

Better Outcomes, Stronger Families:

Peer Recovery Support in Child Welfare and Family Systems

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WVSL SOLUTIONS

Your Presenter

Dan McCawley is a West Virginia native and a person in long-term recovery who has dedicated his career to strengthening the intersection of public safety, recovery, and community health. A graduate of West Virginia University, he is an Internationally Certified Peer Recovery Support Specialist and Certified Interventionist, bringing both lived experience and professional expertise to substance use disorder response and recovery-oriented systems of care. Dan works as the COO of a nonprofit behavioral health who has historically specialized in addiction interventions and recovery housing. Dan serves as a founding board member of the National Peer Recovery Alliance (NPRO) and co-chairs the Recovery Subcommittee for the West Virginia Governor's Council on Substance Use, Prevention, and Treatment. With decades of operational management experience, he offers a practical, systems-focused perspective that emphasizes collaboration between law enforcement, treatment providers, and community-based recovery supports. Recognized as a leader in the peer recovery field in West Virginia and nationally, Dan has played a key role in shaping best practices, expanding peer recovery programming, and developing training initiatives that provide continuing education for professionals across disciplines. His work focuses on equipping the community with effective, trauma-informed approaches to substance use, crisis response, and long-term recovery engagement.



Learning Objectives

- Describe the relationship between substance use and child welfare involvement
- Identify barriers to engagement among CPS-involved families
- Define peer recovery support services and parent partner models
- Explain evidence supporting peer-delivered services
- Apply trauma-informed and recovery-oriented principles in family systems
- Identify practical implementation strategies and community resources

Substance Use Impacts Entire Family Systems

Families impacted by substance use often experience:

- Increased crisis involvement
- Housing and financial instability
- Disrupted attachment and caregiving
- Higher rates of trauma exposure
- Increased interaction with child welfare systems

Research consistently identifies parental substance use as a major contributor to child welfare involvement nationwide.

West Virginia Continues to Face Significant Family Impact

Current statewide indicators include:

- Among the highest overdose mortality rates nationally
- Elevated rates of neonatal substance exposure
- High rates of substance-related child welfare involvement
- Significant increases in kinship care and foster system strain

In West Virginia, approximately 16% of child advocacy center cases involve caregiver-related drug exposure concerns, substantially exceeding national averages.

Families Often Navigate Multiple Concurrent Stressors

Families involved in CPS systems frequently experience overlapping challenges:

- Substance use disorders
- Mental health concerns
- Trauma histories
- Transportation barriers
- Childcare limitations
- Poverty and housing instability
- Fear and distrust of systems

These barriers significantly reduce sustained participation in treatment and case planning services.

Engagement Is the Critical Predictor of Outcomes

Research consistently shows that referral alone does not improve outcomes.

Families often disengage due to:

- Shame and stigma
- Fear of child removal
- Prior negative system experiences
- Fragmented service systems
- Lack of practical support
- Limited trust in providers

Improving engagement is one of the strongest predictors of recovery participation and family stabilization.

Recovery Is a Long-Term, Nonlinear Process

Substance use disorder is a chronic and treatable health condition.

Recovery often involves:

- Multiple treatment episodes
- Periods of relapse and re-engagement
- Long-term behavioral and environmental change
- Rebuilding family, social, and community stability

Sustained recovery is strongly associated with long-term support, community connection, and continued engagement in care.

Stable Recovery Requires More Than Treatment Alone

Long-term recovery outcomes improve when individuals have access to supportive recovery environments.

Protective factors include:

- Safe housing
- Reliable transportation
- Childcare support
- Employment and education
- Positive social connection
- Access to recovery communities
- Stable family relationships

Recovery stability is closely tied to improvements across multiple life domains.

WHAT IS PEER SUPPORT?

Peer recovery support services are relationship-centered services delivered by individuals with lived experience in recovery.

Peer professionals support families through:

- Engagement and outreach
- Recovery coaching
- Systems navigation
- Advocacy and accompaniment
- Emotional support
- Recovery planning
- Community linkage

Peer support complements, rather than replaces, clinical and case management services.



Shared Experience Builds Trust and Engagement

Peer recovery models improve participation through:

- Reduced stigma and shame
- Increased trust and rapport
- Persistent relationship-based outreach
- Improved communication with systems
- Increased willingness to remain engaged in care

Supportive peer relationships are associated with stronger service participation and treatment retention.

West Virginia Peer Recovery Outcomes

The West Virginia PEERS model demonstrated measurable engagement outcomes among high-risk populations:

- 63.9% successfully connected to treatment services
- 52.3% entered formal treatment
- 30.4% remained engaged in treatment for six months or longer

These findings reflect strong engagement outcomes within rural and high-need populations.

Parent Partner Models Improve Participation

Research on parent partner and peer mentoring programs demonstrates:

- Increased parent participation in case planning
- Improved understanding of CPS expectations
- Increased attendance at meetings and appointments
- Improved communication between families and systems
- Greater participation in reunification-related services

Trauma-Informed Approaches Improve Family Engagement

Many families entering child welfare systems have extensive trauma histories.

Trauma-informed peer approaches prioritize:

- Emotional safety
- Respect and collaboration
- Avoiding retraumatization
- Shared decision-making
- Strength-based communication

These approaches improve trust, participation, and long-term engagement.

Recovery-Oriented Care Addresses the Whole Person

Effective recovery support extends beyond symptom reduction.

Holistic recovery approaches address:

- Physical health
- Mental health
- Parenting capacity
- Emotional wellness
- Social connection
- Financial stability
- Community integration

Recovery outcomes improve when care is person-centered and family-centered.

Recovery Planning Supports Long-Term Stability

Peer recovery professionals assist families with:

- Goal setting
- Recovery and wellness planning
- Barrier identification
- Motivational enhancement
- Service coordination
- Crisis planning

Collaborative planning improves ownership, participation, and follow-through.

Peer Professionals Serve Families in Multiple Settings

Peer recovery support may occur within:

- Child welfare systems
- Family treatment courts
- Hospitals and emergency departments
- Recovery community organizations
- Harm reduction programs
- Sober living environments
- Community behavioral health settings

Peers often function as engagement specialists across fragmented systems.

Recovery Community Organizations Strengthen Long-Term Recovery

Recovery Community Organizations (RCOs) provide:

- Peer-led recovery support
- Recovery meetings and events
- Community connection
- Employment and housing assistance
- Volunteer and leadership opportunities
- Ongoing recovery engagement

Peer-led community environments strengthen long-term recovery capital and social support.

Low Barrier Access Improves Treatment Engagement

Engagement improves when treatment systems reduce unnecessary barriers.

Evidence-supported approaches include:

- Same-day treatment access
- Medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD)
- Harm reduction services
- Flexible scheduling
- Telehealth access
- Walk-in intake models

Accessible systems improve retention and reduce disengagement.

Family
Preservation
Should Be
Prioritized
Whenever
Safely
Possible

Best practice child welfare models emphasize:

- Community-based intervention first
- Family stabilization whenever safe
- Collaborative safety planning
- Prevention-oriented support
- Escalation only when necessary

Maintaining family connection improves long-term child and family outcomes when safety can be preserved.

Peer Support Models Demonstrate Measurable Outcomes

Research on peer and parent partner models demonstrates associations with:

- Increased treatment engagement
- Improved retention in services
- Increased participation in case planning
- Improved communication with systems
- Greater continuity of care
- Increased participation in reunification-related activities

Relationship Drives Recovery Engagement

Peer support models function through a progression of engagement:

Relationship

- Trust
- Participation
- Retention
- Recovery Stability
- Improved Family Outcomes

Relationship-centered engagement is a foundational mechanism underlying successful peer support interventions.

Effective Peer Integration Requires System Collaboration

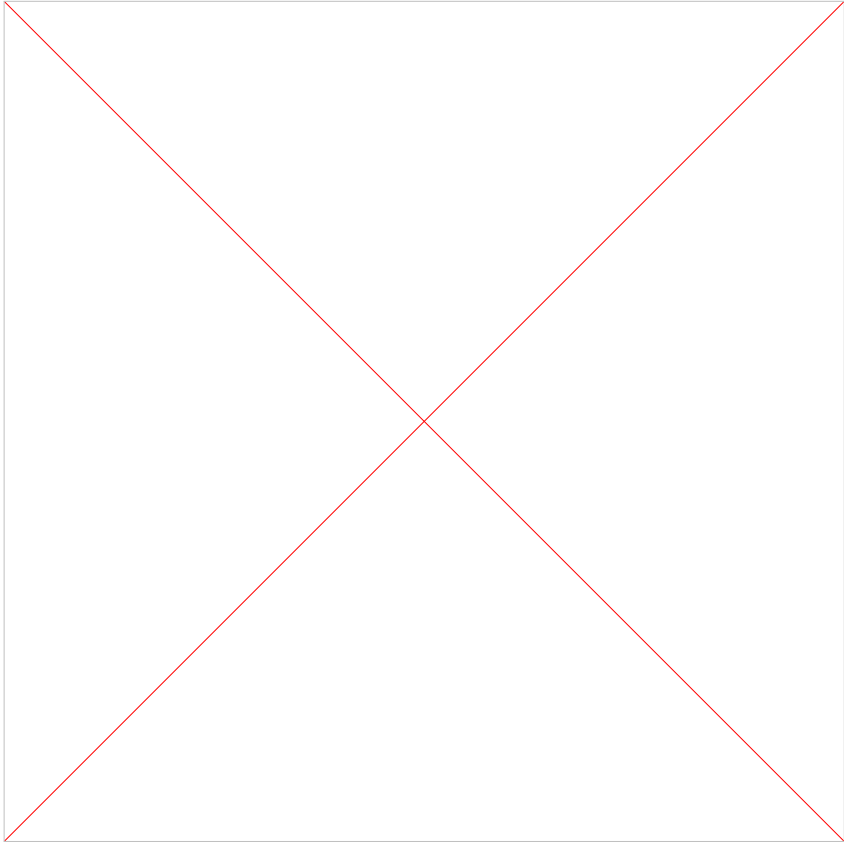
Successful implementation strategies include:

- Early peer involvement
- Integration into multidisciplinary teams
- Warm handoffs between systems
- Partnerships with RCOs
- Sustainable workforce funding
- Clear role definition and supervision

Integrated peer services strengthen continuity across systems of care.

Key Takeaways

- Substance use disorders significantly impact family systems and child welfare involvement
- Engagement is one of the strongest predictors of long-term outcomes
- Peer recovery support improves trust, participation, and retention
- Trauma-informed and recovery-oriented approaches improve family engagement
- Early, integrated peer support strengthens pathways to recovery and family stability



QUESTIONS?



Thank You!

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