



RECOVERY HOUSING BEST PRACTICES

# HOW TO CREATE A RECOVERY TO WORK PROGRAM

HELPFUL TIPS FROM THE FLETCHER GROUP RCOE

The Fletcher Group assists communities in creating impactful workforce development initiatives aimed at the employment of individuals who are in recovery from Substance Use Disorders (SUD). FGI provides recovery to work technical assistance—everything from communication and soft skills development to entrepreneurial training—to help fair chance job seekers achieve gainful, meaningful employment that is essential to long-term abstinence and recovery.

The Fletcher Group (FGI) serves as an RCORP Rural Center of Excellence (RCOE) on SUD Recovery funded by HRSA's Federal Office of Rural Health Policy. FGI is a 501c3 nonprofit and an industry leader in SUD Recovery Ecosystems, providing implementation support, evidence-based practices, and research related to SUD recovery.

If you need more information about this toolkit, or would like additional SUD recovery related resources, please contact the Fletcher Group at 606-657-4662 or use our contact form at [www.fletchergroup.org/contact/](http://www.fletchergroup.org/contact/)

**Quality of life,  
personal  
development,  
and sustained  
recovery from  
Substance Use  
Disorders are  
all enhanced by  
meaningful  
work  
experiences.**

# RECOVERY TO WORK INITIATIVES



By investing in Recovery to Work programs, recovery housing and service organizations can provide recovering individuals with tools and resources to succeed in the workforce. These resources include job training, career counseling, resume building, and support services to build skills and boost confidence. Employment experience is a critical component of recovery that can increase personal marketability and build networks needed to succeed in the job market while achieving lasting recovery. Employment is also critical to establish credit that in turn leads to the ability to obtain and maintain stable housing.

Identifying participant needs is the initial step in creating a successful recovery to work program. This is achieved by assessing occupational skills, work readiness, and vocational interests (including workplace values) to understand what type of job training and workforce development opportunities are best suited to the individual participants. Community resources such as Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Employment Services, and other programs created by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provide valuable tools and expertise for vocational assessment.

Using its robust network of recovery organizations, FGI can help connect established organizations to serve as mentors to others that are either just getting started or that want to strengthen their operations (including creating Recovery to Work programs). The Fletcher Group's contact information is:

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# FLETCHER GROUP INITIATIVES

**The Taylor Made School of Horsemanship** hires residents of local recovery homes to work as entry-level grooms following 12 to 16 weeks of training. Learn more about the Taylor Made School of Horsemanship here: [The Taylor Made School of Horsemanship - Horse Illustrated](#)

**Making Music Hickory Hills** uses high-quality donated musical equipment at two recovery centers that are collaborating with a local theater to create a recording studio which will allow residents to learn valuable music production skills. To learn more contact [lbaier@fletchergroup.org](mailto:lbaier@fletchergroup.org).

**Recovery and Entrepreneurship Elevating Lives (REEL)** is a social entrepreneurship program for residents of recovery homes. Examples of successful entrepreneurship programs have included candle making and tee shirt design. Learn more about REEL: [REEL - SKED \(skedcorp.com\)](#)

**Employment Coaching for Substance Use Disorder Recovery** – Aligning with a SAMHSA 2021 publication on SUD Recovery, Employment, and Education, FGI's employment coaching program emphasizes the need for effective employment supports as part of recovery. Learn more: [lbaier@fletchergroup.org](mailto:lbaier@fletchergroup.org).

**Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)** – This program, in partnership with the Jordan Center (nursing facility), secured approval for recovering trainees with criminal records to take the state CNA test. Future plans are to create a residential CNA program where recovering students can reside onsite while completing training, receiving certification, and securing employment. Learn more: [lbaier@fletchergroup.org](mailto:lbaier@fletchergroup.org).



## *Future Programming*

**Electrician Training** – This will be an alternative course of training for the Taylor Made School of Horsemanship. It will target those who choose not to work in the equine industry. The training program's electrician apprenticeship programs do not require the completion of classroom-based electrician programs. Learn more: [lbaier@fletchergroup.org](mailto:lbaier@fletchergroup.org).

# EXPANDING YOUR SUD WORKFORCE

## *Peer Support Specialists*

This training initiative is a partnership between the Fletcher Group, Southeast Kentucky Community and Technical College (SKCTC), Hazard Community and Technical College (HCTC), and the Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program (EKCEP).

This collaboration is designed to assist residents of six recovery centers to receive remote peer support specialist training, obtain certification, and get linked to peer support employment opportunities.

Individuals interested in a Peer Support Specialist career will be enrolled in an online training course provided by SKCTC or HCTC. The course consists of 30 hours of training, certification prep, and the certification exam on the last day of the course.

The cost of the course and certification exam are covered through grant funding received by the college systems and/or funding provided through EKCEP's SITE initiative.

EKCEP Job Entry and Retention Specialists will work with the participating recovery facilities and students to identify employment opportunities in rural, underserved communities that would benefit from Peer Support Services to expand access to behavioral health care.



## *Help from the Fletcher Group*

The Fletcher Group can assist you in learning more about Peer Support Specialist training and how to develop your own training program. You can request our assistance by visiting <https://www.fletchergroup.org/contact/>.

# TIPS FOR CREATING YOUR OWN RECOVERY TO WORK PROGRAM

Recovery to Work (RTW) programs ideally include job training, career counseling, resume building, and other support services to help build skills and boost confidence.

By assessing occupational skills, work readiness, and vocational interests it is possible to identify job training and workforce development opportunities that are best suited to the participants. Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Employment Services, and WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) programs may offer assessment expertise.

An ideal RTW curriculum includes various types of training (skills building, resume writing, interviewing, and job searching) and soft skills (effective communication, teamwork, and time management). Partnerships with local employers can expand job training and internship opportunities enabling participants to gain practical experience, build networks, and secure employment.

Coaching and Mentoring help recovering individuals navigate the job market, build confidence, and overcome obstacles to obtaining and maintaining employment. Career development services, such as WIOA programs, can help identify areas of improvement and adjust employment plans to correspond with the participant's strengths.



## *Recovery to Work Resources*

**CareerOneStop** is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor and provides tools and resources to help individuals explore career options, develop job search skills, and find employment. The website includes a directory of American Job Centers which offer a variety of services and resources for job seekers. <https://www.careeronestop.org/>

**National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI):** NAMI offers resources to help individuals in recovery from mental illness and co-occurring SUD find and maintain employment. [People with Mental Illness Can Work | NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)

**Goodwill Industries:** Goodwill offers a range of employment services and job training programs for individuals with disabilities, including those in recovery from SUD. Goodwill Industries offers job placement assistance, career counseling, and vocational training. <https://www.goodwill.org/>

# RESOURCES (continued)

**Recovery Community Organizations (RCOs):** RCOs are led and governed by individuals in recovery. Many RCOs offer employment services and support services including job search assistance, resume building, and networking opportunities

<https://facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/programs/arco/>

**Job Accommodation Network (JAN):** JAN is a free service for people with disabilities that is provided by the U.S. Department of Labor. JAN offers resources and guidance on how to request and implement job accommodations, as well as provides information on legal rights and responsibilities related to employment and disabilities. <https://askjan.org/>

**Adult Education and Literacy (AEL):** The AEL program is funded by the U.S. Department of Education and provides free or low-cost adult education and literacy services in all 50 states.

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/index.html>

**Recovery Café Network (RCN):** Recovery Cafés are committed to serving people who have experienced trauma and results of trauma including homelessness, substance use disorder, and other mental health challenges. Employment is essential to RCN's service model which is also recognized as a Recovery Oriented System of Care

<https://recoverycafenetwork.org/>

These resources can be helpful in supporting individuals in recovery to enter the workforce and build a successful, meaningful career. It's important to explore and identify the resources that best fit the needs of each individual, and to provide ongoing support and encouragement as they navigate the job search and employment process.



## *Fletcher Group Partner Success Story*

*"Having a job helps you build a foundation," says Craig Dean, Case Manager at the Recovery Trail halfway house in the rural town of Sevierville, Tennessee. "It not only helps people pay the bills, put food on the table, and take care of child support. It also builds self-worth and a sense of accomplishment." Of course, it's never been easy for people in recovery to find work, particularly if they have a criminal record. That's why Recovery Trail has worked so diligently with the Fletcher Group and their local job center to build a model workforce development program that's helped over 100 residents find gainful employment.*

*Recovery Trail had already committed itself to helping residents find employment when Dean and Recovery Trail Executive Director Toby Wagner met Lori Baier, the Fletcher Group's Director of Workforce Initiatives, at a conference hosted by the National Alliance for Recovery Residences. "When Craig and Toby heard about the new pilot program we were launching, they jumped right in," says Baier. "We began meeting once a week, provided employment coaching, and helped them develop closer ties with both local employers and their nearest job center. From there, it just took off."*

# BUILDING FAIR CHANCE EMPLOYER RELATIONSHIPS

Building fair chance employer relationships refers to establishing partnerships between employers and organizations that work with individuals who have criminal records, histories of Substance Use Disorder, or other barriers to employment. The goal is to create a pipeline for individuals with these barriers to access job opportunities, while also providing employers with a reliable and skilled workforce.

Many employers are hesitant to hire individuals with criminal records due to liability, safety, and reliability concerns. To overcome these barriers, service providers can provide education and training to employers about the benefits of hiring individuals with criminal records, such as tax incentives, increased employee loyalty, and having a larger pool of qualified candidates from which to select.

Service providers can establish relationships with employers by attending job fairs, hosting networking events, and creating a database of employers who are willing to hire individuals with criminal records. These relationships can help service providers connect job seekers to employers who are committed to fair chance hiring.

Job seekers with SUD and/or criminal records benefit from employment preparation services such as job readiness training, resume building, and interview coaching. These services may be provided by the service organization and/or community partners. Ongoing support can be made available to both employers and employees to ensure a successful transition to the workforce.



Building fair chance employer relationships requires collaboration with other community organizations, such as workforce development agencies, reentry programs, and community colleges. These partnerships can help create a comprehensive support system for individuals with criminal records and connect them with a wide range of job opportunities.

# EMPLOYER RELATIONSHIPS (continued)

**Getting Talent Back to Work:** This initiative from the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) provides resources and support to employers who are committed to fair chance hiring. The initiative includes a toolkit for employers, webinars, and best practices for creating a fair chance hiring program.

<https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/news/shrm-foundation-introduces-getting-talent-back-to-work-certificate>

**The National Employment Law Project (NELP):** NELP is a national advocacy organization that works to promote fair chance hiring policies and practices. The organization provides research, policy analysis, and technical assistance to help organizations develop fair chance hiring programs. <https://www.nelp.org/>

**The Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO):** CEO is a nonprofit organization that provides comprehensive employment services to individuals with criminal records. The organization works with employers to create fair chance hiring opportunities and offers job readiness training, job coaching, and retention services to help individuals succeed in the workplace. <https://ceoworks.org/>

**The Ban the Box Campaign:** The Ban the Box campaign is a national movement aimed at eliminating the checkbox on job applications that asks about criminal history. The campaign encourages employers to consider a job seeker's qualifications first, before asking about criminal history. The campaign provides resources and tools for employers who are interested in adopting fair chance hiring practices.

<https://www.nelp.org/publication/ban-the-box-fair-chance-hiring-state-and-local-guide/>

**Second Chance Business Coalition:** This coalition is a national network of employers who are committed to fair chance hiring practices. The coalition provides resources and support to help employers create fair chance hiring programs and connect with qualified job seekers. <https://secondchancebusinesscoalition.org/>

These resources can provide valuable guidance and support for SUD service providers looking to build fair chance employer relationships. By leveraging these resources and collaborating with community partners, organizations can create meaningful employment opportunities for individuals with criminal records and help build stronger, more inclusive communities.





# HOW TO SUSTAIN A PROGRAM

Although grant funds are often used to initiate and temporarily support employment projects, relying on grants for program continuation does not always constitute the basis for a reliable or predictable sustainability plan. Alternative means of sustaining employment programs include creating social enterprises that generate profit to keep the program afloat and exploring whether any of the meaningful employment program components (such as services provided by Peer Support Specialists) qualify for Medicaid reimbursement.

Some employers may qualify for tax credits of up to \$2,400 per employee through the Work Opportunity Tax Credit. Individuals who may qualify for the credit are those who were formerly incarcerated or were previously convicted of a felony; individuals referred to an employer following completion of a rehabilitation plan or program; and individuals experiencing long-term unemployment. An entire list of eligible individuals can be found here: [Work Opportunity Tax Credit | Internal Revenue Service \(irs.gov\)](#).

Another source of employment training has been created by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). This federal legislation was designed to strengthen and improve the nation's public workforce system and help get Americans, including youth and those with significant barriers to employment, into high-quality jobs and careers and help employers hire and retain skilled workers. Information about WIOA funded training programs in all states can be found here: [WIOA-Eligible Training Program Finder | CareerOneStop](#).



# EVALUATING YOUR PROGRAM

Program evaluation is a systematic approach to collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing information about a program to answer questions about its effectiveness, cost-benefit of implementing the program, quality improvement, and others. There are a variety of methods that can be used to conduct program evaluation. For example, programs can develop and distribute surveys to program beneficiaries, conduct interviews or focus groups, or assess pre-existing information collected by the program.

Organizations seeking to implement evaluation activities for their recovery to work programs may consider a simple approach that considers, is the person working, at what wage, and with what degree of satisfaction? A basic evaluation can focus on the satisfaction of the individuals served and a few brief validated measures related to the program. An example of a protocol to assess the impact of an employment coach supporting residents in a RH could include the following surveys:

*Resident Intake Survey* (collected prior to working with employment coach). Includes brief demographic questions; current employment questions (i.e., employment status, role); interest in seeking education/vocational training; dream job; etc.

*Resident Follow-up* (collected at frequencies determined while in the program and follow-up after exit). Collects information about satisfaction with the employment coach’s support. For example, “On a scale from 0 to 10 with 0 indicating “extremely unsatisfied” and 10 indicating “extremely satisfied”, how satisfied are with the employment coaching you’ve received? [0 – 10 scale]. Current employment questions can also be asked, for example – if employed, you can use the following index.

## Brief Index of Affective Job Satisfaction

*Please use a checkmark to indicate your degree of agreement with the following statements.*

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
I find real enjoyment in my job					
I like my job better than the average person					
Most days I am enthusiastic about my job					
I feel fairly well satisfied with my job					

# PROGRAM EVALUATION (continued)

The simple evaluation example on the previous page primarily relies on surveys distributed via survey links. Evaluation can be designed using a variety of methods geared toward meeting the organization's unique needs and questions about a program. For example, one-to-one interviewing methods can be used to capture information directly from residents.

A variety of evaluation tools are cost-effective and easy-to-use. Examples include [Google Forms](#), [Survey Monkey](#), and basic pen/paper with entry into Microsoft Excel. Electronic data entry is recommended as it saves time and resources when the data is ready to be analyzed. Ultimately, evaluation and the methods employed are as unique as the recovery organizations that conduct them. There is no one way to obtain data to answer questions regarding various organizations and/or the unique programs implemented within them.

Evaluation, whether simple, complex, or in-between, is critical to organizational evolution, quality improvement, and ultimately, supporting the individuals who are served. For more information or for rural programs seeking technical assistance regarding evaluation, please contact us at [www.fletchergroup.org](http://www.fletchergroup.org).

## CONCLUSION

Acquiring employment is a critical element to support recovery from a Substance Use Disorder. Individuals in early recovery often face substantial barriers to obtaining employment such as transportation access, having required forms of identification, gaps in resumes, etc. Recovery to Work programs, especially when offered in combination with other recovery support services, can positively influence the likelihood of meaningful employment and ultimately, long-term recovery and improved wellbeing. FGI offers rural recovery programs the tools, training, and technical assistance to successfully launch Recovery to Work programs. For help, contact us at [www.fletchergroup.org](http://www.fletchergroup.org).

