

Friends of Recovery – New York

2019 Addiction Recovery Policy Statement



Friends of Recovery – New York (FOR-NY) is a state-wide Recovery Community Organization (RCO) working on behalf of millions of individuals and families in New York to educate decision makers and the general public about recovery from addiction. We are dedicated to eliminating negative public perception, ending discrimination and removing barriers to recovery, including those that exist in treatment, housing, and employment. We support the expansion of recovery support services for individuals and families. We call on the Governor and the NYS Legislature to take the following immediate actions to address the urgent addiction crisis in New York State:

CONTINUUM, QUALITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF CARE

Creation, expansion and certification of recovery homes – Housing has been identified as the number one priority throughout our communities statewide. Officials must ensure that resources are dedicated to meet this rapidly growing need. We support an initiative that would commit funds directly to housing for individuals in recovery from Substance Use Disorders. We also support regulations and certification of recovery homes. Individuals in early recovery must be afforded a safe, supportive living environment. Regulations and supervision must be adopted within the parameters of the Federal Fair Housing Act in a manner that encompasses those using Medication Assisted Treatment to support individualized treatment and recovery. Such housing must promote integrity, ensure quality improvement, uphold residents' rights, be recovery-oriented, and conducive to well-being. We support the creation and expansion of a variety of recovery residences statewide which will include and embrace those receiving MAT to support their recovery in order to meet a rapidly increasing demand.

Recovery community resources - Fund at least one Recovery Community Organization (RCO), Recovery Community Outreach Center (RCOC) and Youth Clubhouse in each county and ensure that at least two Certified Recovery Peer Advocates and two Certified Family Support Navigators exist in every county in NYS. The peers and navigators must be attached to existing or emerging RCO's to ensure a continuation and expansion of inroads made through existing recovery community networks with real time knowledge of conditions on the ground in local communities.

Support/Establish Recovery High Schools and Collegiate Recovery Programs throughout New York State - Recovery High schools are effective and the accompanying Alternative Peer Groups (APG's), utilized in Texas have been shown to reduce recidivism and dramatically improve recovery outcomes for young people. These high schools and collegiate programs could work closely with youth clubhouses and local RCO's to maximize access to peer recovery support services in the community.

Treatment and Recovery on demand and connection to recovery support services after overdose - It is unconscionable that individuals must wait days and even weeks on average before they can access sorely needed treatment. Insurers, providers, state and county governments must work together with RCOs to ensure immediate access to treatment becomes the norm rather than the exception, on par with access for all other medical conditions. Anyone in need must have 24/7 access to detox, treatment and recovery support services. We also support a permanent and *comprehensive* addiction wraparound services program. We urge a rapid expansion of proactive interventions to assist those in crisis after opiate overdose reversal. Typically no treatment or recovery referral happens and there are numerous reports of additional overdoses and death. Assessment, treatment referrals and *warm handoffs* to recovery support services must be made immediately available to help save lives. Critical intervention points must include (but not limited to) emergency rooms, emergency medical response points, law enforcement encounters and with RCO's.

Expand the role of peers for individuals and families - We support increased education and training to help peers access needed certifications and the expansion of employment opportunities for recovery coaches, peer advocates and family navigators in all phases of the recovery continuum including: crisis centers, detox units, inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation, community residences, recovery centers, supportive housing, hospitals/emergency rooms, probation, parole, emergency housing (shelters), diversion courts, and attached to recovery community organizations and at other recovery access points. Peers should have lived experience and be in sustained recovery in order to become certified.

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Transportation - Individuals in early recovery are frequently without a reliable mode of travel or transport that is essential to sustaining recovery. We support the creation of a transportation work group and a funded pilot project to address this concern in a high priority area to be identified by recovery stakeholders.

Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) and Harm Reduction (HR) as chosen pathways to recovery - We support multiple pathways to recovery, including MAT where therapeutic support is recommended but not mandated.¹ Rapid MAT access and linkage to peers should be the goal. There is overwhelming evidence that abstinence-based recovery is not effective for a significant percentage of those affected and that MAT is the standard of care for Opioid Use Disorders.

Improve outcomes for those in treatment and recovery with a history of criminal justice involvement - We support the removal of barriers that make it difficult for individuals with criminal records to access treatment, sustain recovery and access fair housing, employment, healthcare, and education. Additionally, we support providing those leaving the criminal justice system or mandatory rehabilitation with MAT whenever needed in order to maximize sustained recovery outcomes and prevent overdose upon re-entry in the community.

Trauma informed recovery services and evidence based treatment - Recovery studies and programs should continue to look at trauma as an addiction risk indicator. Related care for those in treatment and recovery should be trauma informed. We must insist that treatment is Evidence Based to ensure that all those seeking and accessing services are able to maximize their chances of effecting positive change and finding long term recovery.

INSURANCE PARITY ENFORCED WITH EXPANDED ACCESS TO ADDICTION TREATMENT

We urge the Governor and NYS Legislature to continue working to enforce parity laws in New York, and hold insurance companies accountable- Insurers must allow unfettered access to at least 14 days of inpatient treatment and we must continue to educate the public about injustices that exist in their coverages at present.

JUSTICE FOR LOST LOVED ONES

Support lawsuits holding opioid companies accountable - Demand that revenue generated by lawsuits and other compensation considerations is earmarked specifically to support prevention, treatment and recovery.

Family harm/Loss register - Family members nationwide are working to find a way for people to list any legal action they are taking against insurance companies. A coordinated "register" would facilitate communication between plaintiffs, help identify common ground and perhaps similar grievances against insurers, who continue to dodge, deny, and delay. This initiative may very well encourage other affected families to come forward as well.

Asset forfeiture funds - We recommend that all asset forfeiture money in the Chemical Dependence Service Fund (Section 97-W/State Finance Law) be allocated to OASAS and invested in the expansion of prevention, treatment, and recovery services. These funds should be dedicated solely for their intended purposes as described.

EDUCATIONAL CAMPAIGNS/ENDING NEGATIVE PUBLIC PERCEPTION

Hope in recovery campaign - Invest resources in a campaign to educate the public about the power and promise of recovery. Education is the key to ending negative public perception. Highlight lived experience and long-term recovery. Continue to eliminate pejorative language and transform to align with a modern, compassionate, healthcare approach.

¹ [Recent evidence suggests that when individuals are treated as a resource in their recovery choices they connect with supports that yield sustainable recovery. (see <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/m/pubmed/16870915/>)]