



Background

Recovery coaching involves nonclinical professionals helping individuals with substance use disorders (SUDs) access care and supporting them in the removal of barriers to recovery. Addressing opioid and other substance use disorders has been a national issue with bipartisan support since at least 2018, and federal agencies such as AmeriCorps have increased their efforts to fund programs that address this national priority.

This brief highlights key findings from an evaluation that examined the services provided by 11 AmeriCorps-supported recovery coaching organizations (funded across two cohorts) and associated individual- and program-level outcomes. The evaluation’s mixed methods approach conducted surveys, interviews, and focus groups with program directors, recovery coaches, program participants, and comparison group members that did not receive recovery coaching.

Findings

By examining the implementation and outcomes of these 11 recovery coaching programs, the evaluation sheds light on the importance of three elements of recovery coaching models.

Approach

Programs used a whole-person, culturally appropriate approach.

This type of holistic care created access to a variety of services, including financial, housing, employment, and mental health support. Most of the organizations worked successfully with partners and providers to facilitate client referrals for a range of services.

Coaches

Recovery coaches’ lived experience with SUD was important for building rapport and increasing client engagement.

The definition of “lived experience” varied across organizations, but it was widely perceived as a key pillar that allowed coaches to relate deeply and build trust with program participants. **Recovery coaches also reported that being a recovery coach helped maintain their own recovery.**

Time

Spending more time with a recovery coach was associated with greater recovery capital scores.

Recovery capital comprises an individual’s internal and external resources that help enhance capacity for and commitment to living a sober life. Participants who reported spending 9-16 hours per week were associated with a 1-point higher recovery capital score (which ranges from 1-5) than those who spent less than 1 hour per week with their coach.

Organizational Capacity Building

Evaluation capacity building was provided to participating organizations through 12 hour-long technical assistance sessions on a monthly basis. The sessions, meant to enhance the organizations’ capacity as evaluation practitioners, focused on evaluation (1) planning, (2) implementation, and (3) reporting and usage.

Surveys administered at the end of each session gauged organization’s satisfaction. The session “Feedback on the Bundled Evaluation” had the highest rating overall, suggesting that **evaluation participation may be meaningfully enriched when evaluation findings are shared with participants.**



Read the full evaluation study on the [AmeriCorps Evidence Exchange](#) to learn more!

About the Office of Research and Evaluation

The [AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation](#) assists AmeriCorps and its partners in collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data and insights about AmeriCorps programs and civic life in America.

About AmeriCorps

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