

What Is RECOVERY?” “

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One definition of *recovery* is “to return to a normal condition.” Another is “to regain control of, or the use of” something. Recovery is what we celebrate during September, *National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month*. Recovery Month highlights the societal benefits of substance abuse treatment; celebrates people who are in recovery and the treatment providers who serve them; and promotes the message that recovery is possible—and it works! Increased awareness of this important issue encourages citizens to help expand and improve the availability of effective treatment for those in need and highlights the benefits of recovery.

Most current figures (2002) indicate that the cost of alcohol and drug abuse in 1997 was more than \$294 billion. That was seven years ago! The total cost of substance abuse is 25 times what we spend on treatment. These staggering figures are complicated by the fact that 60 percent of addicted persons suffer from another mental health issue such as depression or anxiety.

Recovery for substance abuse refers to the condition of being abstinent from addictive substances. However, recovery implies more—a personal growth process that focuses on personal development in an honest and direct manner. First, the individual comes to grips with the fact that they really have become addicted and by themselves are unable to solve the problem. Then, they take a long, profound look at who they have become and begin the process of behavioral, psychological, and spiritual change. This leads a person to a deep sense of peace and acceptance of self and others.

How does a person do that? There are many paths. Some will choose to use a 12-Step program such as Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous. Some go to a healthcare provider who specializes in substance abuse treatment. Others choose a faith-based approach. Many choose all three. The process of change involves engaging in new behaviors—dropping destructive friendships; determining what can be changed about themselves, others, or the world; and the discovery that one needs something to fall back on when the going gets rough. A person in recovery ends up doing these things—often on a daily basis—and deserves kindness and respect for fighting a life-threatening disease and winning one of the hardest battles there is.

Stigma and denial keep many people from seeking help, and adequate treatment and the finances to pay for them are in short supply. We must all help where we can. So during September—*National Drug Addiction and Alcohol Recovery Month*—I hope you’ll take every opportunity to learn about the difficult and lengthy recovery process.

This month CBH and the City of Bloomington offer a month-long, celebratory display in the foyer of City Hall depicting well-known individuals who have battled substances, mental challenges and stigma, to contribute their talents to society.

Additionally, Center for Behavioral Health offers a presentation on “Substance Abuse Costs to Business,” featuring CEO, Dennis Morrison, on Wednesday, September 29th, 6:00 p.m. at the Monroe County Public Library. Amethyst House will join the effort by hosting “Amethyst House: Hope”—a silent art auction and dance performance fundraiser September 25th, 7:00 p.m. at the John Waldron Arts Center. And the Indiana Addictions Issues Coalition will hold its monthly meeting (every second Wednesday), September 8th, at 6:00 p.m. in the Monroe County Public Library, to continue to educate and reduce stigma.

Bloomington is a caring community and we have many partners in our struggles for a better life. Please join us.

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