

# **The WIRCO Dane County Recovery Support Center**

***Model for A Recovery Community Support Center***



***David Macmaster***

***With special thanks to William White  
For improving this manual with helpful  
Suggestions and encouragement***

WISCONSIN RECOVERY COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

# WIRCO RSC MANUAL – ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the development of this model of our Dane County Recovery Support Center manual I thank those who have inspired me to be part of the emerging Recovery Community Organization movement. They have inspired me to create this manual for those wishing to develop their own Recovery Support Center. My purpose is to identify relevant support services that can be provided from a facility/program capable of providing them. I want to share my passion for reducing and eliminated the stigma of addiction and replace it with the reality that recovery is not only possible it is a happening successfully all the time.

I thank William White for his pioneering contributions to the “recovery movement” and his personal assistance and support as I wrote this manual. I am also grateful to William White for his participation as a member of the National Tobacco Integration Advocacy Council I coordinate. His support re-enforces our Big Tent Recovery concept that includes tobacco free recovery as being as important as all other addiction recovery.

Thanks to my colleague, Jim Wrich, who was a board member, project developer and business advisor for our Wisconsin Recovery Community Organization (WIRCO.) Jim contributed significantly in the content of this manual. Jim added his WIRCO services to his pioneer reputation as an early leader and author in the Employee Assistance Program movement. Jim went to Connecticut with me to research the CCAR programs and has been a personal friend and colleague as we share our long-term recoveries.

I thank Phil Valentine for his generous support as the Director of the Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery (CCAR) and his staff for their technical assistance and expertise with recovery support centers. They are the pioneers we want to follow.

Our friend in recovery, Bob Morris, gave me tips and ideas for saving WIRCO from probable failure before he died from lung disease. Bob planned to help us with our WIRCO mission. Sadly before he could provide the program development and funding resources assistance he wanted to share with us, he died from the unexpected onset of his health problems. It was his inspiration that re-energized me to continue with WIRCO when I wanted to quit and move on to easier challenges.

My recovery friend and 20 year colleague, Robert Ingraham, was our first WIRCO President, website designer and Media Director. Robert recorded our high definition video recovery stories and secured our Recovery Community home and a place for our WIRCO Recovery Support Center in Madison at Asbury United Methodist Church. Asbury continues to generously provide rent-free space and support as part of their “reaching out” mission. Rose Gruber, our first treasurer helped us develop our Big Tent Recovery concept by advocating for problem gambling recovery and was a board member from our first day as a Recovery Community Organization. Patrick Kempfer was our first Volunteer Coordinator; helped us raise some money and served on our board. Pat and I spent countless hours dreaming and planning how we could make our Madison Recovery Support Center the success we wanted for it. The dream remains.

Other early board members and early supporters include Scott Stokes, Steve Dakai, Sheila Weix, and Vicky Edgren, I have a special thank you to Stacy McNatt whose energy and vision was the spark that made WIRCO possible. She travelled the state recruiting the 60 stakeholders that met together to create WIRCO. I apologize if I have forgotten to include others that helped us get started and persevere without sustainable funds. It has been an uphill challenge to develop an RCO that can survive and provide the support services that make recovery from addictions and its related life complications effective.

In 2017 our colleagues in the Sheboygan recovery community organization have accepted WIRCO board leadership functions. We thank them and wish them great success taking WIRCO to the next level.

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## **Creating Your Recovery Support Center Manual**

*You are welcome to use the WIRCO Dane County Recovery Support Center Manual as a template for your RSC manual and adapt it for the unique recovery support needs of your community.*

### **Introduction and Summary**

## **WISCONSIN RECOVERY COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION**

### **WHO WE ARE AND WHY**

This manual was written to guide the work of WIRCO Dane County 1recovery and to offer similar guidance to other communities who wish to capitalize on our experience. Here is a brief overview of what is included in the following pages.

- We used a Big Ideas – Grand Vision theme and explained what we mean by that in our text
- We followed that up with some information on the recovery support resources we discovered in our community. This is often called “recovery capital” by some Recovery Community Organizations (RCO’s). This section documents a community that already has significant recovery resources available. This process of mapping recovery resources also describes the gaps in recovery resources that will need attention going forward.

- We included a brief history of our WIRCO experience as we modified our expectations from our early, ambitious aspirations to address the funding and leadership realities we faced.
- We included a sense of our WIRCO recovery philosophy, open to all that identify themselves as having a desire to be in recovery without limiting that recovery to any particular pathway or type of recovery.
- We addressed the issue of anonymity and recovery celebration as a way of clarifying the different roles mutual help societies and recovery community organizations have in the community by honoring both approaches.
- We made the point that addictions/substance use disorders are seldom singular disorders and are typically accompanied by mental health and medical issues as well as other addictions needing attention and recovery support. Recovery has many related challenges needing attention.
- We explain that RCOs initially were created to reduce the negative stigma of addictions and evolved by adding recovery support activities to this original mission of stigma-reduction.
- Big Tent Recovery became the model for our WIRCO RCO. Big Tent Recovery expands the open door to recovery support for more than those who are recovering from alcohol and the other substance use disorders.
- We decided to include tobacco use disorder recovery because for decades those with tobacco use disorders have been excluded from addiction treatment even though tobacco-use disorders remain the leading cause of death for those with addiction and mental health disorders. WIRCO decided we would not deprive those with this legitimate substance use disorder the same recovery support opportunities that are available to those with alcohol and other drug addiction.
- We decided to include problem gambling recovery support to our Big Tent because this disorder is frequently comorbid with alcohol, tobacco and drug disorders.
- Finally, our Big Tent approach welcomes anyone that wants to be in recovery from any substance use related disorder including family members affected by someone's addiction and related problems.
- We believe those with substance use disorders need life-long support not just early recovery support to address the chronic nature of these disorders.

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**WIRCO**

## **RECOVERY SUPPORT CENTER MANUAL**

By David “Mac” Macmaster

### **BIG IDEAS – GRAND VISION**

Recovery from addictions, now called substance use disorders, and all their related problems and concerns, have plagued us for centuries. What to do about them is a challenge individuals families and communities continue to struggle with.

Emerging from this dilemma is the notion of recovery communities. New concepts of “Recovery Oriented Systems of Care (ROSC)” and “Recovery Management (RM)” are now the prevalent federal and state approaches to our addiction realities. We welcome them. They are missing links to making recovery more powerful than the pathology of addiction.

Addiction treatment providers have known for decades that recovery from substance use disorders requires acceptance of the nature of addictions as chronic disorders requiring lifetime management. One-time treatments are helpful, but they are not enough. Evidence-based addiction treatment combines skilled therapy, medication assistance and long-term support. That long-term support has usually been scarce. When it is available, it is insufficient for those with the most severe and complex conditions. That is changing.

Recovery community organizations (RCOs) like our Wisconsin Recovery Community Organization (WIRCO) are springing up everywhere to provide the comprehensive long-term support that has been missing.

Creative new ideas and services are being offered that provide more “wrap around” support for those in recovery. A grand vision of recovery for everybody is emerging. It is shifting the community from a negative stigma perception of addiction, and those suffering from it, to positive recovery awareness.

Recovery is not only possible but it is happening all around us. The result is a positive new perception of recovery worth supporting. The truth is, those in recovery contribute to better lives for both the afflicted and affected from addiction and the problems that go with it.

Voluntary 12-Step mutual help societies like Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and others have provided support for individuals with substance use and behavioral disorders since 1935. They remain an invaluable recovery asset, and will continue to be there for those wanting to participate. The only requirement for membership is a desire to change.

RCOs like WIRCO believe there are many pathways to [and of] recovery that deserve support. We are not in competition with 12-Step or other mutual support programs. That these societies have helped millions of people find recovery, happiness and productive lives is undisputed. A specific addiction and the behavior attending it is usually the singular focus of these mutual help programs. They tend to limit their activities to the primary purpose of seeking relief from a particular substance or form of self-destructive, self-defeating addictive behavior: AA, alcohol; NA, narcotics and largely illicit drugs; OA, eating disorders; GA, gambling; SA, SAA, SLAA, lust and sexual addiction. Unfortunately, addictions run in bunches. Experience is showing that a person, man or woman, addicted to one substance or behavioral pattern is susceptible to others.

WIRCO and our Recovery Support Center offer a different recovery focus. We intend to provide support services for lifetime recovery from addiction, not just one manifestation of it, and the problems that often go with it. These services include assistance finding housing, employment, and the community services that may help them. WIRCO has a special interest in supporting those in jail, prison and treatment when they are released to the Dane County community.

We welcome all the “big ideas” we can discover that can help us turn our “grand vision” of recovery into a life-changing reality.

WIRCO welcomes all those willing to join us in building our recovery support services. We welcome all those willing to help us reduce the negative stigma and trauma associated with all addictions and the related concerns that harmfully affect individuals, families and our community.

## **DANE COUNTY IS RICH IN RECOVERY RESOURCES**

### **Challenge: Hardly Anyone Knows This.**

Wisconsin is known to have a wide range of community and health services for our residents with substance use and related issues eligible to receive them. Madison and Dane County have more than our share.

#### **When it comes to potential recovery services consider this:**

- Dane County has more than 30 licensed addiction /AODA treatment providers.
- There are more than 200 12-step and other mutual help meetings in Dane County every week.

- One estimate indicates that there are more than 2,000 12 step and other recovery program members in Dane County. There is no registry or directory that keeps track of how many are in recovery or from what.
- Four 12-step meeting centers and at least two other community centers operate in Madison providing affordable space for meetings, social gatherings and services.
- A permanent AA intergroup office (MAICO) operates to coordinate AA meeting lists, outreach, newsletters, literature distribution, and phone information services connecting new comers to those willing to accept calls seeking help.
- Narcotics Anonymous has a similar central member service function in Dane County.
- Dane County has four active recovery community organizations (RCO's) for volunteer peer helpers.
- Other significant resources include the Recovery Coalition for Dane County (RCDC), a merger of addiction and mental health providers and consumers; the Bureau of Prevention, Treatment and Recovery, which coordinates state addiction services from their office in the Division of Mental Health & Substance Use in Madison, and an Alcohol and Other Drug Use office in Dane County Human Services.
- There are many more locally funded resources including mental health and primary health services, court and corrections services, private sector treatment services.
- In addition, federal and state employment programs for job placement and vocational rehabilitation are crucial to WIRCO's mission.

These are only a partial list a of Dane County's recovery support services. Our continued search [for other recovery support services] will likely identify many more.

**How can a person entering or re-entering recovery figure out  
Where to go and who to see?**

- WIRCO intends to create an extensive recovery directory, compiling resources to help those in recovery find the support they need for the specific issues that often associated with addiction.
- WIRCO intends to set up focus groups of recovering people to determine missing recovery resources and where current recovery resources need to be improved.
- WIRCO intends to train peer volunteers to understand how to help new and existing people in recovery to access the recovery resources they need.



## **FROM STATE TO LOCAL COMMUNITY**

WIRCO was created to be a statewide recovery support program, and it is our hope that that goal will eventually be realized. We have not yet obtained the funds necessary [and recovery leaders] to make this happen.

Regardless of the eventual geographic scope of WIRCO, it is necessary to create and succeed with a local (or regional) recovery support program that can be adapted and replicated in other Wisconsin communities, an alpha recovery center if you like. We named it the WIRCO Dane County Recovery Support Center (RSC.)

We are modeling the Dane County RSC after centers developed and successfully operated by the Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery (CCAR.)

WIRCO was initially created based on information and training provided by CCAR. Later WIRCO board of director members visited CCAR's headquarters in Hartford and two of their community Recovery Community Centers. We decided to develop and implement some of the specific recovery support services CCAR provides from their centers and follow their guidance in defining and "staying in our lane."

WIRCO decided to adapt much of the CCAR recovery support services for Wisconsin in our first Recovery Support Center. Details of the WIRCO vision, mission and guiding principles can be reviewed on our WIRCO website – [www.wirco.org](http://www.wirco.org)

## **EVERYONE IN WIRCO IS IN RECOVERY OR IS A RECOVERY ALLY**

Addictions are chronic disorders requiring life-long management and attention. More than 80 years of experience with mutual help (or peer help) prove there are real benefits when addicted people are organized to help each other to recover. Long-term peer support for addiction recovery meets the critical criteria of accessibility, affordability, and effectiveness.

Medically based addiction treatment has also been shown to be effective, and combining professional and peer support often generate more favorable recovery outcomes than either when provided in isolation. Other helpful approaches have also been effective in reducing personal, family, and community harm from inappropriate, unwise and addictive alcohol, tobacco, other drug use and related problems.

This is why WIRCO supports the range of pathways and practices that lead to and support successful, ongoing recovery. We do not discriminate or argue about which recovery approach is better. One of our mottos is, "You are in recovery if you say you are, so how you choose to recover is up to you."

Beyond the initial difficulty of getting into recovery, there are a myriad of other life challenges that come into play, some directly related to addiction, others indirectly. As a

result, research and decades of recovery show that even after getting into recovery, many cannot sustain it long term. . Such problems include the basic issues of housing, family dynamics, employment, and the on-going stigma and informal punishment of felony convictions. Moreover, co-occurring and co-morbid mental and physical health issues are frequent barriers to strong recoveries, an improved quality of life, and can lead to relapse.

WIRCO and our RSC were created to take up the challenges of these barriers to recovery in Dane County. The 12-step and other programs specialize in supporting the personal recoveries of their members and those seeking personal recovery from addictions. They are very good at it. All our WIRCO board and members are in recovery and understand the boundaries and separation of roles.

WIRCO will recruit, train and coordinate RSC volunteer peer helpers, sometimes called recovery coaches. RSC volunteers will serve on WIRCO's board and r Advisory Council and will be coordinated to provide RSC recovery support services.

## **Definitions and Language Are Important**

### **ANONYMITY AND CELEBRATION**

Twelve-step programs are anonymous. They began their anonymous tradition, not because they were "secret societies" with something to hide, but to protect their members and the organizations themselves. . In the earlier days of these organizations, being labeled alcoholic or drug addict could get you fired or not hired and damage a person's reputation. Moreover, with anonymity there is a strong emphasis on humility in these programs. Boasting about one's success, or leaving the appearance of such, is not only considered bad taste but can be a threat to one's recovery.

Finally, anonymity is also a commitment to respect another member's privacy. Despite the fact that the World Health Organization and the American Medical Association declared alcoholism to be a disease more than six decades ago, the stigma still remains. Without the safety anonymity provides in 12-step program meetings, fear would surely keep many away.

This tradition still serves its purpose and WIRCO has no quarrel with it. . However, anonymity also creates a dilemma, in that it has largely precluded the advantages that public disclosure of successful recovery could provide, along with the messages of hope to those afflicted and their loved ones – hope which can be so vital in helping an addict to at least try to get on a recovery path.

WIRCO is not bound by an anonymity tradition. However, we respect and support the 12-step program's anonymity tradition in the practice of an individual's 12-step life. While disclosure of recovery is strictly a matter of personal choice, we do encourage those who are solidly grounded in recovery to publicly share their experience, strength and hope, especially the contrast between active addiction and recovery. For some this

may be a quiet disclosure to friends and associates, while for others it may mean shouting it from the rooftops.

Whatever form they may take, our recovery stories counter the stigma our diseases have produced. We want everyone to know that there are two sides to addiction: certainly the sickness with all its terrible public and private consequences, but equally important, what a life of recovery is and its value not only to the addict, but also to their families, their employers and the community at large.

Here is an example of language for disclosing a person's recovery identity that offers a positive impression without revealing any involvement with a 12-Step program that to some is a sacred private trust. It may be seen as way of "going public" in a positive, stigma reducing way:

**"My name is Mary Jones. I am in long-term recovery from alcohol and other drug addiction and have been alcohol and drug free for 22 months. Because of that, I have been able to be a tax-paying parent, employed and doing volunteer community work."**

We do not consider this to be bragging: we are simply sharing our gratitude and joy for the new lives we have been able to raise up out of the rubble of our addictions with the help of others. . We tell our stories because they need to be told. We share our experience, strength and hope publicly so the community will support our personal and family recoveries and help make it more obtainable for those needing support and acceptance.

Recovery is not easy to get and keep especially in the early going. We suffer from addiction - a chronic disorder that needs lifelong attention in order to prevent relapse.

Sometimes it is more important to keep our recoveries private and anonymous for our own good and for the good of the reputations of mutual help and other recovery support programs we participate in.

At other times it is equally important to tell our personal recovery truths publicly, so those that need and deserve recovery will know that it is possible and where to get it. In addition, for some of us, disclosing our recovery publicly actually reinforced our resolve to remain in recovery, especially those for whom abstinence is a crucial part of it.

When large numbers of individuals and families in recovery tell their stories publicly they provide evidence that a large, functioning recovery community that had been largely out of sight actually exists. This powerful message tells everyone that recovery is worth pursuing and supporting and the benefits are plain for all to see. .

But, again, it is a matter of personal choice and the decision should be done preferably after consultation with our sponsor, mentor, therapist, or families.

## **ADDICTIONS COME IN BUNCHES**

One of our WIRCO volunteer directors coined this “addictions come in bunches” concept. He shared his own recovery from more than one addiction and related difficulties. This concept is part of WIRCO’s model of recovery support. We welcome everyone with an addiction or related issues as e equal partners in our program.

WIRCO’s “big tent” model for Recovery Support Communities recognizes the need for lifelong recovery support and that the goal line may shift as time passes. We will seldom be dealing with just one form of addiction as a single challenge. Recovery from addiction is not the same as having a bad tooth pulled, replaced with an implant and the problem is permanently solved. It is a chronic condition, just as diabetes is chronic. Moreover, addiction can be similar to some types of cancer, which manifest in one form, are treated, seem to be remediated but then metastasizes in another form.

We believe it will take all the time it takes on an individual basis to deal with this phenomenon. Moreover, an addiction in multiple forms is not the only issue. Contemporary treatment usually addresses the presenting issue, i.e.: Joe has been getting drunk and using cocaine, so we’ll deal with the substance use disorder. Often, other forms of addiction (gambling, sex, food, smoking) are present but not causing the immediate or most dramatic trouble.

But, if experience has taught us anything, it is that addiction is patient, and unaddressed, will always emerge in some other form to the point of interfering with the life style and life functioning of the individual and those close to him or her. .

We developed our All Recovery Meetings to provide a time and place for dealing with whatever recovery issues we bring to the meetings. WIRCO recognizes those in recovery have different and changing recovery support needs at different stages of our recoveries. For us, recovery is a process we can benefit from if we remain engaged in what we need to address in order to improve the quality of our lives, prevent relapses and become the best versions of ourselves we can be.

## **FROM STIGMA TO SUPPORT**

The original mission of Recovery Community Organizations was to reduce, and hopefully one day eliminate, the stigma of addiction and its negative effects on individuals, families and communities.

Where it has been implemented, this stigma reduction campaign has been very successful and has led to the creation of a number of recovery advocacy organizations such as e the international Faces & Voices of Recovery. Stigma reduction programs, many federally and state funded, have been in existence for more than 20 years.

Stigma reduction and recovery advocacy remain a key component of the “recovery oriented systems of care” approach, which has become the foundation of the recovery component in the “prevention, treatment and recovery” model for addressing addiction

and related issues as a public health problem in a continuum of these three essential components.

The next phase of recovery support is the need for specific recovery support services as an equal plank in the recovery advocacy program.

WIRCO was created to address these two specific core recovery advocacy components. WIRCO's Recovery Support Center (RSC) will reach out to the community with ongoing stigma reduction efforts and develop, identify and provide all the recovery support services possible while staying in our lane. Prevention, intervention, and treatment services are vital, and we support them. However our primary focus is on recovery as a separate and equal component of the continuum.

## **BIG TENT RECOVERY**

WIRCO is different from most other Recovery Community Organizations. Most RCO's focus on alcohol and other drugs as being the problems causing the most trouble in the community. They threaten public safety and produce unwanted negative social behavior. They have the worst reputations in the opinions of many, and need to be the major priorities in recovery support. The current national concern over the opiate epidemic and drug overdoses reinforces the perception that these specific addictive disorders require the highest priority attention. Unfortunately, in practice "highest" often ends up being near exclusive.

WIRCO does not challenge the reality of the opiate overdose issue. But we do not want to lose sight of the overall problem of addictions and its many forms. WIRCO wishes to expand "recovery" to include the full scope of suffering from other addictions and behavioral health disorders because they all play on each other, creating a negative synergism in the life-style and life functioning of the afflicted individual. Consequently, WIRCO promotes tobacco free recovery, problem gambling recovery and recovery from other compulsive and related behavior disorders. WIRCO also supports family recovery from addictions and related disorders.

At this point, we need to look at how WIRCO defines recovery from addiction. With Substance Use Disorders a traditional definition involves abstinence marked by a demonstrated improvement in life-style and life functioning. We have no quarrel with that definition. However, when someone first shows up at our RCO, we have no basis for knowing whether this definition is being realized in their lives, and they may not be ready to buy into it all at once. We do believe, however, that the desire to change for the better and some degree of willingness to do what is needed to realize that change is an essential starting point. If someone shows up at our doorstep we assume that the desire and willingness are present in some measure or they would not be there. Therefore, without denying that there are objective criteria for recovery, we say,

**"You are in recovery when you say you are."**

**And, we greet all who enter the premises by asking:**

**“How can we support your recovery today?”**

Many pathways connect to the road of recovery. WIRCO has an open mind on this issue. We are a “Big Tent” recovery center. Anyone entering WIRCO and our Recovery Support Center enjoys equal status and is welcomed as a recovery family member no matter what they are recovering from and how they come to us.

## **ALCOHOL AND DRUG FREE RECOVERY**

Most of our original WIRCO board directors and members come from backgrounds of addiction recovery. We want to supplement what AA, NA, Alanon, GA, NicA and other mutual help programs do so very well. We leave personal recovery from these devastating disorders to them and the recovery support they offer and help when and where we can.

WIRCO’s volunteer peer helpers help with other issues important to people in recovery beyond their personal recovery programs. We know there is a range of critical needs people in recovery have at the beginning and continuing through their lives in recovery.

It is very difficult to stay clean, sober, in recovery when we don’t have a safe, affordable place to live; when we have no job and can’t find one; when we have a felony record; when our family life and major relationships are in a shambles and when we don’t have enough money to support ourselves.

There are other challenges that happen throughout our recoveries like sickness and death of loved ones, divorces, our children in trouble, loss of financial independence, mental, physical problems and other life complications that make living life on life’s terms very difficult where we need support and solutions. WIRCO wants to help with these issues. We also know we may need to maintain progressive recoveries; addressing our other addictions as we are ready to deal with them.

Our volunteer peer helpers don’t provide direct services that solve these problems, but they are committed to trying to help find solutions and provide referrals to those that specialize in these challenges.

WIRCO’s objective is to respond to those we greet with “How can I/we support your recovery TODAY?” with suggestions and solutions.

## **TOBACCO FREE RECOVERY**

**Why Does WIRCO and our Recovery Support Center Emphasize and Support Tobacco-free recovery?**

Almost everybody knows tobacco is harmful. This fact is not news. What is not generally known is how vulnerable those with alcohol, other drug and mental health disorders are to sickness and death from tobacco caused and related diseases.

Only recently have we discovered the harmful prevalence of tobacco use in these populations. We learned from 80- 92% of those admitted for addiction treatment of alcohol and other drugs smoke and use other tobacco products. This compares with data that reveals smoking tobacco has been reduced to approximately 15% in the general population.

Studies report that approximately 50% of those that smoke for 20 years or into early middle age die from tobacco caused or related diseases. This means those with other drug and alcohol disorders that smoke gets sick and dies at more than 4 times the rate of those dying from tobacco in the general population. Other studies reveal that death from tobacco diseases result in a loss of life expectancy ranging from 10 to 25 years.

Bottom line: Those addicted to nicotine that achieve abstinence from alcohol and other traditionally defined drugs, die early from tobacco. Ironically they get “clean and sober” only to die from the biggest drug killer of them all - tobacco with its most addictive of all drugs, nicotine.

Similar research reveals that those with mental health disorders are also vulnerable to very high rates of sickness and death from tobacco. . They get sick and die from tobacco at two to four times the rate of the general population. Members of WIRCO’s Board of Directors are very aware of these tobacco related facts. They are leaders in the challenge of integrating tobacco treatment and recovery in addiction and mental health services both in Wisconsin and nationally.

By administrative rule, tobacco use disorders are not eligible for inclusion in Wisconsin addiction treatment services as a discrete treatment issue regardless how severe and life-threatening the circumstances. These tobacco discrimination policies and practices are historically true in other states.

Wisconsin addiction treatment providers can only treat nicotine concurrently with other addictions. Only two of Wisconsin’s addiction treatment programs are providing recommended evidence-based tobacco treatment and recovery services. Wisconsin is not the only state that excludes tobacco use disorders in their addiction treatment programs; it is merely an example of the national tobacco exclusion policy in addiction treatment.

The USA developed its current tobacco programs in the 1960’s after the Surgeon General’s annual report linked smoking cigarettes to lung cancer. The Centers for Disease Prevention and Control Centers created the federal Office of Smoking and Health to address tobacco related issues. Every state has its Tobacco Prevention & Control Program.

The USA began its current addiction prevention and treatment programs in the 1970’s following passage of the Hughes Act. Nicotine addiction was not recognized as an

addiction at that time, so tobacco was not included in alcohol and other drugs that became eligible for addiction treatment.

An opportunity came to include nicotine and tobacco in addiction treatment in the 1980's when the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual 111 was published. The DSM is the manual accepted as the authoritative designation of mental health disorders that included alcohol drug dependence. For the first time the DSM included nicotine abuse and dependence as drug dependence disorders. However, the addiction field opted to continue its exclusion of tobacco and nicotine in addiction treatment services, which is a policy that continues to the present.

These discoveries led to WIRCO's decision to include tobacco-free recovery as equal to alcohol, drug and other recoveries.

WIRCO's conclusion is that addiction treatment and addiction recovery field has excluded tobacco recovery for too long. WIRCO is not going to continue this discriminatory practice in our recovery support program.

Those with tobacco, as one of the recognized and listed substance use disorders in the past and present issue of the DSM5; will be welcomed members of our recovery community organization, whether they have other addictions or not.

A prominent addictionologist commented, "Treating tobacco and nicotine dependence in our addiction treatment will save more lives than anything else we do in addiction treatment."

We believe him. WIRCO is grateful to be one of the first to advocate for tobacco free recovery in our (RCO. WIRCO will continue to advocate for a prominent presence of tobacco and nicotine recovery in our invitations for those seeking the best recoveries possible.

Our WIRCO Recovery Support Center will provide tobacco stigma reduction activities in Dane County. WIRCO will also provide tobacco recovery support services for those with tobacco use disorders seeking recovery from this addiction that kills more of us than die from all the other addictions combined.

## **WIRCO SUPPORTS RECOVERY FROM GAMBLING DISORDERS**

For the first time problem gambling has been recognized as an addiction in the DSM5. This makes gambling disorders eligible for treatment services in the public health system. WIRCO and our RSC welcome those seeking support in our recovery community family.

Research indicates that addiction to gambling destroys more families than addiction to alcohol. Many problem gamblers have other addictions to contend with including substance use and mental health disorders. For many, addictions really do come in bunches. Our RSC is a resource for groups seeking a place to meet for a specific focus like



problem gambling. Gambling addiction can also be addressed along with other forms of addiction in our All Recovery Meetings.

WIRCO intends to expand its knowledge of the resources available in Dane County to address the gambling addiction will have a gambling disorder section on its website for postings and information that might be helpful to individuals and families with gambling related issues.

## **WIRCO SUPPORTS FAMILIES IN RECOVERY**

Families are victims of addiction. The persons with an addiction and those that care about them are all victims.

Every family member is harmfully affected by the addiction of family members. Families have their own recovery challenges. Some may be victims and survivors of a family addiction and also suffering from an addiction of their own. Coping with someone else's addiction is a skill set family members learn in family recovery programs like Al-Anon, Families Anonymous and other mutual help programs.

Personal recovery from an addiction is well served by the proven practice of one alcoholic/addict helping another person struggling to find and keep recovery. Families' meeting together to help other families with their struggles to overcome addiction and create recovery is also effective and continues the value of the concept that "recovery is a "WE" program.

WIRCO recognizes that addiction is a family disease. Our Dane County Recovery Support Center and our volunteer peer helpers exist to support family recovery. Peer helpers with experience in family recovery issues lead families to the community services and access to our recovery community and the support and encouragement members of our recovery community provide.

Families in early recovery benefit from the experience of participating in "family interventions" and options shared by other families that have been through the intervention process. Other family volunteers know some families can only cope with the ongoing active addiction of their family members making the best of their unwanted circumstances.

There are ongoing family issues in recovery no matter how long we are in recovery. It is important to have recovery friends that understand these issues and support us as we cope the best we can with life on life's terms. The RSC is a place where ongoing family recovery support can happen.

## Section Two



### **Proposed Recovery Support Center Services**

We have considered why WIRCO was created and why we are developing our Dane County Recovery Support Center. We exist to serve the “recovery community” with the services and solutions that establish and promote a life-long recovery life style. We are reminded to “stay in our lane.” We are not a treatment program; not a drop in center; not a social service agency; not a club or social or recreational center. We are committed to staying in our lane, but we do our best to be helpful to all those that find their way to us. However, we can schedule whatever recovery support activities at our center as special events. We provide “recovery support.” That is why we exist: That is our exclusive mission

Now, let’s describe the specific services we are developing to support all the stages of recovery from early to long-term recovery support.

Remember WIRCO is a “big tent” recovery support program. WIRCO and our RSC services are open to all those that accept their need for recovery from their addictions and related problems. As mentioned above, our philosophy is: “You are in recovery if you say you are.” If RSC visitors do not have a desire to acknowledge their need for recovery, our WIRCO peer helpers will do our best to direct them to community services that may have better resources for them than WIRCO can provide.

### **WIRCO Dane County Recovery Support Services We Plan To Develop**

#### **ALL RECOVERY MEETINGS (ARM)**

##### **WIRCO MEMBERS ARE IN RECOVERY, OR THEY ARE A RECOVERY ALLY**

We have re-stated WIRCO is a “big tent” recovery support community. Our RSC schedules All Recovery Meetings (ARM) that welcomes all who declare they are either in or desire to be in recovery.

Our RSC ARM'S are there to help those attending develop a lifestyle that supports their recovery from addictions and related problems. The ARM helps them to deal with the problems and issues that are associated with addiction and the co-occurring disorders and situations that are common to most with addiction and mental health related disorders.

A monthly calendar provides the days; dates and times ARM meetings are scheduled. The RSC plans to eventually schedule ARM meeting twice-a day, 6-7 days per week.

Those who come to us are in different stages of their recoveries. In ARMs there is a blend of newcomers and those with longer-term recovery and this diversity provides the range of recovery experiences that meets the needs of those attending. Supportive friendships develop among members. Members discover common issues that are important to them. As they listen to others they may see that their addiction is taking a turn they may not have otherwise been aware of.

This often leads to special sub- groups where members work together on issues they may have been struggling with on their own. . These special issue groups arrange their meetings and work sessions separate from ARM meetings, and may be facilitated by RSC's volunteer peer helpers or may be self-facilitated. An example of a special interest group could be members with histories of ineffective financial management. They may recruit a local expert in financial management, or WIRCO may have a volunteer with that expertise to work with the group.

Other examples of special interest groups could be members willing to form a softball team or plant and maintain a community garden. The ARM meetings will be helpful as members find different reasons for connecting.

ARM meetings are not traditional 12-Step meetings, but ARM has adopted the 12-Step meeting concept that provides respectful opportunities for those willing to share their recovery experiences without interruptions, cross talk and uninvited advice. Each person is given an opportunity to share with an understanding that it is important to limit their comments so all are given an opportunity in the time set aside for the meeting.

## **PRE-RELEASE RECOVERY SUPPORT**

Who needs recovery more? A case can be made that anyone with an addiction/substance use disorder can benefit from recovery. But there are those with special circumstances or issues who are entitled to recovery. Recovery is never easy. Those incarcerated in jails and prisons and their families often have a very difficult road to recovery that works for them.

Many prisoners are released with inadequate support and resources and end up incarcerated again because they are unable to make the fresh start they need. WIRCO has peer volunteers very familiar with the challenges of staying clean and sober under these conditions. They have learned how to find the personal and family help necessary

to secure and maintain recovery and freedom. Our volunteer peer mentors are willing to share this recovery support experience.

WIRCO's board of directors is very aware of the challenges those with addictions and co-occurring disorders face when prisoners are released from jail and want to help them get re-established in successful recoveries.

WIRCO is developing a pre-release mentor program to assist prisoners get the personal recovery support that makes their continuing freedom from incarceration more likely and achievable.

WIRCO recruits volunteer peer helpers that commit to develop personal one-to-one relationship support for prisoners that are scheduled to be released to Dane County. WIRCO volunteer mentors commit to providing this one- to- one support for pre-release, release and continuing recovery support for a duration agreed to by both parties.

Other pre-release recovery support programs are components of the WIRCO RSC program. Those in addiction treatment and related health services need to transition from treatment to recovery in a planned path that reduces the risk of relapse.

## **WIRCO TELEPHONE RECOVERY SUPPORT**

WIRCO is replicating a successful telephone recovery support program developed by CCAR. This telephone support service is part of the pre-release mentor program can add another dimension for the person returning from incarceration.

Addiction treatment providers are provided sign-up forms they can offer patients residing in Dane County. Those in treatment are offered free phone recovery support calls from the WIRCO RSC. Those accepting this service sign the agreement, and provide phone numbers where they can be called and the times they think will be most convenient for them to be called. They also provide the date they will be discharged and contact information to allow WIRCO to connect with them. .

WIRCO volunteer peer helpers are assigned to be the telephone "recovery buddy" and begin the phone support as requested by the person accepting this service. Telephone recovery support may continue as long as agreed to.

This phone support is based on the WIRCO/CCAR greeting, "How can I support your recovery today?" Voluntary phone support has proven to be an effective way to connect those released from jail or discharged from residential treatment to existing recovery resources in Dane County. It provides the personal recovery support one addict or family member can give another.

## **BUILDING AND EXPANDING COMMUNITY RECOVERY CAPITAL**

We have identified some of Dane County's rich recovery resources. We consider them to be part of WIRCO's r "recovery capital" or "recovery allies."

Recovery Allies help reduce the stigma and negative perceptions of addiction and related problems. They also understand and support WIRCO's recovery mission. We consider our recovery allies as friends we can trust to help us serve those who come to our program.

WIRCO plans a "WIKIPEDIA" approach to our Recovery Support Directory. We want to be able to add details about each recovery resource as our volunteer peer helpers learn more about them noting any special ability they may have in providing help for specific issues or circumstances. These ongoing additions to our recovery support directory are similar to progress notes in a treatment plan or a project being managed.

This calls for the development of a flexible data base program that can be maintained to provide the updates we hope to add.

This database will include both public and private resources and programs to assist those seeking services to the resources they need. The database may also include individuals, members of WIRCO, the Dane County RSC and other groups and categories that will make searching more convenient.

When we ask "How can we support your recovery today?" we want to be able to have not only personal recovery support and sharing, but also some realistic suggestions for where potential help and services may be provided outside of WIRCO. WIRCO's RSC directory will utilize current directories and build on them. Fortunately such directories exist and are being developed by others. WIRCO is not in competition with others developing recovery resources. We believe our volunteer helpers will benefit from having our recovery resources close at hand in a directory they are helping create as well as utilize.

## **RECOVERY NAVIGATORS**

Dane County has many recovery resources as previously noted. The problem is very few people in or out of recovery know who and where they are. Recovery Navigators are WIRCO volunteer peer helpers trained to understand the needs of those new to recovery or are in crisis. They are educated about recovery resources and able to assist those needing them to identify and access them. WIRCO discovered this recovery navigator service is largely an un-met community need, a service gap if you like.

WIRCO does not directly provide many of these services aside from our RSC support. For example, our RSC does not provide food, shelter, financial assistance, transportation, and employment, or therapy services. But, we know who does and we can help those in need navigate the challenges to get to them.

There are literally thousands of people in recovery living in Dane County. The individual and family experience and recovery skills these people possess are a treasure trove of hope for those WIRCO serves. Now, what a miraculous gift it would be if we could find and enlist these previously anonymous and invisible recovery resource people. How

many lives could we save? How many people would find a better quality of life if we had more people helping others into recovery?

How rewarding would it be if WIRCO could provide opportunities for them to offer their recovery skills by serving as volunteer contacts in our Recovery Resources Directory, and partner with our recovery navigators to connect them with those seeking recovery?

Those in AA, NA, Alanon and other mutual help programs will continue their personal addiction and related recovery sponsorship and services with their tradition of anonymity. WIRCO will always respect the tradition and practice of anonymity, and encourage our members in recovery to never reveal any involvement we may have with AA, NA or other 12-step programs in our public contacts or media.

## **RECOVERY RENEWAL RETREATS**

Our WIRCO RSC recovery support program will include quarterly and some times monthly recovery renewal retreats for WIRCO members and the recovery community.

These scheduled recovery retreats offer opportunities for those in recovery to focus on recovery practices that enhance the quality of life for those in new and long-term recovery. They provide a place and time for spiritual, emotional, and physical growth and healing. Retreat sites are selected for the privacy and atmospheres that promotes a relaxing environment. Retreats may be one day or weekend gatherings, and may expand to “recovery camps” for individuals, families and groups.

WIRCO Recovery renewal retreats provide opportunities for individual, family and groups to expand their recovery relationships and have new opportunities for social connecting and shared times of fun blended with serious personal work.

## **SKILL TRAINING FOR VOLUNTEER PEER HELPERS**

WIRCO is developing a program that trains volunteer peer helpers in basic and advanced helping skills.

WIRCO’s Recovery Support Center volunteers first learn how to listen and understand before offering suggestions. These communication skills provide the basis for developing helping relationships. They give peer helpers the confidence to feel competent as they address the needs and issues people bring to the RSC.

One RSC services provides assistance as visitors and WIRCO recovery community members seek the recovery and other resources they need. This is where RSC recovery navigators serve as guides for those seeking recovery services. Helping RSC volunteers understand where Dane County recovery resources are located is part of their WIRCO training. Peer volunteers are asked to increase the RSC recovery resources directory by adding the recovery resources they have found that may not yet be know to others.

The WIRCO volunteer peer helper training plans to create new opportunities for those desiring advanced recovery support skills to receive the necessary training. Some may wish to become recovery coaches or certified peer specialists. WIRCO plans to help those seeking this advanced training find pathways and financial resources to accomplish this process. WIRCO may apply for applications that accept WIRCO as a qualified vendor of these advanced helping skills training.

## **WIRCO RECOVERY ADVOCACY AMBASSADOR PROGRAM**

WIRCO intends to strengthen Dane County's recovery support resources by advocating for improvement in the recovery-promoting environment.

WIRCO identifies barriers to recovery and proposes solutions to overcome them. Two examples of WIRCO's recovery advocacy priorities are:

**Changing a state regulation that excludes primary tobacco use disorders from receiving treatment for this disorder in our Wisconsin addiction treatment system**

**Those in recovery with felony convictions are burdened with life-long barriers to employment and the freedom from stigma many of them deserve. Felony convictions limit those with documented recovery histories who have completed their debts to society should not be further punished after completing their sentences and court-ordered obligations**

WIRCO recovery focus groups will explore other issues that need to be addressed so access to and support for recovery are improved and sustained.

Determining what are barriers to recovery is one thing; doing something about them is another. WIRCO Recovery Advocacy Ambassadors action team will have lobby functions and take their solutions to the appropriate decision makers in local, state and federal government for consideration.

WIRCO recovery ambassadors will make recovery-promoting presentations to community groups, business organizations and others and seek support for WIRCO and recovery support services. These presentations will also provide support for the various proposals WIRCO makes for improving recovery opportunities and eliminating barriers that make recovery more difficult.

WIRCO is increasing its membership so its advocacy for improved recovery resources will be more credible. Hundreds of tax-paying WIRCO individuals and families in recovery campaigning in person for these improvements is a force to be reckoned with. With a hundred or more WIRCO supporters present at a county or state hearing is difficult to ignore when they are willing to not only sign petitions, but also testify at these hearings.

Wisconsin has lost almost all of the associations that once advocated for better addiction prevention, treatment and recovery services that existed for decades. This means there is little or no functional advocacy for recovery-related issues. The WIRCO Recovery

Advocacy Ambassadors intends to provide one recovery advocacy face and voice that will make a difference and reveal the positive face of recovery to those needing to know we exist so they can support our recovery mission.

## **WIRCO RECOVERY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER**

A successful radio executive created a motto for his sales representatives, “What goes untold goes unsold.”

This is true for Recovery Community Organizations like WIRCO. We have positive messages about recovery to share. We need to share them, so we are creating our WIRCO Recovery Communications Center to get our stories out to the media, our members and the public.

Our WIRCO board of directors has media and communications experience and skills. Our WIRCO Media Director is a professional media and website expert. We have four published writers serving on our WIRCO board. We are combining more than 150 years of recovery experience with our knowledge and skills creating messages and outreach with videos, social media, graphics and related media.

Our communications team leaders have already recorded and distributed high quality, high definition recovery stories. WIRCO will expand this component of our outreach program to assure that recovery stories from all the different recovery pathways are shared.

We are developing podcasts and other video and audio messages and printed materials and recovery products. WIRCO will train our volunteer peers so they understand and can participate in the recording, writing and production work we expect will expand in the future as our membership grows with more willing peer volunteers seeking ways to help.

Our WIRCO Recovery Communications Center is an exciting part of our vision for WIRCO’s statewide services created to provide the positive message that recovery is a powerful community resource that deserves support and recognition.

**[WWW.WIRCO.ORG](http://WWW.WIRCO.ORG)**

Welcome to our WIRCO website in its present form. This is just our first version of this website. A more comprehensive version of this website is a future WIRCO objective with pages dedicated to different recovery memberships like tobacco recovery, problem gambling recovery and others. WIRCO Media Director, Robert Ingraham, created our website and maintains it for us.

Please visit and explore our website for a glimpse of what we are doing and hope to do. Please check into our WIRCO Face-book page too.



# WIRCO

*Big ideas and a grand vision*

# Absolutely!!



**G > c = PM**

*Gratitude More Than Complaints  
Equals Peace Of Mind*