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**Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and  
General Affairs**

***The Efficacy and Cost Effectiveness of Addiction Recovery Services***

Testimony of Robert Purvis, Executive Director  
Turning Point Center of Central Vermont

*March 20, 2015*

My name is Bob Purvis and I am executive director of the Turning Point Center of Central Vermont, which is one of eleven addiction recovery centers comprising the Vermont Recovery Network. I am also an officer of the Network itself.

I am here to talk about the key role that Vermont's recovery centers play—both in our health care system and the broader human services systems. I will first outline how recovery services are successfully helping Vermonters change their lives in recovery in cost-effective ways. I will then describe the key role that recovery services are playing in 2 major policy trends in Vermont.

***Recovery services are effective and helping to reduce costs.***

A growing body of research is beginning to demonstrate the effectiveness of recovery services. In a 2013 report prepared by Evidence Based Solutions LLC, recovery coaching at our centers demonstrated the potential for reducing costs in medical, criminal-justice and social services—while helping addicted Vermonters enter into and maintain recovery. The findings are detailed in the report included with my testimony called, *Brief Report on the Vermont Recovery Network: Recovery Coaching in Recovery Centers*.

The bar chart on page 2 shows statistically significant reductions in the use of crisis services by participants, including a sharp decline in the use of courts, corrections, hospitals, and detoxification programs; along with a shift towards more cost-effective preventative services such as family doctors. In parallel, the bar chart on page 4 shows significant improvement in a range of life domains, for example health, family, housing and transportation. The changes documented in this report took place over a period of roughly 3 months, the interval between taking the survey at the inception of recovery coaching and 3 months later.

In a more recent report published this year, titled *Recovery Center Success Stories & Data*, Evidence Based Solutions LLC evaluated data collected from Participant Surveys administered to visitors in Vermont's recovery centers. The report includes longitudinal data from 565 individuals who completed the survey multiple times over the 7 year period between 2007 and 2014. The results show statistically significant changes in people's lives: improved health, reduced criminal justice involvement, increased employment, improved mental health, and more. This report is also included with my testimony.

In addition to these compelling data, this report also includes numerous success stories of individuals who have achieved long term recovery through involvement with a recovery center.

***Recovery centers play a key role in 2 major policy directions in Vermont.***

There are 2 major policy directions that will continue even in the face of Vermont's structural deficits because they hold out the promise of both reducing costs and increasing the health of our communities.

The first is the shift in healthcare reform from treating chronic diseases episodically through expensive, short-term interventions, to managing them in the community. From heart disease to diabetes and addiction, it has proven less expensive to support people in staying healthy than to treat them with expensive tests and procedures when their health fails because they have not managed their

condition well from day to day. The Affordable Care Act has created major financial incentives for making this shift—including with addictions. Recovery centers are proving to be the most effective means for managing addictive disease through the recovery services they provide as well as through the connections they help people make with communities of recovery.

The second policy shift is the increased focus on releasing nonviolent offenders from prison early—or not incarcerating them at all, such as pursuant to Act 195 of 2014—and getting them into community-based services that can help them become healthy, productive citizens. With approximately 70% to 80% of offenders incarcerated in Vermont prisons because of drug-related charges, our recovery centers are increasingly being called upon to provide recovery supports for them as they attempt to change their lives in recovery.

### ***Conclusion.***

Vermont is a pioneer in the national recovery movement. We have created a statewide recovery system with standards, accountability, and evidence-based recovery support services that is providing cost-effective help to Vermonters that is not available anywhere else. This has taken a great deal of work over many years, but it would not have been possible without the early and continued support of visionaries in the Vermont Legislature. We thank you for making this possible.

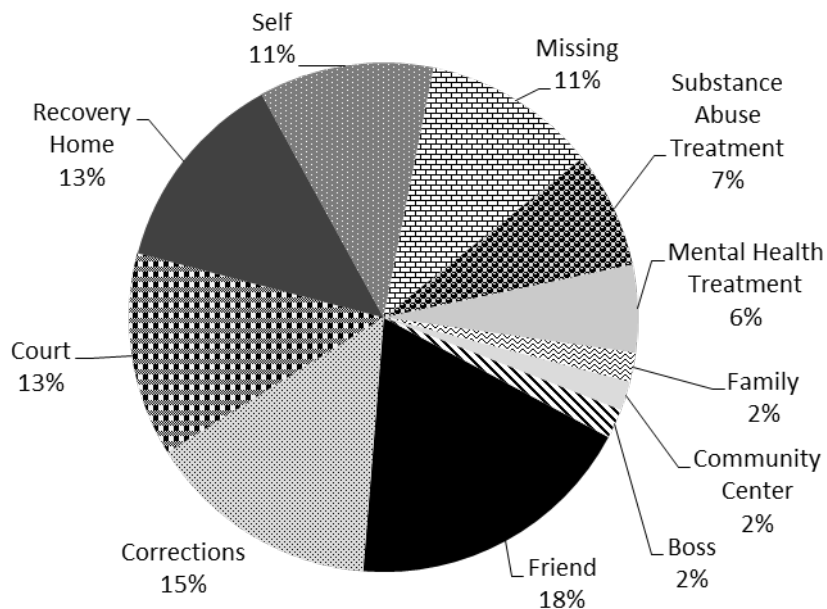
# Brief report on the Vermont Recovery Network: Recovery Coaching in Recovery Centers

## What the initial data suggest.

Over the past year, recovery coaching demonstrated the potential for reductions (cost savings) in medical, justice, and social services while helping addicted Vermonter's enter and maintain recovery. These findings warrant a broader implementation and examination of recovery coaching in the near future. This brief report shares initial data on outcomes achieved through recovery coaching in Vermont's community recovery centers. Recovery coaching is a form of peer based recovery support which has been defined as *"the process of giving and receiving nonprofessional, non-clinical assistance to achieve long-term recovery from severe alcohol and/or other drug-related problems. This support is provided by people who are experientially credentialed to assist others in initiating recovery, maintaining recovery, and enhancing the quality of personal and family life in long-term recovery."* (White, W., 2009)

The report includes data from 52 individuals seeking recovery coaching at one of the Vermont Recovery Network's Recovery Centers. Participants were 62% male, 38% female and 37.1 years of age (SD = 11.5). Participants provided data at least two times while utilizing the Recovery Center: once at the beginning of their work with the recovery coach and again at a follow up time point. If a person provided data more than two times, we used the last time point available. The average number of days between the two time points was 120 (SD = 76). Because of the small sample size, trends of statistical significance where the p-value ranges between .06 and .08 are included.

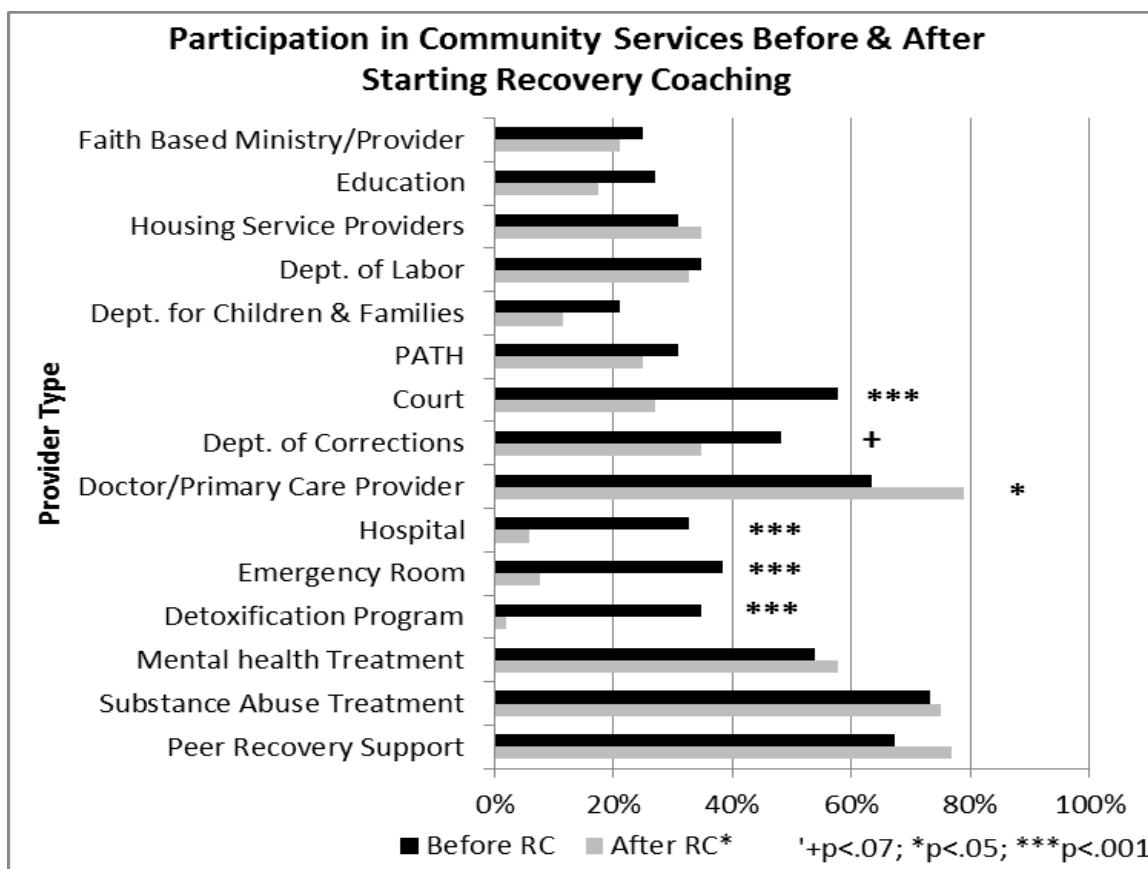
### Recovery Coaching Referral Sources



**Note:** Percentage is greater than 100% as several participants listed more than 1 referral source.

### ***Participation in Community Services Before and After Receiving Recovery Coaching***

Initial findings suggest a potential for recovery coaching to reduce social costs associated with addictive and co-occurring disease. There were significant reductions in detoxification programs, as well as hospital and emergency room use. At the same time, there was a significant increase in the use of primary care providers. The increased use of primary care providers demonstrates the potential for recovery coaching to provide a role in health care reform's efforts to respond to addictive disorders and the concomitant co-occurring disorders as a chronic diseases which, when responded to appropriately, can lead to reduced hospital and emergency room costs. Recovery coach participants also reported a significant decrease in court and corrections involvement. Further evaluation is needed to determine cost savings that can be accrued across the human services spectrum.



## ***Motivation and Sobriety***

Across alcohol, marijuana, other illicit, and prescription drugs, participants' motivation to abstain averaged a score of 8.5 out of 10, indicating that upon beginning Recovery Coaching, individuals are very motivated to become and remain abstinent. At the follow up time point, the average motivation score across all substances including alcohol was 8.6. Thus, over time, Recovery Coaching may have helped to sustain individuals' motivation to be abstinent.

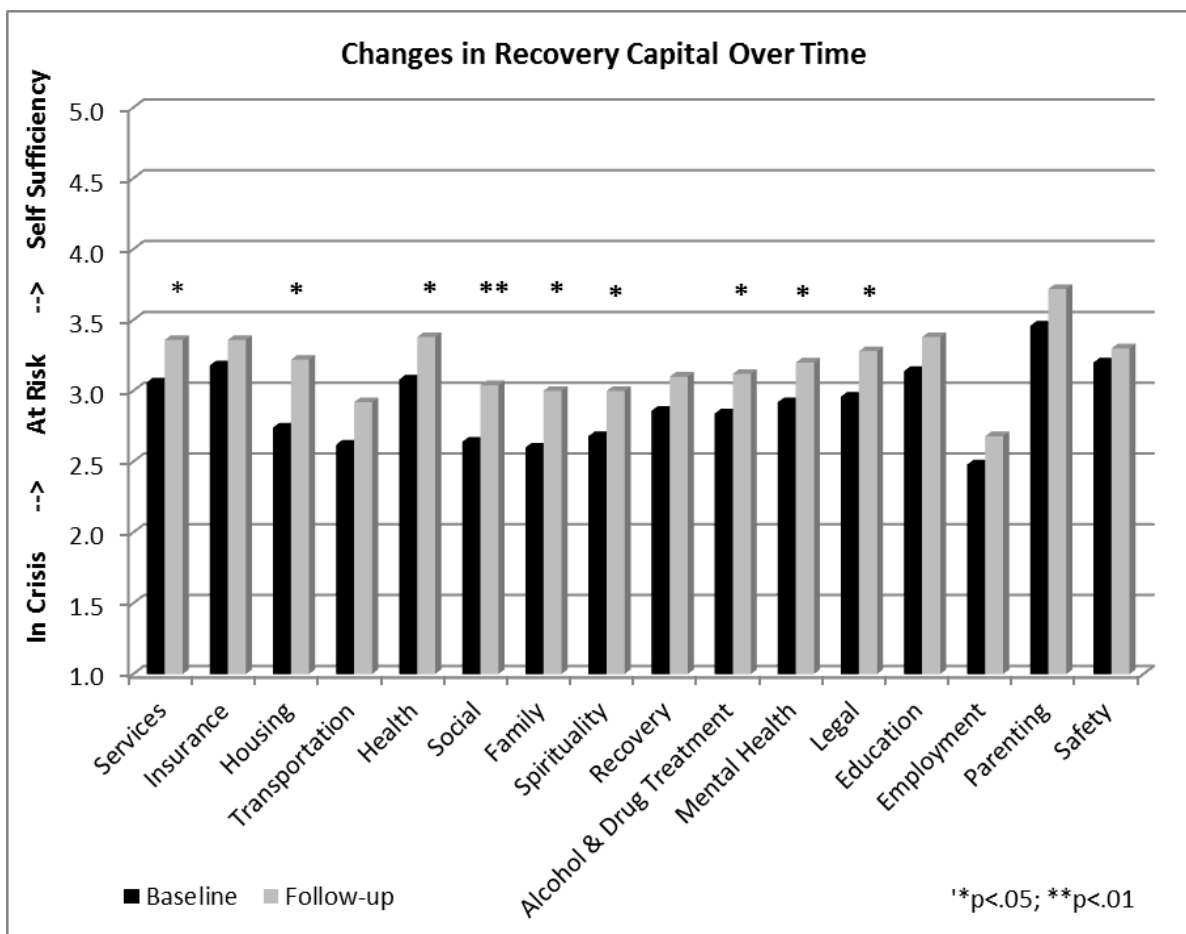
At the start of Recovery Coaching, participants reported an average of 118 days clean from alcohol and other drugs (SD = 217). At the follow up timepoint after starting Recovery Coaching, participants reported an average of 123 days clean from alcohol and other drugs (SD = 164).

### **Note:**

Vermont Recovery Network (VRN) has developed and adopted a uniform set of guidelines for the provision of recovery coaching in Vermont's peer community recovery support centers. <http://www.vtrecoverynetwork.org/> **All coaches are screened to insure that they understand and can communicate the recovery process. All coaches undergo background checks to insure participant safety. All coaches must have certificates from a formal recovery coach academy and participate in ongoing training and regular supervision.** VRN recovery centers all maintain lists of supervised coaches in good standing to insure that participants in the recovery coaching process receive appropriate support from qualified coaches.

### ***Participants involved in Recovery Coaching experience greater improvement in other areas besides addiction, regardless of how long they participate.***

The Self Sufficiency Matrix (SSM) was designed to help assist in assessing and building **community based recovery capital**. Recovery capital refers to the amount and quality of internal and external resources one can bring to bear to initiate and/or sustain recovery from addiction and mental health challenges, and related problems. The SSM is influenced by the principles of Recovery Oriented System of Care (ROSC; IRETA, 2006; White et al., 2003). In general, when completing the Self Sufficiency Matrix, individuals seeking services at Recovery Centers tend to report "At Risk" to "Stable/Safe" across many life domains. Over time, individuals' scores continue to improve, moving from "At Risk" towards "Stable/Safe". **These changes were statistically significant for the domains of Services, Housing, Health, Social, Family, Alcohol & Other Drugs, Mental Health, and Legal for all participants, regardless of how long they had participated in recovery coaching.**



## Summary

The initial data demonstrate that recovery coaching helps to foster sustained motivation for abstinence, increased number of days of abstinence the longer a participant’s involvement in recovery coaching, and increased overall wellness as evidence by a shift towards greater self sufficiency in other areas of participants’ lives aside from addiction. In addition, while individuals’ lives are improving, their use of costly services such as hospitals, emergency rooms, and detoxification programs decreases. The current study is limited by a small sample size from 5 regions of the state. These promising findings reinforce the need to further evaluate the potential of recovery coaching as an effective and cost saving approach to help promote wellness among Vermonters struggling with addiction and co-occurring mental health problems.

\*\*\*\*\*

Data and report prepared by Evidence Based Solutions (EBS) – Jody Kamon, PhD & Win Turner PhD. At Evidence Based Solutions, LLC we believe families struggling with mental health and substance abuse issues deserve the highest quality care available, from prevention to recovery. We work to collaborate with you to support the use of a range of evidence based interventions in effective efficient ways. We offer state of the art consultation, training (including clinical supervision), and evaluation services. Check out our website: [www.metcbtplus.com](http://www.metcbtplus.com) to learn more.

## During State FY 2014:

Recovery Centers hosted 179,234 visits from people seeking recovery & providing recovery support.

Centers average 1,348 visits per month.

On average:

Centers were open 60 hours per week.

Centers supported 19 active volunteers.

Centers benefitted from 82 hrs a week of volunteer support.

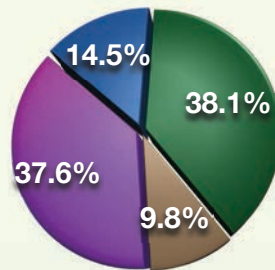
Visitors were 44% women & 56% men.

Network centers have many occasional visitors; an *average* of more than 100 regulars who come for 2 or 3 visits a week; and a small **revolving population of high-utilization visitors coming daily**, until their lives stabilize.

Our visitors get their lives in order, find jobs, find housing, repair the damage caused by addictive behaviors, and function in recovery as productive members of their communities, often for the first time in their lives.

### Sources of Recovery Center Support in FY 2014

Local Community Support	\$402,814
Donated Volunteer Time	\$1,061,293
FY14 State Recovery Center Grants	\$1,046,404
FY14 State Network Grant & SAMHSA Support	\$271,700



*Helping people who have experienced problems as a result of drugs and alcohol to find, maintain, and enhance their recovery through peer support, sober recreation, & educational opportunities.*

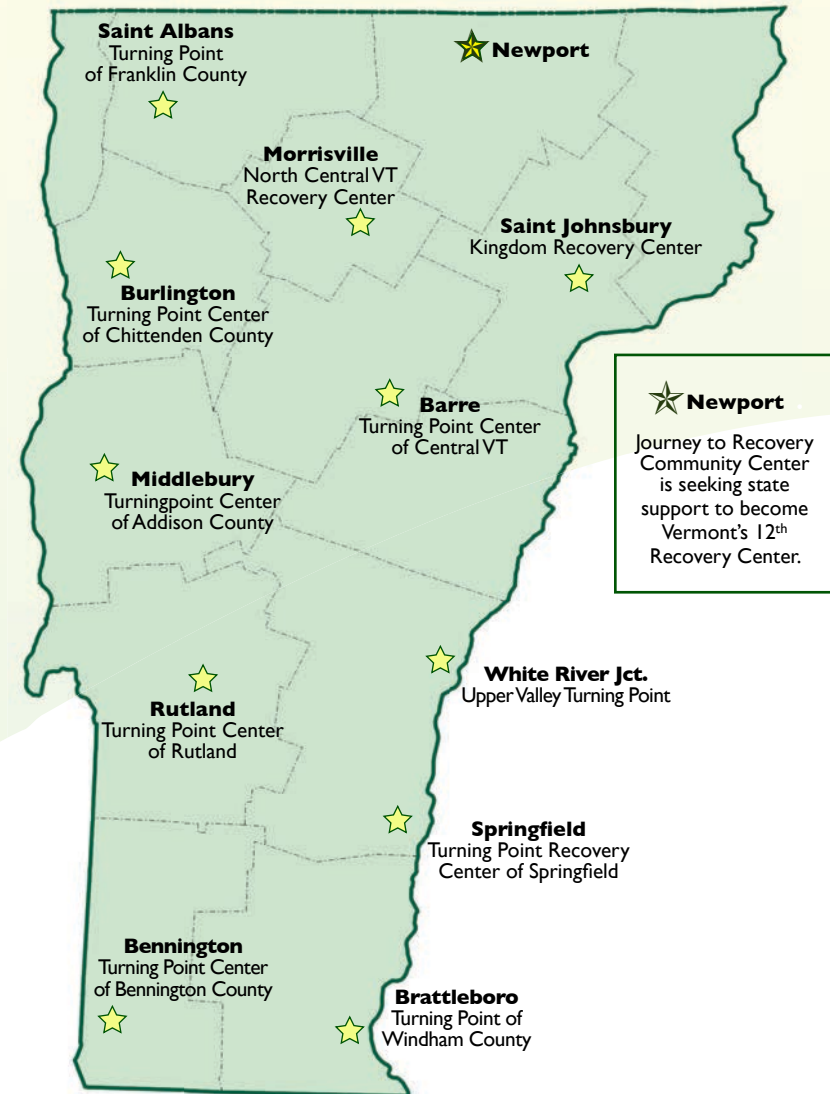


[www.VTRecoveryNetwork.org](http://www.VTRecoveryNetwork.org)



Recovery Centers ~ Recovery Solutions

## Recovery Center Success Stories & Data



★ **Newport**  
Journey to Recovery Community Center is seeking state support to become Vermont's 12<sup>th</sup> Recovery Center.



# Vermont continues to be a pioneer in the national recovery movement. We've created a statewide recovery system with standards, accountability, and evidence-based recovery support services.

Vermont's recovery centers have grown to become a front door to Vermont's treatment system, as well as a destination after treatment. In some cases, centers offer support until treatment is available; in others, our recovery supports provide a direct path to a life in recovery.

Recovery centers provide welcoming, safe places for people seeking recovery. We provide support for families and friends who are trying to help loved ones. Our trained recovery workers provide facilitated groups and recovery coaching. Centers are safe havens where people who are committed to recovery volunteer to support others.

Vermont Recovery Network hired the evaluation team from Evidence Based Solutions [EBS] to analyze Participant Survey data collected in Vermont Recovery Centers between 2007 and 2014.

## The data evaluation demonstrates statistically significant changes in the lives of people attending Recovery Centers.

[See important findings on the Centerfold]

**"I started using drugs when I was 8 years old.** I was prescribed opiates for pain as a child. I stopped for a long time and then an accident got me back into opiates for 5-6 years. Started at Brattleboro Retreat and decided to go cold turkey. **I've been clean for 100 days.** Most of my support came from Turning Point and the All Recovery meetings. People there care about me. I have my kids back in my life."

Travis H.

Middlebury

The statistical analyses included in this report were conducted by Evidence Based Solutions (EBS) and examine Participant Survey data collected by Vermont Recovery Network (VRN) for Vermont's recovery centers (RCs). Guests participating in the recovery support services were asked to provide general information about themselves, comment on their use of centers and their experiences in recovery. This report includes longitudinal data from 565 individuals who reported attending the recovery centers for themselves (vs. in support of someone else) and had completed the survey on multiple occasions over time. Data were collected over 7 years and the average length of time participants had been attending recovery centers upon completion of the survey was 1.5 years. The average visitor comes to the center 3 to 4 times every week. The results of this data analysis are highlighted throughout the following stories with a summary (centerfold) highlighting statistically significant changes in peoples' lives.

## Improved Health

**91%** of those responding to questions about health, reported improvement in their overall health and wellbeing  
**28%** of those responding have decreased or stopped smoking since coming to the center.  
**69%** of those responding have started or increased physical exercise since coming to the center.

*Note: Data obtained above are from a sample of 282 of the 565 individuals as these questions were not always included in the Participant Survey.*

**"My days are full of health, rewarding, and helpful events. I have a family who loves and respects me and my recovery. People can depend on me showing up. I also have choices today."**

Anne A.

Morrisville

**"Before recovery I didn't belong anywhere** – school, work or dysfunctional family – got stoned every night just to maintain.

My teacher 3 years ago put our non-traditional classroom at the **recovery center where I learned I could have fun & not get high.** I have graduated school and have a job. Stop at the center as much as I can, for a meeting or a game of pool. I can be me and not be a follower – my new friends are always there."

Drew H

Springfield

## Reduced Criminal Justice Involvement

46% of our visitors report past incidents of criminal justice involvement before coming to Recovery Centers & no criminal justice incidents since.

“When I was using, **I was in and out of jail for relapsing.** I was estranged from my family and friends. Life is so much simpler since I found recovery. **I have not gone to jail in almost 3 years** and have reconnected with family and friends. I have financial and emotional stability now. My life has improved 100%.”

Sherri H. Rutland

“Before recovery **I was homeless and stealing, in and out of jail** – no connection with my children or family. Now my health is better, I have found a permanent job and housing. I have reconnected with my children and my parents.

The **Turning Point has given me a safe, supportive and sober place to grow in my recovery.** It helped me find many resources when I was in early recovery. They also helped me realize what I really wanted for my future.”

Mindy M. Brattleboro

“**My life was full of jail and institutions.** Turning Point has been a big help – I volunteer there, and it gives me a sense of feeling safe. I wake up with hope and life happiness. I am learning how to love myself and take care of myself and others. My recovery is giving me meaning and reason to live on life’s terms. Relationship with my family is improving.”

Raul R. Burlington & Middlebury

## Increased Employment

18% increase among the number of visitors employed.

58% of visitors who said they found work since coming to the Center, credited support or information provided at the Center with helping to find work.

“**I was depressed, homeless, isolated and lonely. I was a chronic relapser,** I had no joy in my life. I now have my own apartment. I got my license back and finally have my dream job. I work with others who have addiction problems. I don’t know where I would be if I hadn’t walked into TPC”.

T. C. Burlington

“Turning Point helped me find recovery – **I have turned my life around.** I am 20 months sober have made new friendships, am working my way through my legal issues with great success. **I have a job and my life is headed in a positive direction.** The people at Turning Point make me feel important and no longer ashamed of my addiction. They helped me become a productive citizen instead of a danger to my community. I am thankful that Turning Point was there when I was in need.

Don Barre

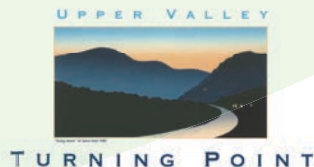
“Before recovery I was a high-functioning alcoholic for over 15 years. In the last year of my drinking, I was drinking 24-7, health declined including liver damage and I lost my long-time job.

Life has gotten progressively better. I am optimistic, caring, hard-working and motivated. It’s great having a place to go to avoid triggering people and places while talking with others in recovery. I’ve been volunteering helping others, and have started a new and wonderful career.”

T. R. Brattleboro



Turning Point Center of Bennington County

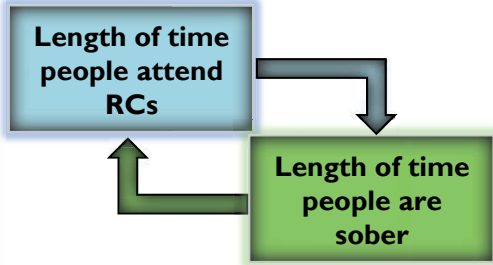


# Vermont Recovery Network: Our story of helping others find & maintain recovery

Enclosed here is a summary highlighting statistically significant findings over time.

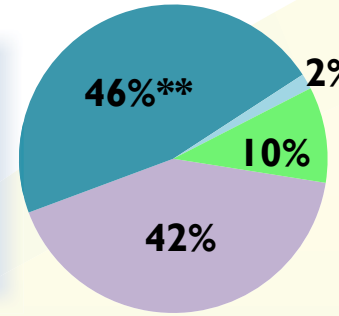
## Increased Sobriety

Participants who attend RCs for longer periods of time also report longer periods of sobriety ( $r = .47, p < .001$ ).\*\*\*



## Decreased Criminal Involvement

Statistically significant decrease among participants with previous incidents or criminal involvement.\*\*



- Had incidents or criminal involvement before, but none since coming to RC
- No incidents or criminal involvement ever
- Continued incidents (both before and since coming to the RC)
- Incidents or criminal involvement only since coming to RC

65%

of participants felt RCs helped them **FIND** their recovery

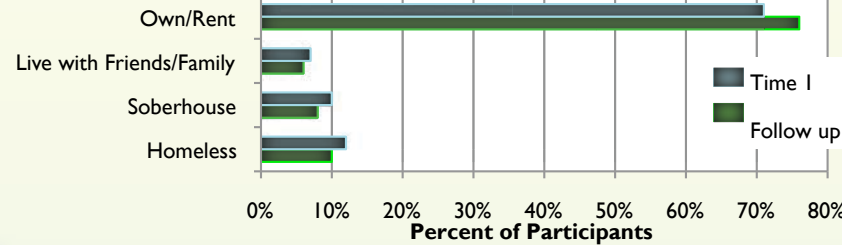
76%

of participants felt RCs helped **REDUCE THE FREQUENCY & LENGTH** of their relapses

91%

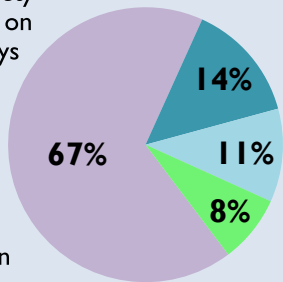
of participants felt RCs helped **ENHANCE & MAINTAIN** their recovery

## Increase in Stable Housing



Although not statistically significant, there was an increase over time in the percent of participants who own/rent their own home. This is impressive given the scarcity of affordable housing.

There was a significant increase in sobriety over time based on self report of days sober ( $t=5.4, p < .001$ ). This was because 67% of participants maintained their sobriety between Time I & the FollowUp & another 14% of participants gained sobriety.



- Maintained sobriety consistently over time
- Achieved sobriety by FollowUp
- Relapsed
- Never achieved sobriety greater than 30 days

## Increased Employment



From Time I to Follow up, there was a significant increase of 18% among those who were employed.\*\*

## Other Good News

28%

of participants **decreased or stopped smoking** since coming to the RCs

69%

of participants **started or increased physical exercise** since coming to the RCs

71%

of participants' **family relationships improved** since coming to the RCs

91%

of participants **overall wellness & health improved** since coming to the RCs

*Note: The longitudinal study has several limitations including data were all self-report and data were collected using a convenience sampling method. Convenience sampling means that participants were recruited as they utilized the Recovery Centers. Lastly, there was no set follow up time point for data collection. At the same time, surveys were completed anonymously in an effort to ensure participants responded openly.*

For questions please contact Dr. Jody Kamon of EBS at (802) 999 - 1676.

## Improved Mental Health

80% of visitors report current or past participation in outpatient/inpatient mental health services.

46% of those responding to questions about prescription drug use reported having used anti-depressant, anti-anxiety, or anti-psychotic medications.

**“I was suicidal and wanted to die.** Went to Rehab & Detox at least 4 times, overdosed 3 times and was saved by ambulance. 2 serious suicide attempts **Everything is different now** – I have my own apartment and am able to work. I know I have a safe place to go. I can find support and find others who understand and accept who I was and encourage who I am and want to be. **I am lucky to have a Recovery Coach** – she is a very big support and a friend to me.”

Amber H. Middlebury

**“Life was chaotic, I had terrible anxiety and depression** which I treated with substances. I am now on medication to treat my chronic depression and anxiety. My life is markedly more stable now, I have long periods of peace. I have hobbies, and mended my relationship with my mother. I have hopes and aspirations.”

M.M. Brattleboro

“My life before recovery was complete hell. **I wanted to kill myself.** Since I got recovery, **my life has improved in every way.** I’ve learned to love myself and others. I facilitate groups and am a peer coach.”

Karen Z. Kingdom Recovery Center

“Before recovery my life was a constant battle, suffering from my habit, struggling to maintain and hide it. I fell into a life of lying, cheating, stealing, self harm, depression and everything else associated with using. I experienced multiple overdoses, DCF involvement, and then homelessness. It was horrible. Since working a solid program my life has continually progressed. I joined a sober house, which was an amazing blessing. Having a supportive community helps back me up on doing the next right thing. I am increasingly **reunited with my daughter, building a solid parental foundation with her father and rebuilding lost relationships with my own parents.** The recovery centers provide me with a safe environment – I spend my time there to avoid users, triggers and unsafe people.”

Kelly O. Middlebury & Burlington

## Increased Housing

50% of those who said they found housing since coming to the Recovery Center credited the Center with helping them find it.

**“I was living and sleeping on the streets. I now have a nice apartment** and support my three cats. I have consistency in my employment, and am engaging in healthy relationships. TPC helps me connect with resources in the community that strengthen my recovery. I have integrity and can face life’s issues in a positive way”.

Jedediah P. Brattleboro

**“I was an everyday IV user, lost my daughter to DCF, and was homeless.** Overdosed regularly. My life had been a lot more manageable. I have steady housing and am working a full time job. I am facing my legal issues including DCF. Trying to mend what relationships I can. Turning Point is important because there aren’t many other recovery based programs in town.”

John St. Middlebury

“I started drinking when I was 16. By 2009 I was addicted to crack cocaine. I have two sons. At the time, my two-and-a-half-year old was living with me in this environment and my 12-year-old son had written me a letter saying he didn’t want to see me anymore. After multiple relapses, including a scary six months where everyone in my family thought I was dead, I finally got myself into Willow Grove and the programs at the Turning Point.

I spent every waking moment that was free at the Turning Point. They helped to teach me how to have fun without the drinking and drugs. Becoming sober was a complete shift in my mentality – it is not just not drinking. It was a complete overhaul of everything that I think and believe. The Turning Point is a safe haven.

It’s been almost 4.5 years that I’ve been sober. In all, it took me 16 years to get one year of sobriety. **I went from being a homeless crack addicted mom** on the brink of death that abandoned her children, **to an honor student and an amazing mom.** I’m a good role model for other women who are addicts that have children. The people at the Turning Point made this all possible – these people believed in me when I could not believe in myself.”

Lisa C. White River Junction

## Improved Relationships

71% of those responding reported improved family relationships since coming to the center.

*Note: Data obtained above are from a sample of 282 of the 565 individuals as these questions were not always included in the Participant Survey.*

### **“My life was hell before coming to the recovery center.**

I was struggling with raising my 2 year old son. I spent many nights at bars, eventually ending up with a DUI.

I have a new happiness; I attend meetings and volunteer at Turning Point. I am graduating with my Associates Degree and will continue my path to Mental Health Counselor. **The Turning Point Recovery Center has given me a new life**, and a chance to see my full potential – I have of this new life”. The center has given me growth and inspiration – I go into local schools to speak and tell my story.”

Brandy C. Springfield

“I used to drink and use drugs every day. I was abusive to my wife and was always getting arrested for domestic violence. I had no friends. **My life is totally new** – I go to meetings and **volunteer at the Turning Point Center**. I like to help out people, it’s my way of giving back. I am living a great clean and sober life.”

Scott K. Bennington

“There wasn't a life, **it was all about getting high at any cost**. Now, I've bonded with my children, family, and people in general. Being around others in recovery is a big part of making life easier. Turning Point works”

H.T. Brattleboro

### **“Before recovery I was on the verge of losing my husband, children, and home.**

I would drink, black out and towards the end, I would end up in jail. I became suicidal. The recovery center is very important to my recovery – it provides a safe environment and I enjoy volunteering my time at the center. I have gained the love and trust of my husband and children back. I have gained my own self respect back.”

Laura S. Morrisville

## Treatment System Utilization

### **“I bottomed out hard at 16, but never went to treatment.**

I have been clean & sober in Recovery for over 25 years. I recently discovered the VT Recovery Network of Centers. My recovery has taken a wonderful new direction. I have become a Recovery Coach & am really excited about this approach to helping others, especially kids.”

Jen G. Brattleboro

21% of visitors report never attending treatment.

76% reported past treatment for substance abuse.

23% of visitors had been in treatment during the last 30 days.

“I lost everything and felt like a failure. I lost my license, job, health and was in jail. After treatment I got involved with the recovery center, and am now a pathway guide helping others like me.”

Larry B. Springfield

*Pathways to Recovery Project: Our Network received Federal funding to provide support for Vermonters in opiate treatment. People in opiate treatment now have consistent access to welcoming peer recovery groups and recovery support services. All of Vermont's recovery centers now host half-time “Pathway Guides,” paid by VRN, who are working with opiate treatment providers and receiving referrals for one-on-one support and/or facilitated peer recovery support. Meet another of our Pathway Guides:*

**“Before recovery, I had no life.** I was unemployable for 5 years, didn't have stable housing. Had little relationship with my family. Life was very dark, lonely and hopeless.

I now have a life and a purpose. I have a relationship with my family. I work in the field of recovery, helping those who are still struggling. At age 48 I am going back to school to get my degree and have gotten all A's. The recovery center provides a safe environment to come and be with others who are seeking recovery. It has also doubled the amount of meetings and support groups in our area.”

Hal P. St. Albans