

Addressing Pain in South Carolina

Quick Reference #9

Substance Use Recovery Support

There are many pathways to recovery from substance use, and you can be a critical support system for patients during their individual journeys. The four dimensions that support recovery (i.e., health, home, purpose, and community)¹ are outlined below with ideas for how you can help patients successfully build their recovery.

Dimension	Definition	What Can You Do?
Health	Overcoming or managing one's disease(s) or symptoms and making informed, healthy choices that support physical and emotional well-being	Provide respectful medical care. Time invested in prevention and chronic disease management is never wasted and should not be deferred. Providing respectful medical care supports recovery by acknowledging the value of the person regardless of his or her condition.
Home	Having a stable and safe place to live	Ask about housing. For some people, using substances is a way of coping with an otherwise unbearable situation. Personal safety and shelter are critical to recovery. Ask about housing and be familiar with resources for the homeless and at-risk families in your community. Asking doesn't oblige you to fix the situation, rather it recognizes the elephant in the room.
Purpose	Conducting meaningful daily activities and having the independence, income, and resources to participate in society	Discuss employment and other meaningful daily activities. Paid employment is typically the priority. Poor job history and missed opportunities for education and training may mean work is instrumental to life but not a source of drive or meaning. Helping others even in the smallest of ways can restore a person's sense of worth. Easy ways to be of service to others is through mutual aid groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous or a faith community.
Community	Having relationships and social networks that provide support, friendship, love, and hope	Ask about relationships and support systems. Many people in recovery isolate themselves to avoid people, places, and things associated with their past substance use. Friendship and belonging are important to recovery. Ask your patients what they do for fun, how they socialize, and whom they turn to for support.

¹ <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/recovery>



Resources for You and Your Patients

- [Decisions in Recovery: Treatment for Opioid Use Disorders](#): This handbook can help patients and their loved ones compare opioid use disorder treatment options to better prepare them to discuss their preferences with you.
- [Faces and Voices of Recovery in South Carolina](#): FAVOR SC offers free recovery coaching from volunteer Certified Peer Support Specialists.
- [Local Recovery-Support Services](#): Compiled by the SC Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services, this list includes support groups and programs for people in recovery and their family members.

Recovery Facts

- Most of what we know about recovery is based on studies of people who sought formal treatment for substance use disorder (SUD).
- Convenience studies of community populations suggest some people can stop using substances without formal help. Convey optimism!
- Having a social network that includes people who do not use substances and access to resources, such as safe housing and job skills—often called “recovery capital”—makes recovery more attainable. Encourage patients to work on building recovery capital even while actively using substances. The investment is not wasted.
- More attempts at recovery tend to be needed for people with more severe SUD or SUD that is complicated by depression, anxiety, or current psychological distress. They may require different or more intensive types of support for longer periods. Adjust the “dose” of support if the patient is struggling.

