

COLLEGIATE RECOVERY

Roadrunner Collegiate Recovery Program

(RCRP)

The Mission of Ramapo College is dedicated to providing students a strong foundation for a lifetime of achievement. The College is committed to academic excellence through interdisciplinary and experiential learning, and international and intercultural understanding. Ramapo College emphasizes teaching and individual attention to all students. We promote diversity, inclusiveness, sustainability, student engagement, and community involvement.

Incorporating the Roadrunner Collegiate Recovery Program into our campus is a great fit as it falls nicely into Ramapo College's Value Statements:

- **Teaching, learning, and mentoring—we are actively engaged in and out of the classroom.**
- **Developing the whole person—we are scholars, we are creators, we are local and global citizens, and we are individuals.**
- **Respecting each other and our environment—we are an open, inclusive, supportive, and sustainable community.**

The RCRP is open to any enrolled Ramapo student active in a Harm Reduction recovery who chooses to work towards a substance-free lifestyle:

- **Individualized recovery coaching**
- **Ongoing mental health support and addiction recovery, allowing for a holistic recovery support experience**
- **Academic assistance working with faculty and advisors**
- **Educational seminars, events and discussion groups**
- **Leadership, service and professional development opportunities**

- **Referral network for recovery and wellness services**
- **Alcohol and/or other drug-free social activities and events**
- **Campus Recovery Housing**
- **Recovery Allies Fusion (Allies & Mentors)**
 - **Major component of support by students, faculty, staff, alumni, family**
 - **Allies - Persons who have never used substances themselves but are truly supportive of the recovery process and those working within it; those who currently use substances in a non-at-risk manner; those who use in an at-risk manner but are deeply considering treatment, recovery, and beyond**
 - **Mentors - Persons who have been active in their own recovery for at least two+ years of uninterrupted recovery growth and are willing to work with the RCRP to assist students in getting what they need to stay healthy and sober**
 - **Together - will provide a supportive network, create a feeling of fusion and belonging and acceptance on our campus. Those in recovery will know that others believe in them and their potential to succeed.**

The Need for Recovery Programs on College Campuses

Attending college is one of the most stressful periods of transition in a person's life. Younger students often leave their homes and attempt to live independently for the first time in their lives. Non-traditional or returning students are faced with the challenge of balancing work, family and scholarly responsibilities.

Other stressors related to college put students at an increased risk for mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety and eating disorders. These risks jeopardize the ability of a student in recovery to remain sober. To make matters worse, college life in the United States is often characterized by late nights, binge drinking and experimenting with drugs. The culture and accepting or expecting alcohol and/or other drug use on college campuses often threatens the well-being of students in recovery.

Many students believe they have to drink alcohol or use other drugs to fit in, and both are often easily accessible. In some cases, parents, faculty and staff contribute to such expectations by referencing their own college experiences or encouraging risky behaviors. Due to a culture of tolerance towards alcohol and other drug use, recovery from use is often stigmatized. It isn't uncommon for a student, faculty or staff member to demean students in recovery with insensitive or judgmental language.

This stigma makes it difficult for students in recovery to openly express their status in recovery, a key component of building a support system and accessing recovery resources. When students in recovery have weak support systems and don't feel like they can be honest with peers, staff and/or faculty, college can become a lonely place. All of these factors make college campuses risky environments for students in recovery. That is why recovering students need to find a safe and supportive community.

Dimensions of Recovery

- **Health – Abstaining from substances of abuse and making healthy choices**
- **Home – Having a safe place to live**
- **Purpose – Participating in meaningful daily activities**
- **Community – Having healthy relationships and social support**

College Students in Recovery: Campus Challenges

Recovery is not the simple act of stopping the use of any/all substances, it is actually:

- **Recovering that person they were before they ever used any substance**
- **Recovering their mental health, goals, dreams, direction and confidence**
- **Letting go /working through feelings of anger, fear, hurt and shame**
- **Taking back the control in their life**

Daily, sometimes hourly work will be done to maintain abstinence while restructuring their daily lives:

- **Working through feelings often connected to other behaviors or triggers to which they have no control over.**
- **Balancing the daily demands of recovery, academics, work and socialization.**
- **Making new friends and finding a sense of belonging.**
- **Learning how to maintain abstinence.**

Five Benefits of a College Recovery Program (CRP) (According to those who have been through it)

- 1. A recovery community – recovering students emphasize how important it was to have access to other students in recovery. They feel relief from isolation and safe with peers.**
- 2. Support from program staff – recovering students enjoy the environment of equality that staff members create and the on-call availability of the staff.**
- 3. On-campus meetings – so the easy availability of on-campus support group meetings is beneficial.**
- 4. Academic support – students express ease of working with advisors who understood their needs and enjoy access to these trained advisors.**
- 5. A place to hang out – students express a sense of safety and stability from the program’s physical location for recovering students to hang out on campus.**

Recovery is not just abstaining from all mind-altering substances (i.e., sobriety), but also includes embracing a positive view of wellness and personal growth. Recovery is a process, rather than a cure, and therefore requires ongoing support and effort to sustain.

The exact number of college students in recovery is unknown. However, there are approximately 1.7 percent of college students in the United States who have ever received treatment for alcohol or other drug use Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association (SAMSHA), 2022. It is plausible to assume many of these students are in recovery and need supportive resources to sustain their recovery. At the same time, 37 percent of college students engage in binge drinking and over 1 million U.S. college students meet standard clinical criteria for current alcohol or other drug dependence (SAMSHA, 2021). These statistics illustrate the diversity of substance use experiences among college students.

**Spending time in situations where alcohol and other drugs are being used—
unfortunately, an all-too-common scenario on America's college campuses—and
continuing to interact with friends who drink and use other drugs are two reliable
predictors of re-use, especially in early recovery. Conversely, having a strong
support network of pro-recovery peers can serve as a critical counterweight to
sustain recovery.**

**One important way is by helping young people in recovery enroll in collegiate
recovery programs so they do not have to choose between their education and their
health.**

**Institutions of higher education are placing more and more emphasis on attending
to the health needs and well-being of students. The notion that academic success is a
function of both providing high-quality educational experiences and promoting
physical and mental health is gaining traction. Students in recovery understand this
connection well. Many colleges have financial constraints to prioritizing student
health, much less being able to offer specific services to students in recovery. At
many colleges, students in recovery are referred to off-campus resources. However,
these external services, on their own, might not be adequate to support recovery
because they might not be tailored to address the unique set of stressors that college
students face. For this reason, expanding recovery support services in academic
settings was named as a priority by the U.S. Department of Education and the
Office of National Drug Control Policy.**

**Recent growth in collegiate recovery programs can be partially attributed to
increased attention from state legislators. A recently passed bill in Maryland
requires that schools in the University System of Maryland establish an on-campus
CRP for students in recovery from alcohol and other drug use problems (General
Assembly of Maryland, 2017). Similarly, New Jersey legislation passed in 2015
requires public universities to offer substance-free recovery housing if at least 25
percent of students live on campus (New Jersey State Senate, 2015).**

**Generally, collegiate recovery programs offer access to recovery resources, such as
counseling or substance-free housing, and have events geared toward students in
recovery. The programmatic features of CRPs can vary depending on the size of the
campus and the availability of resources. The common features of comprehensive
collegiate recovery programs include substance-free housing and social events,**

dedicated space, on-campus Twelve Step support meetings, fulltime dedicated staff and professional counseling by addiction treatment specialists.

People in recovery are not only sober; they begin to align their lifestyles with the values they have always had within. As a result, recovering individuals start to become the people they were meant to be, the people that their loved ones always knew they were. Their relationships blossom, their dreams are realized and their hopes prosper. While hard to quantify academically, recovery has legitimate merit in the real world. In a health care culture obsessed with metrics and symptom management, recovery represents the best of holistic care. When you engage with young college students in recovery, it's impossible to not be awed by who they are and what they have to offer the world. Not much captures the humanistic spirit as well as recovery.

Collegiate recovery is an essential part of the higher education landscape. It's integral to a continuum of care through its role in prevention, intervention and recovery support. Students in collegiate recovery programs have demonstrated higher student success through higher GPAs, retention rates and graduation rates. In the endeavor to shift college culture away from high-risk behaviors, highlighting efforts and success stories like students in recovery and other substance-free students is paramount to success.

Collegiate recovery and Harm Reduction

Collegiate recovery and harm-reduction tools are not antithetical to one another. Abstinence is one form of harm reduction and is the best way to reduce harm for many people, but not for everyone. Some people may have abstinence as a goal, but are not ready to take that step. Some may not have a goal of abstinence. Showing compassion and providing the tools to be safe can offer an entry point to making positive change. Whether that ends up being abstinence or not is not for anyone but the individual to decide.

Collegiate recovery is in many ways a social justice movement. The goal is to provide accessibility and support to students in recovery seeking a higher education who may not otherwise be able to attend or complete college; to remove barriers to achieving personal, academic, and professional goals. Those in abstinence-based recovery from a Substance Use Disorder (SUD) were active substance users at one time, and at some point they all received help from someone who did not judge them for who they were at that exact moment. Students who choose abstinence-based recovery need specific supports to maintain that way of life, and having programs

and spaces exclusively for those students is essential. We can also be there for the students who may not be ready for that, or who simply want to be empowered to save lives in their community. There is enough room for everyone.

Collegiate Recovery and Programs (CRPs) Stigma

Brown University established the first CRP in 1977 upon noticing an increase in the number of students in recovery (1) Today, the need for CRPs is as relevant as ever. Defined as “an institutionally sanctioned and supported program for students in recovery from substance use disorder seeking a degree in higher education,” the goal of a CRP is to make campus more recovery friendly by supporting returning students who recently received treatment or are in recovery for substance use disorders (2) As of 2022, there were more than 150 CRPs nationwide. These programs have proven to be beneficial to student success. Students in recovery who engage in CRPs have higher Grade Point Averages (GPAs), retention and graduation rates, and lower rates of relapse compared to those in recovery who do not participate in CRPs (3)

For some students in recovery, returning to college is only possible with the presence of a CRP, and the decision of where to go to college depends on the robustness of the recovery program and the supportive resources available to individuals in recovery.

Despite the proven benefits of CRPs, the stigma of being in recovery dissuades students from using them. Full time college students make up the largest group of individuals meeting the criteria for substance use disorder but are the least likely to seek out treatment services (4) This gap is due to the glorification of substance use in college party culture and the social stigma associated with being in recovery.

Those who do seek out services often fear the judgement of others. Therefore, many decide not to disclose their status (5) Unconscious biases and negative language used to describe people with substance use disorder (such as “addict”, “alcoholic”, and “abuser”) makes disclosure of a recovery status difficult (6)

Many students report that the consequences of stigma result in loneliness and isolation. (7) Isolation and loneliness can lead to a relapse. To reduce the likelihood of a relapse, students in recovery report needing community and social support that

includes compassion, acceptance, and understanding. In addition, they emphasize the necessity of broader societal education regarding addiction and recovery (8)

Colleges and universities must do more to reduce stigma and encourage the use of CRPs. For a college campus to be recovery friendly, it needs to use recovery inclusive language, recognize and support those in or seeking recovery, and create a culture where there is not any judgement toward those asking for help or receiving services for substance use disorders. To achieve this, we need to implement programming that breaks down the primary barrier to accessing CRPs: stigma around recovery. Leaders can spearhead this by offering recovery ally training to their students, staff, and faculty.

RCRP Recovery Allies Fusion (RAF)

A core component of the RCRP is the Recovery Allies Fusion program. Recruitment for RAF is currently underway. Allies are students, faculty, staff or alumni who have never used substances but are understanding of the related stigma, willing to fight the stigma and support our students in recovery. Allies may also be students who are using substance, not ready for change but contemplating both treatment and recovery. Allies may also be mentors with two or more years of recovery, be willing to share ideas, tools, time, and support with students for moving forward through recovery.

Together, Allies and Mentors will work together to address and fight the stigma society has linked to substance use and mental health disorders. Through words, actions, and advocacy Allies put the person, not the disorder, first.

Throughout the training, participants learn how to express support for those in recovery and learn about on- and off-campus resources for recovery. After completing the training, participants are able to describe the science of substance use disorders and recovery and demonstrate how to initiate a conversation with a person struggling with substance use. Allies are trained to use more inclusive, person-first language about recovery, placing the person before the clinical diagnostic label, such as “person with a substance use disorder.” This helps in reducing unconscious bias from campus community members. Recovery ally training helps reduce stigma, spread awareness, and normalize the conversation on

recovery. Seeing or hearing the word recovery around campus more frequently normalizes the idea of being in recovery and refraining from AOD use, encouraging those who need help to seek it and those in recovery to engage in these programs without the fear of stigmatization.

Recovery Housing

Ramapo College is proud to offer on-campus housing dedicated to students in recovery from alcohol and/or drug dependence. Ramapo Recovery Housing offers students the opportunity to have a fulfilling residential experience living within a supportive community with other students in recovery. There are no signs identifying the Recovery Housing in order to protect the anonymity and privacy of students who live there.

Once a student has been accepted to Ramapo College their next step is to apply for and interview with the Coordinator of Substance Use and Recovery Programs, Cory Rosenkranz (crosenkr@ramapo.edu). Once accepted into the Roadrunner Collegiate Recovery Program, the student has the option to apply for Recovery Housing. If interested, please e-mail reslife@ramapo.edu to initiate the housing application process.

RESOURCES

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