The Culture of Recovery in America:
Recent Developments &
Their Significance

Bill White
Chestnut Health Systems
Email: bwhite@chestnut.org
The Ecology of Addiction Recovery

1990: The Culture of Addiction, The Culture of Recovery

Transition from addiction to recovery often a journey between two quite distinct worlds.
A Cultural Model of Addiction and Recovery

Total Population

Death
Spontaneous Remission
Maturing Out

Treatment
Self Help

Tribal Organization

Elements
- Language
- Symbols
- Rituals
- Diet
- Music
Activities
Roles
Careers
Milestones

Tribal Organization

Elements
- Language
- Symbols
- Rituals
- Diet
- Music
Activities
Roles
Careers
Milestones

Styles of Long-Term Recovery
Early Definition of Culture of Recovery

- Focused on Twelve Step Groups (AA and NA in particular) and fledgling alternatives
- Spoke of “recovery community” in singular
- Recommended assertive approaches to disengaging clients from C of A and linking clients to resources within the C of R
- Today, the doorway of entry into recovery is widening as are resources to enhance quality of life in recovery.
Presentation Goals

1. Provide a historical update of the culture of recovery in America to include a review of diverse communities of recovery and emergence of cultural institutions beyond mutual aid societies.

2. Explore the implications of these changes for addiction professionals.
Recovery: From Self-help to Social Movement

Parallels with other modern social movements (civil rights, women’s liberation, LGBT rights)

1. Institution Building
2. Cultural Development
Institution Building

- National/Local Leadership Organizations
- Public Education & Media
- Law & Policy, e.g., discrimination
- Educational Access & Equity
- Business, Industry & Labor Practices
- Health Care Access, Equity & Response to Special Concerns
- Mobilization or Challenge to Religious Institutions
Cultural Development

- Reconstruction of History
- Identity Reconstruction
- Language Audit & Construction
- Values Definition
- New Symbols
- Musical Anthems
- Artistic Expression
- Literature
Culture of Recovery Update

- Recovery Support Societies
- New Recovery Advocacy Movement
- Spread of Grassroots Recovery Community Organizations & Recovery Support Centers
- Recovery Home Movement
- Recovery School Movement
- Recovery Ministries, Churches & Colonies
Recovery Mutual Aid

• Growth of Twelve Step Groups
• Growing varieties of Twelve Step experience
• Dramatic growth in total membership
• Geographical dispersion in U.S. and internationally
• Diversification of recovery frameworks
Spiritual Frameworks of Recovery

Twelve-Step Groups, e.g., -AA (1935) and NA (1947, 1953)


Non-Twelve Step, Spiritual Alternatives

--The Red Road to Wellbriety
Further Specialization

Family


Emergence of Concept of “Family Recovery”
Further Specialization

Occupational

International Doctors in Alcoholics
Further Specialization

Co-Occurring Problem

Criminal Justice
Inner Circle
Winner’s Circle/Community
Meeting Specialization

- Gender
- Age or duration of sobriety
- Ethnicity
- Sexual orientation
- Smoking status
- Degree of religiosity
- Endless varieties of meeting formats
Secular Recovery Support Groups

- Women for Sobriety (1975)
- Secular Organization for Sobriety / Save Our Selves (1985)
- Rational Recovery (1986)
- Men for Sobriety (1988)
- SmartRecovery® (1994)
- Moderation Management (1994)
- LifeRing Secular Recovery (1999)
Religious Recovery Support Groups

- Calix Society (1947)
- Alcoholics Victorious (1948)
- Teen Challenge (1961)
- Alcoholics for Christ (1976)
- JACS (1979)
- Celebrate Recovery, Free N’ One, Ladies Victorious, Overcomers in Christ, Liontamers Anonymous, Mountain Movers, Millati Islami
Important Resource

Mutual Support Resources updated every 30 days at Faces and Voices of Recovery Web Site

http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/resources/support_home.php
Update on Science of Recovery Support

Emerging Recovery Research Agenda

Key Findings Emerging on:

• Recovery Prevalence
• Diversity of Recovery Pathways
• Active Ingredients
• Additive Effects to Treatment
• Best Linkage Procedures
• Point of Recovery Stability
New Recovery Advocacy Movement

History

2001 Recovery Summit in St. Paul

Influence of CSAT’s RCSP and ATR

National Organization

Faces and Voices of Recovery

NCADD

Johnson Institute

Legal Action Center
Movement Goals

• Political/Cultural Mobilization of Communities of Recovery
• Recovery-focused Public & Professional Education
• Advocacy of Pro-recovery Laws & Social Policies
• Push for Recovery-focused Redesign of Treatment
• Promotion of Peer-based Recovery Support Services
• Recovery Celebration
• Promotion of Recovery Research
by our silence we let others define us

How will anyone know about recovery from addiction if we don’t tell them?
Will we continue to allow stigma, shame and misunderstanding to destroy our friends, our families, and our communities?
How will anyone know?

Be an Agent of Change!
Join the Missouri Recovery Network and support the Face and Voice of Recovery!
Toll-free 877-669-2280  www.morecovery.org
WE ARE THE
FACES OF RECOVERY

Recovery is everywhere.
Grassroots Recovery Community Organizations (RCOs)

- Organized by and on behalf of communities of recovery
- Focus on advocacy, education and peer support services
- Establishing Recovery Support Centers, e.g., CCAR’s Network of RSCs in CT
- Some contracting to do telephone-based, post-treatment recovery checkups
Recovery Home Movement

• Halfway Houses (1950s) to Social Model Rehabilitation Programs (1970s)
• Oxford House (1975) (1,200 homes, 48 states, 24,000 residents per year)
• Federal Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 (Loan Fund)
• Broader Recovery Home Movement
• Philadelphia Survey (21 funded; 250 unfunded)
Recovery School Movement

• High School and Collegiate Levels
• Association of Recovery Schools (2002)
• Key Elements
  -- Active recruitment of people in recovery
  -- Scholarships
  -- On-campus recovery support
  -- Academic mentoring
  * Early Evaluations (high rates of continuous recovery & academic excellence)
Recovery Industries

• Formats range from “recovery friendly” (Zingerman’s Deli, Venturetech) to “recovery exclusive” employers (Recovery at Work)
• Preparatory or Permanent Employment
• Core Elements:
  --Skill training
  --Work-based peer recovery coaching
  --Linkage to recovery communities
  --Establishment of legitimate work history
Recovery Ministries, Churches & Colonies

- “Recovery friendly churches”
- Mega-churches with a “recovery pastor”
- Lay leaders of recovery support groups
- Recovery-focused worship services and workshops
- Recovery Churches, e.g., Central Park Recovery Church in St. Paul
- Faith-based recovery colonies, e.g., Dunklin Memorial Camp in Okeechobee, Florida
- National Association for Christian Recovery
Cultural Development Between (rather than within) Communities of Recovery

- Identity Reconstruction
- Reconstruction of History
- A New Language
- Values Definition
- New Symbols
- Musical Anthems
- Artistic Expression
- Literature
Implications for Addiction Professionals

1. We must all become students of American Communities of Recovery

2. We (recovering and non-recovering) can play key roles in the new recovery advocacy movement and local recovery community development

3. We must help re-engineer addiction treatment toward a greater focus on long-term recovery.
Implications for Addiction Professionals

4. The growing diversity of communities of recovery calls for use of a philosophy of choice with clients in addiction Tx.

5. We must move towards more assertive models of linkage to recovery support societies and larger recovery support institutions.

6. We must begin to see the community as our client—openness to models of community organization and community/cultural development.
Primary References
