

**“Not in Our Home Group!”**  
***How MAPS for Recovery is Overcoming Stigma***

Bangor, Maine, a community of 35,000 in eastern Maine, has become known as the “eye of the storm” of Maine opiate epidemic. Its recovery community has been traditionally 12-Step or faith-based oriented, and was not at all prepared for the system’s response to this epidemic. Between 2002 and 2007, Bangor became home to three large methadone clinics, and controversy surrounding these clinics was often central to debate within the recovery community and the community at-large. The Bangor Area Recovery Community Coalition was founded in 2008, and at its 2<sup>nd</sup> Summit on Addiction Recovery, the Coalition was charged with developing some type of peer-support model for individuals receiving medication-assisted treatment.

The MAT population in Bangor is ostracized in traditional 12 Step meetings, sometimes indirectly, sometimes vehemently. BARCC believed they could benefit most from their own peer support, where they would be free from judgment and stigma associated with MAT. Medication-Assisted Peer Support for Recovery (MAPS) was originally designed and piloted in a manner similar to traditional mutual aid groups, and led by two individuals with successful MAT recovery. It did not succeed for a variety of reasons. Held at a location in the community, people in MAT recovery stayed away, and organizers believed they had underestimated the depth of stigma the MAT community experienced.

Discovery House Bangor, one of the local methadone clinics, became involved in BARCC and a sponsor of its annual summits. Realizing the one environment where the MAT community may feel safest is at the clinics themselves, BARCC reached out to Discovery House to develop MAPS within its own client population. Discovery House responded with enthusiasm and developed innovative approaches to market the concept of peer support to its clients. They began to hold peer-support groups on a daily basis, staggered at times to accommodate work and school schedules. From these groups, identified peer leaders evolved and participated in peer leadership development. These leaders then began to develop their own principles for governance and meeting materials, and began to co-facilitate the groups.

MAPS for Recovery continues to develop and refine itself, not only at Discovery House but in the broader community as well. MAPS has migrated from the clinic and is now also holding meetings at the recovery community center operated by the Bangor Area Recovery Network, Inc. Perhaps the most gratifying element of this has been a greater degree of acceptance of MAT within the recovery community itself. While personal opinions continue to exist, no one wants to deny anyone the opportunity to meet and support their own recovery. MAPS allows the recovery community to stretch itself, and in doing so, brings the power of peer support to its own community as well.

For further information on MAPS for Recovery, contact Carroll Ackley at Discovery House Bangor, (207) 947-6800, or [cackley@discoveryhouse.com](mailto:cackley@discoveryhouse.com).

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