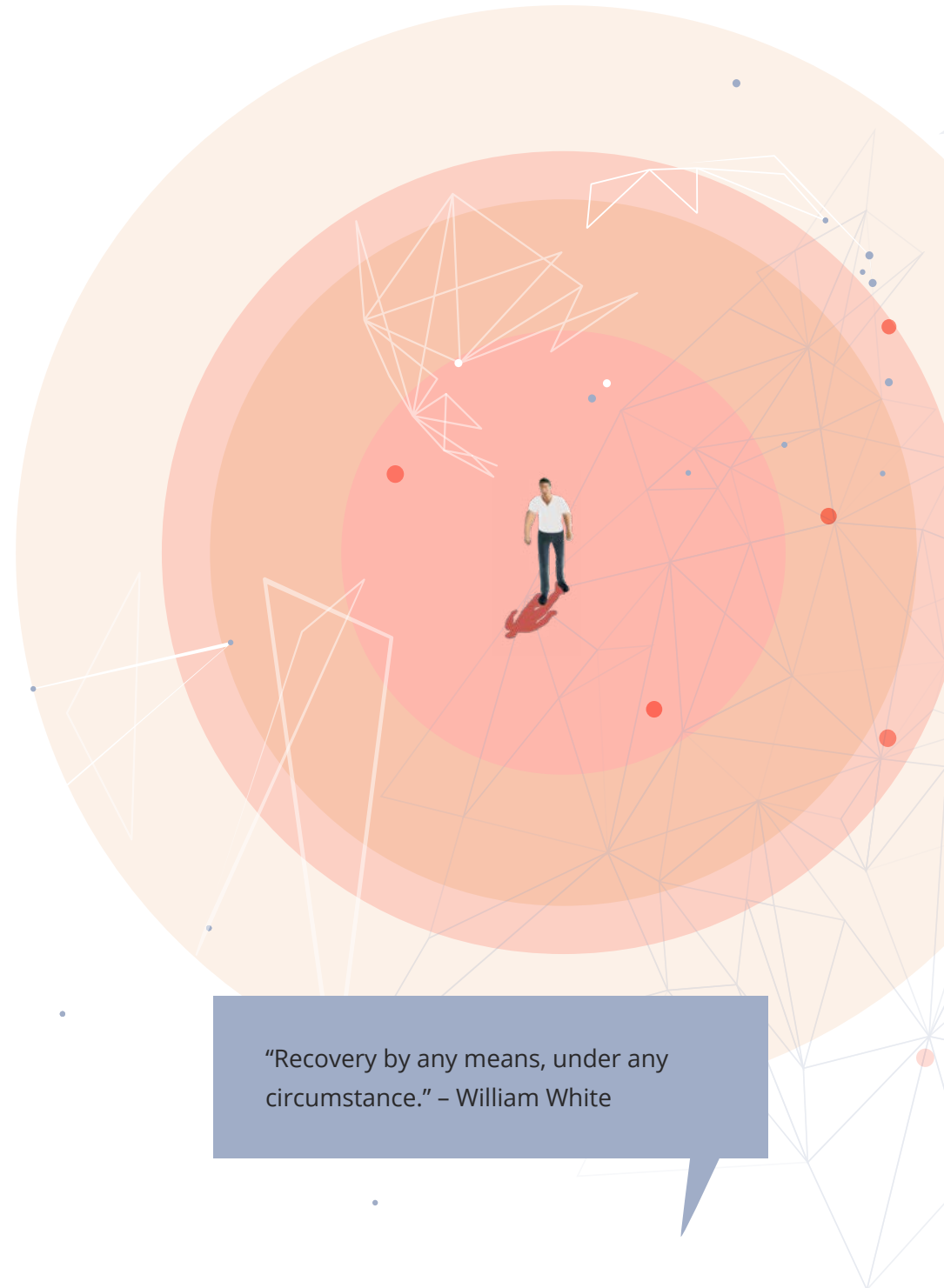
# What is Recovery Capital?

Recovery capital refers to the social, physical, human, and cultural resources a person has available to them to help find and maintain recovery from addiction (Cloud & Granfield, 2008). The accumulation of recovery capital can influence resiliency and coping skills to mitigate the stress associated with addiction-recovery, and can help support and promote domains of recovery capital, for example:

**PERSONAL:** Self-esteem, Self-efficacy, communication skills, coping skills, resilience

**SOCIAL:** Positive friendship networks, your commitment to those networks

**COMMUNITY:** access to recovery treatment, access to recovery coaches, jobs, housing, community supports.



# Fast Facts



**1 in 5** Canadians will experience a substance use disorder over the course of their life

**1 in 4** Nearly 1 in 4 university-aged adults (aged 18 to 25) experience substance use disorders (SAMHSA, 2021)

**75%** of adults with untreated substance use disorder are in the workforce (PRCE, 2022)

## UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY CONTEXT:

**31%** of UCalgary students have been directly affected by a family member or friend's addiction (CCSW, 2022)

**11%** of UCalgary students identified as being in recovery from addiction (CCSW, 2022)

## Benefits of Recovery:

### CAMPUS STAFF ID CARD



Employees in recovery save an average of \$536 a year in healthcare utilization costs compared to those with untreated substance use disorder

(Goplerud et al., 2017).

### CERTIFICATE

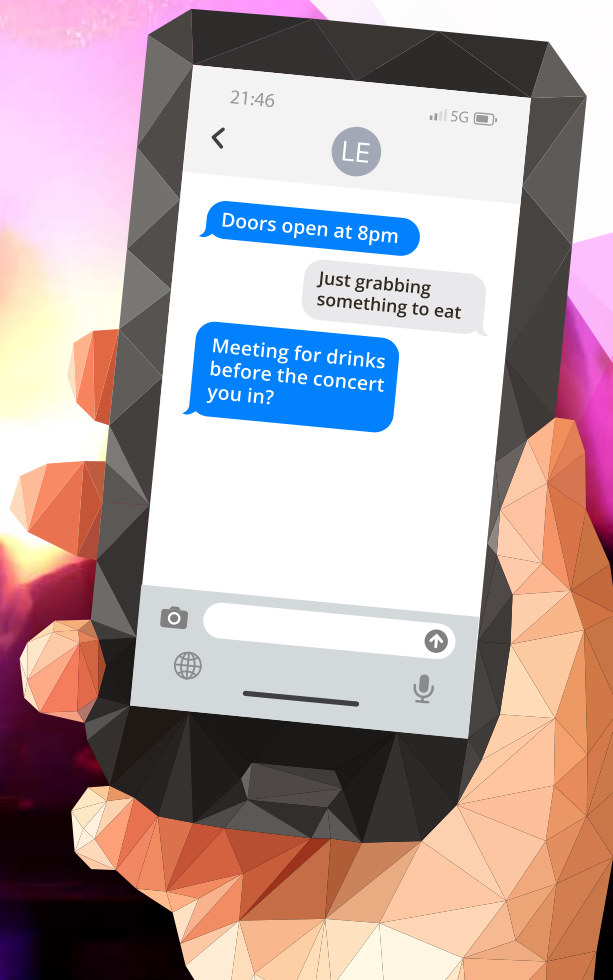
Students in recovery have higher graduation rates than the general student population (70% compared to 60%) and higher GPAs (3.18 compared to 2.93)

(Harris et al., 2008)



## Campuses can be recovery-threatening environments

The post-secondary environment can be a difficult place for those in recovery or who are trying to recover from addiction. There is a lack of services and support available, and campus members often feel isolated and unsupported. Additionally, there is a lot of pressure to drink and party, which can make it difficult for students in recovery.



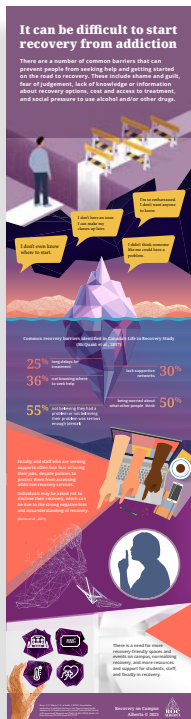
# Common Recovery Barriers

There are a number of common barriers that can prevent campus members from getting started on the road to recovery and/or maintaining long term, quality recovery.

Campuses are known to be recovery threatening, 'abstinence-hostile' environments (Cleveland et al., 2007; Burns, 2021). In addition to the stress associated with maintaining their recovery and academics, students in recovery encounter few on-campus supports, isolation, and significant pressure to drink and party.

For staff, disclosing a current or past substance use problem may create fear of job, reputation and/or status loss (Burns et al., 2021).

To promote help-seeking and sustained recovery there is a need for more recovery-focused spaces and events on campus, peer support, substance-free housing, sober role models, and built-in opportunities to connect with peers on similar paths.

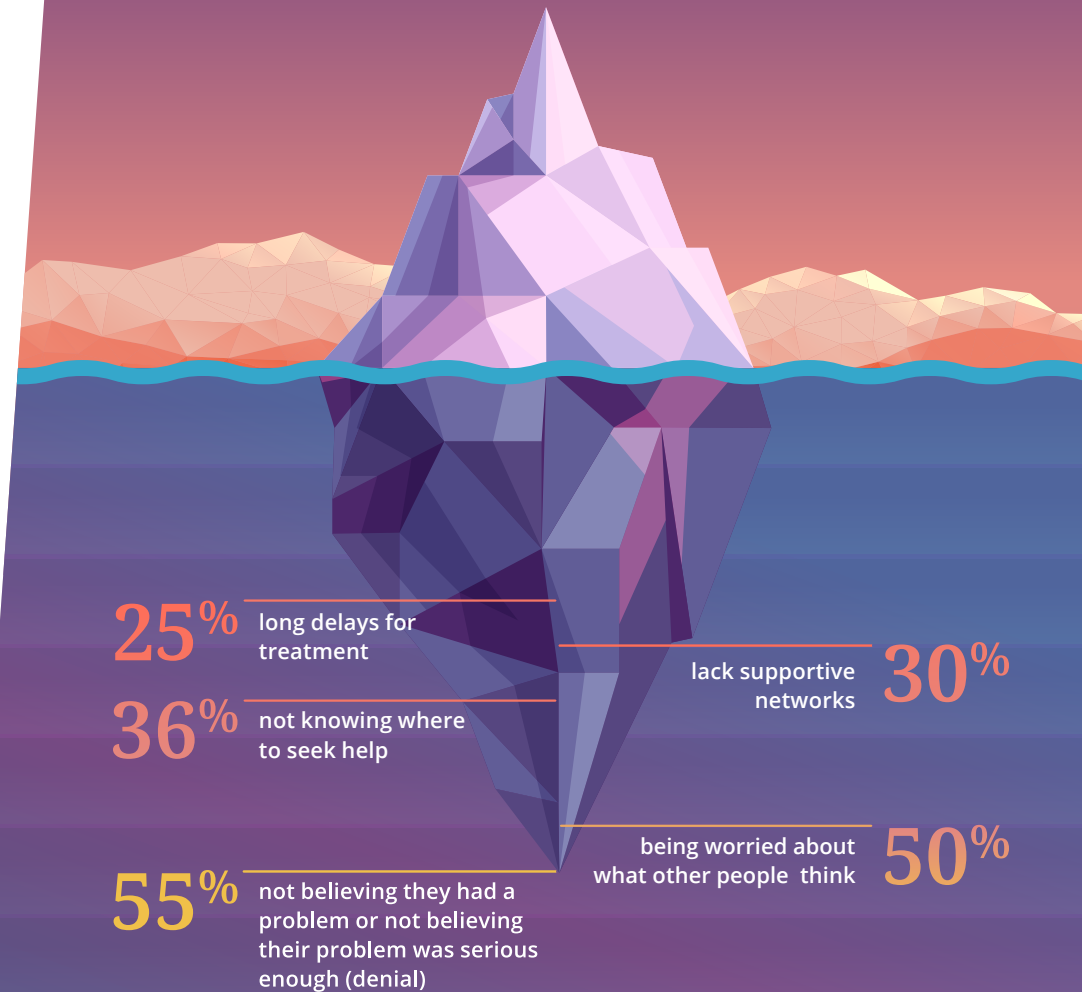


[Download the full infographic](#)



## Common recovery barriers identified in Canada's Life in Recovery Study

(McQuaid et al., 2017)



Stigma can create challenges for people who want to be open about their recovery efforts, a necessary condition to build a supportive network of peers and access support services.



- ▶ It's based on the belief it is a personal choice and reflects moral failing, rather than a health concern.
- ▶ This attitude leads to harmful consequences for those who struggle with addiction, such as judgement, discrimination, and isolation.
- ▶ This creates challenges for people who want to be open about their recovery efforts, a necessary condition to build a supportive network of peers and access support services.

A survey of people currently in recovery reported experiencing stigma or discrimination

49% during their active addiction

33.2% during recovery

(McQuaid et al., 2017).

## Addiction Stigma

Addiction stigma is defined as “negative attitudes towards those suffering from a substance use disorder (SUD) that one, arise on account of the SUD itself, and two, are likely to impact physical, psychological, social or professional wellbeing” (Avery & Avery, 2019, p. 2).

### Outcomes and Impacts of Addiction Stigma

- Decreased use of health and social services and poorer quality of services received
- Concealment of substance use disorder
- Loss of work and limited access to leadership positions
- Increased risk of homelessness
- Isolation, social withdrawal and avoidance, further substance use
- Increased risks of poorer physical health, quality of life and psychological outcomes
- Poorer outcomes for substance use disorder treatment

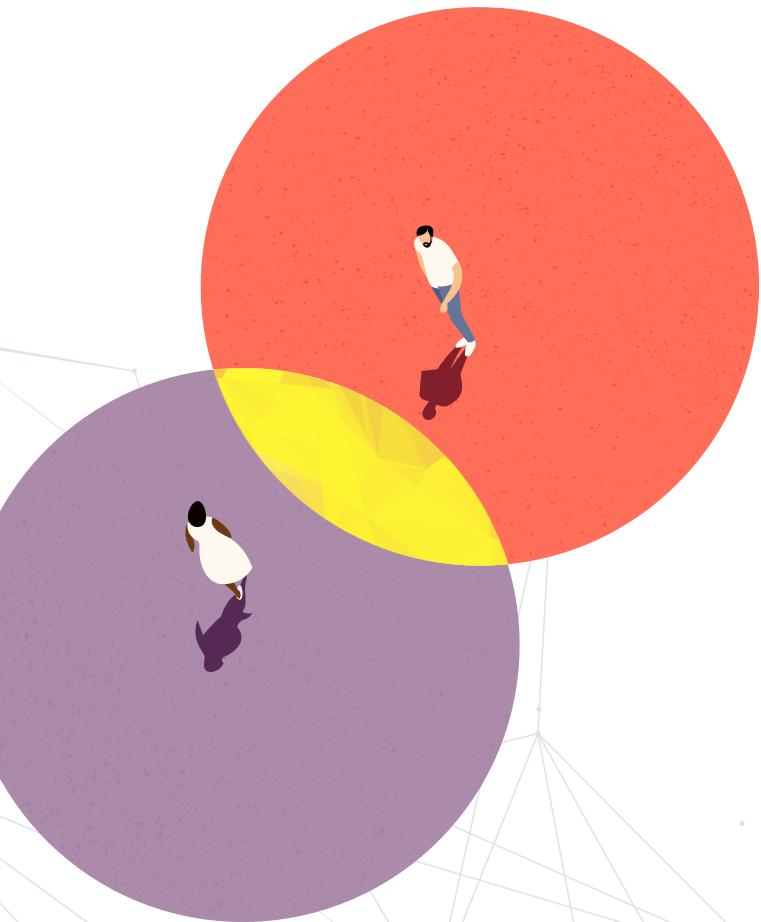


[Download the full infographic](#)



# Why a Collegiate Recovery Program (CRP)?

Removing barriers to recovery can help improve the campus climate for individuals who are in recovery, or seeking recovery in the following ways:



1<sup>st</sup>

First, by providing recovery-focused spaces and events, where students, faculty, and staff can connect with others who share their experiences and challenges, post-secondaries can create a supportive community that helps to promote overall wellness, inclusion, and belonging.

2<sup>nd</sup>

Second, campuses can benefit from having recovering students and staff as leaders. When students and staff feel accepted to be open about their recovery, they often take leadership positions and become advocates for change. This not only benefits the individual students and staff involved but also the university as a whole.

3<sup>rd</sup>

Third, research shows that students in recovery have greater outcomes than the general student body when it comes to GPA, retention rates, and graduation rates (Vest et al., 2021). Flourishing students will lead to a more engaged alumni population which is beneficial for the university's reputation and fundraising efforts.

4<sup>th</sup>

Fourth, Recovery is good for business! Employees in recovery take less unscheduled leave than their colleagues. On average, they miss 13.7 fewer days than employees with an active substance use disorder and 3.6 fewer days than an average employee (Goplerud et al., 2017; PRCE, 2022).

Ultimately, there are many benefits to colleges and universities when they create collegiate recovery programs for their students, faculty and staff!

# How to Create a Collegiate Recovery Program (CRP)?

The University of Calgary Recovery Community (UCRC) was founded by Dr. Victoria Burns, associate professor of social work, addiction-recovery researcher, and person in long-term recovery. Recommendations from her research and lived experience revealed a need for addiction recovery supports on campus. Inspired by the 150+ CRPs and best practice resources (ARHE, 2021; Texas Tech, 2005), here are the non-linear steps she took to begin the UCRC, which provided the foundation for the province-wide Recovery on Campus Alberta initiative.

"The UCRC is the program I needed both as a student in active addiction and a faculty member silenced by shame about being recovery."  
- Dr. Victoria Burns

## Steps to creating and sustaining a collegiate recover program: **ICECAP**

**I****DENTIFY** students, staff, and alumni in recovery. Having people with direct lived experience of addiction-recovery is key. You will also want to connect with compassionate allies.

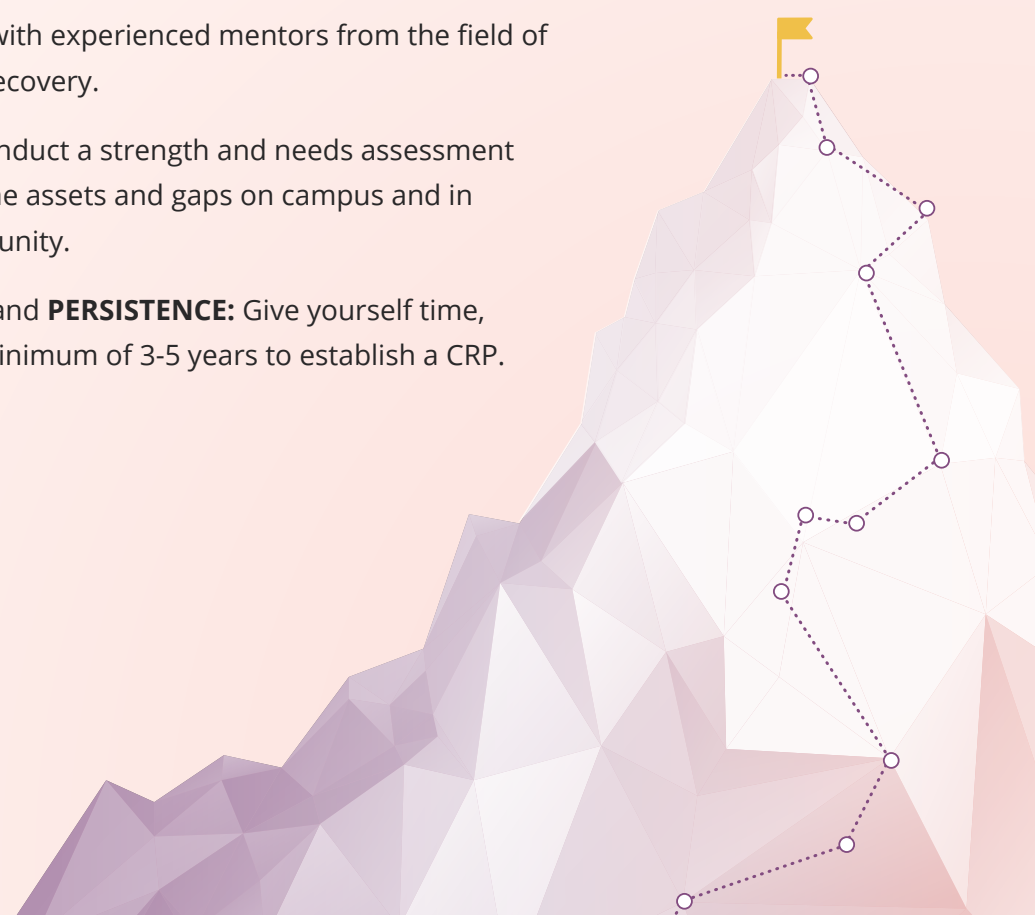
**C****ONNECT**: Get buy-in across campus. Build a team with passionate stakeholders on campus, including student and staff wellness services, faculty members, alumni office, advancement and residence housing and administration. Give people the opportunity to say "No"!

**E****DUCATE** about addiction and recovery, and the importance of CRPs.

**C****ONSULT** with experienced mentors from the field of collegiate recovery.

**A****SSESS**: Conduct a strength and needs assessment to determine assets and gaps on campus and in your community.

**P****ATIENCE** and **P****ERSISTENCE**: Give yourself time, it takes a minimum of 3-5 years to establish a CRP.



## Questions to Consider

Prior to starting a collegiate recovery program or CRP, it is important to consider some key questions that will help start the process of introducing a collegiate recovery program. The responses to these questions will help guide the actions in the next steps.

**What current services are available to support recovery in and around your campus?**

**Are there any identifiable barriers to developing a collegiate recovery program (i.e., funding, administration)?**

**Have you connected with someone in the collegiate recovery field, such as Recovery on Campus, who can act as a mentor and guide?**

**Will decision-makers/administrators on your campus understand the importance of having a collegiate recovery program on your campus?**

**Have you identified key stakeholders (students, staff, faculty, administration)?**

**Is there representation of people with lived experience in the decision-making process?**

**Do you have a dedicated space to hold meetings? Dedicated staff or project planning team?**

**Has there been any recovery groups currently or previously that have had meetings on your campus?**

The Association for Recovery in Higher Education developed a Collegiate Recovery Readiness Survey, which can be found in the External Resources section of this toolkit. This survey can further help guide the need for a collegiate recovery program in your post-secondary and recovery readiness.

# Best Practices of Collegiate Recovery Programs

Creating a CRP is an essential step in supporting campus recovery, wellness, and inclusion. Common best practices include:

- Paid dedicated staff
- Peer Support
- Physical space
- Awards
- Recovery trainings
- Substance-free social events
- Substance-free housing

(Vest et al., 2021)

Let's dive in and examine how a few post-secondary campuses have effectively implemented these best practices.

## Paid Dedicated Staff

By investing in staffing, an institution clearly shows that it is committed to protecting those who require help and support. This reflects recognition of the importance of proper care for each individual's healing journey.

- ▶ **By leveraging grants from the City of Calgary and the Student Union's Quality Money program, the UCRC was able to grow their team, by adding a program director and coordinator, in addition to a Staff Wellness and Student Wellness Services liaison. This has yielded numerous benefits, including a volunteer system, webinars, outreach activities, and successful social events.**

## Peer Support

Peer support provides a safe and supportive space for individuals to share their challenges, exchange resources, and find solutions that work best for them.

- ▶ **Mutual aid meetings: Recovery on Campus hosts weekly mutual aid meetings for students, faculty and staff, and friends and family. To remain anonymous, participants may keep their camera off or change their screen name during the meeting.**
- ▶ **Student Recovery Navigators (SRN): Volunteers who take part in this initiative have direct personal experience with problematic substance use or behaviors, or can be compassionate allies. The role of SRN is to assist fellow students in finding their own path towards recovery via advocacy, education, resource referral, and community building. Volunteers are supplied with both necessary and elective trainings (e.g., Recovery 101), in addition to attending social events, aiding outreach efforts, and gaining and gaining valuable experience!**



## Dedicated Physical Space

Campus members need safe spaces to gather, meet, support each other, away from the dominant drinking and substance use culture on campuses. Creating these spaces communicates pride and belief in the value of the recovery identity.

▶ **After convincing key stakeholders that a physical space was necessary, the University of British Columbia Student Recovery Community (SRC) finally achieved its goal in 2021. The SRC dedicated space is an inviting safe environment where students can drop-in, and events/meetings are held.**

## Recovery Supportive Programming

Providing targeted support programs and resources to help campus members overcome challenges and achieve their recovery goals fosters a culture of empathy and support, encouraging people to connect with a community that is committed to helping them thrive.

▶ **In the spirit of celebrating all recovery pathways, in 2023 Recovery on Campus provided 20 Lived Experience of Recovery Awards for students, faculty, and staff who were prepared to champion recovery on their campus.**

“I appreciate that this award sees and celebrates my own courageousness and imagination about championing safe places for all people to carry out their sober curiosity, allyship, and personal approaches to recovery.”- Student Award Recipient

“I’ve been sober for 20 years, we hear a lot about the negative aspects of addiction, so I was thrilled to see there is recognition that people in recovery are part of the UCalgary community and thriving.”  
- Staff Award Recipient

## Recovery-Oriented Education

Provide campus members the knowledge and skills needed to better understand the challenges of living with addiction and how to manage those challenges effectively.

- ▶ **Recovery on Campus Alberta created a 3-hour instructional course titled Recovery 101. Participants have the opportunity to gain insight about substance use and addiction by engaging in personal stories, group conversations, practical scenarios, and videos that will aid them as they form an alliance with recovery efforts. Throughout this training process participants can reflect upon their own biases concerning issues like harm reduction while preparing themselves to build allyship and take action in their own lives.**
- ▶ **In 2021, the UCRC Director created a new credited course in the faculty of social work, titled Addiction & Recovery. The course critically examines the socio-historical context, theoretical models, and debates surrounding addiction and recovery. Topics include stigma, harm reduction, peer support/mutual aid, allyship, boundaries, and recovery capital.**

## Substance-Free Social Events

These events provide an opportunity for campus members in or seeking recovery to build social connections, have fun, and relax without feeling the pressure to use substances.

- ▶ **The UCRC has crafted and executed a wide array of recovery-focused events. For example, in partnership with Residence Services, the UCRC hosted a St. Patrick's Day mocktail night attended by over 60 students. Additionally, UCRC developed a relationship with Partake - supplier of non-alcoholic craft beer- allowing them to sponsor several events, including the UCalgary Strong Festival, by providing their products free of charge!**
- ▶ **The UCRC hosted a Staff Chat: Lunch & Unlearn: Busting Alcohol Myths. 30 faculty and staff were led through 5 common myths about alcohol. Over a free pizza lunch, participants were encouraged to get curious about and discuss their relationship with alcohol.**

## Substance-Free Housing

Provide a supportive and safe space where students can focus on their recovery without being exposed to triggers or temptation. It also fosters a sense of community among students who share the same recovery goals and values. By offering substance-free housing options, campuses show their commitment to supporting students in recovery by creating an environment that promotes mental health and wellbeing.

▶ **Most recently, the UCRC is partnered with UCalgary Residence Services to implement substance-free housing in Cascade Hall. The housing is geared to students who choose to lead a substance-free lifestyle for various reasons, including past personal/family problematic use, religion, and/or health.**

“Substance-free housing encourages a healthier relationship to substances, provides a support system and overall promotes a healthier mind and body for all residents,” – Undergraduate Student

# Resources & Tools




Language Matters

External Tools

Important Dates



# Language Matters



The language used has a direct and deep impact on people around you. You can reduce stigma by changing the words, narrative, and language you use to talk about substance use. Showing compassion can create a safe environment for someone to speak up, feel understood and/or receive help.

It is important to note, that many people with lived experience have reclaimed stigmatizing labels like “addict” and “alcoholic.” The bottom line is, you can call yourself what you want, but use person first language when referring to others.

## **DON'T SAY:**

Substance Abuse

## **WHAT THEY HEAR:**

Criminal or violent behaviour

## **SAY:**

Problematic substance use

## **DON'T SAY:**

Addict/Junkie/Drug User/  
Alcoholic/Crackhead

## **WHAT THEY HEAR:**

No hope, negative  
stereotypes, and labels

## **SAY:**

Person who uses substances

**DON'T SAY:**

Former addict/straight/clean

**WHAT THEY HEAR:**

Perpetuates negative stigma,  
promotes a negative label

**SAY:**

Person in recovery

**DON'T SAY:**

Clean/dirty test

**WHAT THEY HEAR:**

People who use substances are  
inherently clean or dirty

**SAY:**

Positive/Negative test

**DON'T SAY:**

Overdose

**WHAT THEY HEAR:**

Implies that the person who uses  
substances knows what the dose is,  
and chooses to take too much

**SAY:**

Drug poisoning/accidental  
drug poisoning

**DON'T SAY:**

Relapsed

**WHAT THEY HEAR:**

Individual's fault, failure

**SAY:**

Had a set back

**DON'T SAY:**

Drug habit

**WHAT THEY HEAR:**

Individual's choice





**SAY:**

Person with a  
substance use disorder

The language we use can have a direct impact on people who use substances, and can carry real world harm. Using person first language helps to separate the person from the behaviour, which can eliminate negative stereotypes and promote a recovery-oriented narrative.

# External Tools

This section can help provide post-secondary institutions with understanding the current need of students, staff, and faculty for a collegiate recovery program. The resources provided can help identify resources available, campus recovery readiness, and plan for future growth of your program.

| RESOURCE   |   | ORGANIZATION  | DESCRIPTION   |
|--|---|---|---|
| <a href="#"><u>Determining the Need for a Recovery Community on your Campus</u></a> (p. 4 and 5) |    | Centre for the Study of Addiction and Recovery - Texas Tech | Formulas to help determine an estimate of how many students would benefit from a collegiate recovery program, and potential savings for your campus.                              |
| <a href="#"><u>Collegiate Recovery Readiness Survey</u></a>                                      |    | Association of Recovery in Higher Education                 | Survey to help guide the need for a collegiate recovery program in your post-secondary and recovery readiness.  |
| <a href="#"><u>Checklist for Workplace Policies on Substance Use Stigma</u></a>                  |  | Canadian Centre for Substance Use and Addiction             | A one-page list to review workplace policies for stigma and discrimination related to substance use.  |
| <a href="#"><u>BARC-10 Questionnaire to Measure Recovery Capital</u></a>                         |  | My Recovery Plan  | Online questionnaire to measure and individuals recovery capital. Though intended for an individual, institutions can use results to guide areas of recovery capital to focus on. |

# Becoming a Recovery Ally

## What is a Recovery Ally?

Allyship refers to the ongoing and intentional practice of unlearning and re-evaluating one's beliefs and actions in order to act in solidarity with marginalized groups.

(The Anti-Oppression Network, n.d.).

Allies are required to engage in consistent and sustained efforts to recognize and challenge systems of oppression and be willing to have their actions and intentions recognized by the communities they aim to support.

## Recovery Ally Practices:

- **Reflect on your own beliefs and biases surrounding substance use, addiction, and recovery.**
- **Avoid using stigmatizing language that reinforces negative stereotypes.**
- **Educate yourself about addiction and recovery, and avoid placing the burden of education on those in recovery.**
- **Create and maintain safe environments that are supportive of recovery. (e.g., If you are hosting an event that includes alcohol, offer alternative beverages)**
- **Practice empathy and avoid making judgment about individuals who use substances or those who abstain.**
- **Listen actively and show your support for those in recovery without attempting to diagnose or solve their problems for them.**
- **Engage in volunteer work, activism, or other forms of advocacy without seeking recognition or praise.**
- **Follow the guidance and direction of those with lived experience of addiction and recovery and approach your work with integrity.**
- **Remember that allyship is a continuous process of learning and unlearning. Be open to constructive criticism and work to improve your understanding and approach to supporting recovery.**



# Important Dates

Observance of important dates related to addiction and recovery can increase awareness and help to promote a greater understanding of substance use disorders. Identifying important dates can reinforce the idea that recovery is possible, and that people who use substances or are in recovery are deserving of attention, care, compassion, and healing.

Highlighting important dates can help post-secondaries with planning initiatives, events and promote a communication and/or marketing strategy.

Recovery on Campus has developed social media templates that post-secondaries can use in their platforms, which will be found in the 'Resources' section of the Recovery on Campus website.

## JANUARY

Dry January

## FEBRUARY

First Week of February:  
Eating Disorders  
Awareness Week

## MARCH

March 17<sup>th</sup>  
Celebrate St-Patrick's Day  
Substance-Free!

## APRIL

Alcohol Awareness Month  
April 15<sup>th</sup>: Collegiate  
Recovery Day  
Last Sunday of April:  
Prescription  
Take Back Day

## MAY

May 7<sup>th</sup>: International  
Harm Reduction Day  
May 17<sup>th</sup> - International  
Day Against Homophobia,  
Biphobia, and Transphobia  
May 31<sup>st</sup>:  
World No Tobacco Day

## JUNE

Holiday Season:  
Tips & Tricks  
Fun Mocktail recipes

## JULY

Kick off the summer  
season with harm  
reduction tips!

## AUGUST

August 31<sup>st</sup>:  
Overdose  
Awareness Day

## SEPTEMBER

Recovery Month  
September 30<sup>th</sup>:  
Recovery Day

## OCTOBER

Last Sunday of October:  
Prescription  
Take Back Day

## NOVEMBER

Third Week of November:  
National Addictions  
Awareness Week

## DECEMBER

Holiday Season:  
Tips & Tricks  
Fun Mocktail recipes

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## Contact us

Recovery on Campus (ROC) is available to support Alberta post-secondary institutions, no matter what stage of planning you are in. The goal of ROC is to offer recovering students, staff, and faculty and those who are seeking recovery, opportunities for success in an academic environment and beyond.

ROC is available to provide one on one mentorship and goal setting, provide funding and awards for innovative campuses, offer educational opportunities through the virtual learning community, resource navigation, as well as belong to a network of post-secondary recovery communities.



**For more information, please visit the [Recovery on Campus website](https://recoveryoncampusalberta.ca), or email [coordinator@recoveryoncampusalberta.ca](mailto:coordinator@recoveryoncampusalberta.ca)**

