






What can we learn about recovery from national leaders?


Strategies to Advance Recovery in Iowa


The Public Science Collaborative (PSC) interviewed national and local recovery community leaders for advice on building resilient Recovery Community Centers (RCCs) in Iowa. Recommendations from recovery experts include:


 **Use Recovery-Specific Language:** Creating a positive culture starts with using recovery-friendly and person-centered language. Avoid clinical or stigmatizing language. For example, use the term a 'person in recovery' instead of 'addict' and describe recovery as a long-term process, achievable with multiple pathways or activities.


 **Create Allies, Not Competitors:** Through intentional outreach, RCCs should maintain a collaborative mindset and partner with local services. Ensure that treatment and service providers understand that RCCs exist to support long-term, post-treatment recovery and community building.


 **Pay Recovery Staff:** While having a strong volunteer base is important, a core team of fairly compensated staff is necessary to provide efficient, reliable recovery care. Because RCCs are largely staffed by people in recovery, this has the added benefit of supporting people in recovery with meaningful work.

 **Engage the Local Recovery Community:** Reach out to communities early and often on social media and at events to foster community trust and build alliances. Local connections are critical to an RCC's success.

 **Encourage Diverse Funding Models:** Avoid fee-for-service or for-profit funding models, as they require consistent attendance and time to complete the reimbursement process. RCCs require flexible funding streams that allow a variety of services to be provided at the RCC, regardless of where a person is in their recovery journey.

 **Curb Certifications:** Some sectors use certifications to professionalize their work. Leaders caution that requiring certification in the recovery space can limit the valuable hands-on recovery support offered by people with lived experience.

 **Move at the Speed of Trust:** Creating an RCC is an exciting opportunity filled with potential, but building a portfolio containing achievable and realistic goals is important. Doing so will help establish trust for engagement, curb RCC burnout, and allow the community to decide what role the RCC should have.

 **Support Multiple Pathways:** RCCs should be open to multiple pathways of recovery. Service offerings should read like a buffet menu with multiple options for anyone to choose from. The RCC's success relies on the organization's ability to meet the individual where they are. This means recognizing, serving, and celebrating individuality and diversity within the recovery experience.

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