

Recovery Partners of Vermont – DOC Partnership

Feb 11, 2026

Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Tracie Hauck from Rutland, VT. I am a person in long-term recovery and the Executive Director of Turning Point Center of Rutland.

Today is Recovery Day in Vermont, and I'm here to talk about the importance of our recovery coaching programming within the Department of Corrections. I also want to mention two important requests for the FY27 Budget to help support local recovery organizations:

First, we are asking the Legislature to please renew the \$800,000 we received in Prevention Funds in FY26 in order to level fund recovery centers and preserve current services in a time when recovery centers are facing increased demand.

Also, Please support the Vermont Department of Health's recommendation to appropriate \$1,250,000 in FY27 Opioid Abatement Funds to continue the successful peer recovery coaching program within our correctional facilities in your budget memo to Appropriations.

I want to start by saying how much it matters to people like me that you take time to listen to voices from the community. Peer recovery work is deeply human, and I appreciate the chance to share what this funding truly means.

I would like to ground this in a real experience—because peer recovery is ultimately about people, not programs.

This is a story about one individual who received our services:

Coachee Z, 38 year old male:

He has been receiving coaching at TPCR for a number of years, dating at least from 2016, with a serious problem with drug use. He was incarcerated for short periods and, while having a considerable amount of difficulty with his addiction, stayed in touch with us and reached out for help from us on many occasions. Although he had periods of staying clean and having productive employment, he had frequent relapses but always came back to us at the end of each period. His perseverance with us, and ours with him, meant that he knew what he needed to do and retained a recovery focus even when he was in a very bad place. His story demonstrates the importance of just staying

in contact on his part and always being available on our part. As of this time, he has been entirely clean for two years, has a safe and secure place to live, has a very good job that can turn into a career for him, has a business plan for starting his own property management company (for which he already has clients!), and is close to achieving one of his main sobriety goals, which is regaining his driving privileges to open up further opportunities for himself. Where he once was so thin as to be in great danger of dying from a number of causes, he is now a positive and healthy man with a good future in front of him. He is living proof that persistence in recovery really pays off and that, no matter how bumpy the road may be, one should never give up hope....and he didn't, and neither did we.

.What I just shared is not an exception. It is what peer recovery looks like every day across Vermont.

Peers are people with lived experience who meet others without judgment and without an agenda. We build trust in moments when trust in systems is often broken—especially for people involved with the justice system. When someone is leaving incarceration or reporting to probation or parole, they are often scared, overwhelmed, and at high risk. A peer can be the difference between someone shutting down and someone leaning in.

Peer recovery coaching works because we show up consistently. We walk alongside people as they navigate treatment, housing, employment, family reunification, and the emotional weight of starting over. We don't replace clinical care—we strengthen it by helping people stay engaged long enough for it to work.

Peer Recovery Coaching began in 2016 at Turning Point Center of Rutland serving Marble Valley Regional Correctional Facility. In July of 2023, I was approached by the Department of Corrections to begin discussions on how to expand this program statewide. In July of 2024, grant funding was in place and recovery centers were beginning their programs in correctional facilities in their area and by February 2025, funding was provided to work with all Probation and Parole offices. The funding request before you supports peer recovery coaching at 18 sites statewide, including six correctional facilities and twelve probation and parole locations, through a partnership between Recovery Partners of Vermont and the Department of Corrections.

This work creates continuity of care across systems. Instead of people being released with a phone number and a "good luck," peers help ensure that someone has support before release and continues to have support once they are back in the community. That continuity saves lives—especially in the weeks immediately following release, when overdose risk is highest.

This is also about public safety. When people are supported in recovery, they are more likely to stabilize, less likely to return to incarceration, and more likely to become contributing members of their communities.

The \$1.25 million request is a responsible, carefully structured investment.

Over \$1 million goes directly to peer coaching staff—the people doing the work day in and day out. Operating costs are minimal, averaging about \$1,000 per site per year, and administrative costs are capped at 10 percent. This means the vast majority of funding goes straight to services, not overhead.

From a fiscal perspective, peer recovery programs reduce costly emergency department visits, prevent relapse and overdose, and decrease recidivism. From a human perspective, they keep people alive long enough to heal and rebuild.

I am here today because someone believed I was worth investing in—before I believed it myself. That is what peer recovery does. It holds hope until someone can carry it on their own.

Vermont has long been a leader in recovery-oriented systems of care. Supporting this \$1.25 million increase allows us to continue that leadership and ensures that recovery support is available regardless of where someone lives or whether they are involved with the justice system.

Federal dollars have funded this program in the past, but that funding ended, so the Opioid Abatement funds are needed to keep this program going to serve individuals within correctional facilities and local Probation and Parole offices.

Please support the VT Department of Health's recommendation to appropriate \$1,250,000 in FY27 Opioid Abatement Funds to continue the successful peer recovery coaching program within our correctional facilities. This is a joint request from Recovery Partners of VT and VT Dept. of Corrections. It reflects Vermont values: compassion, dignity, accountability, and belief in people's capacity to change.

Thank you for your time, your attention, and your commitment to the people of Vermont. I'm happy to answer any questions.

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Recovery Stories for Legislative Testimony 2/11/2026

Coachee X, 41 year old male:

He began coaching at Marble Valley Regional Correctional Facility in January, 2019, shortly after he had been incarcerated, as soon as he became aware of our coaching program. He participated in our group programs and always came for individual coaching when called down. We provided him with a variety of recovery literature, which he studied avidly and internalized thoroughly. During the COVID shutdown at MVRCF, he maintained a consistent correspondence with his coach via mail and maintained his focus on his recovery from addiction. He was released on probation in January, 2021 without accommodation and without employment, but he was in close touch with TPCR from the moment he was released until he was able to get on the voucher program. We helped him find employment and he soon got a room at a rooming house in downtown Rutland and, within a couple of months of his release, got a better-paying job in construction. He was able to save money and acquire a vehicle, find better housing in Brandon. By Fall, 2024, he had gotten a job as chief mechanic at a marina in Shelburne and an apartment in Rochester. In October, 2025 he successfully completed his probation and has been free from any legal issues since then. On January 19, 2026, he received a medallion commemorating seven consecutive years of continuous sobriety.

Coachee Y, 62 year old male:

He began coaching at MVRCF in the Fall of 2018, having seen a flyer posted in his unit for an information meeting concerning our recovery program at the prison. After attending that meeting, he commenced individual coaching and added our group coaching, attending faithfully and participating actively. His enthusiasm for recovery was amazing and infectious, bringing a lot of other men at MVRCF into coaching as well. After he was sentenced, he maintained an almost daily correspondence by mail with his coach when he was relocated at SSCF, NSCF, and finally to NECC prior to his release in February, 2022. He was accepted at Dismas House in Rutland where he was a model resident while hading many difficult mental and physical health problems to overcome, along with adjusting to being out of prison for the first time in a long time. Despite some minor setbacks, he has stayed focused on his recovery and now has an apartment of his own, a partner with whom he is very happy, and a very good plan for the future. One of his major issues had been reaching out for help when he needed it, which he has largely overcome and is now one of the most engaged people in our program. He has 3 1/2 years of continuous recovery from alcohol and drugs.

