

## **National Recovery Month.** ***Helping a loved one transition home after treatment.***

Since 1989, September has been recognized as National Recovery Month, an observance that promotes and supports new evidence-based treatment and recovery practices, honors the country's strong and proud recovery community, and salutes the dedication of service providers and community members who make recovery in all its forms possible. It also serves to increase public awareness surrounding mental health and substance use disorders.

One concern that I'm often asked about by the family members of individuals facing substance use and mental health challenges is: What can we expect and how can we support a loved one's recovery journey once they leave their inpatient treatment?

### **Understanding your role.**

First, be prepared for their homecoming. Holding a family session before your loved one leaves the treatment facility will help you understand your role in their recovery process. It is also important to stay committed to rebuilding your relationship.

Recovery is a lifelong process that is not facilitated by treatment alone. In other words, treatment is just the beginning. Your loved one will be navigating a substance-free life, trying to gain acceptance from family members and friends who may be unsupportive or who may not understand what it's like to undertake a recovery journey.

Substance use disorder affects the entire family, so it may be wise to seek out support for yourself while your loved one is in treatment. A Family Recovery Coach or a therapist can educate you on substance use disorder, help you make changes in your household routines, teach you how to create boundaries and prepare you to deal with challenging situations moving forward.

### **Keep realistic expectations.**

To help your loved one transition from an inpatient facility to their home, it's helpful to keep your expectations realistic. Your loved one has worked on discharge planning with their counselor in treatment to distinguish when and how they should return to or find work, engage in family responsibilities, and engage in social commitments outside of recovery meetings and functions. It's unrealistic to expect them to instantly resume all their usual activities. Such expectations only put added pressure on them (at a time when they are already anxious).

When a loved one returns home after treatment, you may be tempted to bombard them with questions about what it was like and what they learned about themselves and about their substance use. However, this line of questioning is not advisable. Inpatient treatment for substance use is an intensely personal experience – so it's important to allow your loved one to talk to you about things only when they feel comfortable to do so (that is, if they decide to share at all).

One other important note: every single household should have life-saving naloxone (aka Narcan) in hand to help prevent an overdose – it should be a standard item in every first aid kit!

### **Stay in the moment.**

Try to remain focused on the present moment. You may feel compelled to rehash old situations that went unresolved or to bring up circumstances where an apology should have been given. Unfortunately, doing this can make your loved one's transition even harder. It can be helpful to think of the transition as a new beginning and commit to letting the past go.

Most importantly, openly communicating with your loved one will help them with their recovery. Express your love and support as honestly as possible. Remain flexible regarding your expectations of your loved one. Like anyone else, they'll have good days and bad days. Try to respect your loved one's values. Understand that they've worked hard in treatment to learn self-respect and to respect others – so encourage them to continue these positive behaviors.

### **Self-care is key.**

Please remember to take care of yourself. It's impossible to pour from an empty cup, so do whatever it is that keeps refilling yours. As always, if you would like a free Narcan kit, help with any of these challenges, or you're struggling in your relationship with a loved one who is using substances, don't hesitate to reach out to me.

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***McCall's Family Recovery Coach Program is grant funded and provided at no-cost to all participants.***

For more information contact:

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## **Resources**

**McCall Behavioral Health Network**  
860.496.2100  
mccallbhn.org

**McCall's Recovering Together Group**  
Meets every Wednesday,  
5:30PM via Zoom.  
For more info, email:  
leann.mitchell@mccallbhn.org

**NAMI CT, Waterbury**  
Paul Brainerd  
860.882.8674 or 860.310.4055  
pbrainerd@namict.org

**Sound Community Services**  
New London  
Amy Faenza  
860.439.6443  
amy.faenza@soundct.org

**Clifford Beers Clinic**  
New Haven  
Christine Montgomery  
203.915.4074  
cmontgomery@cliffordbeers.org

**Community Renewal Team**  
Hartford and Middletown  
Casie DeRosier  
860.549.3350  
derosierc@crtct.org

**TriCircle, Hope and Support Groups**  
Hope After Loss Groups  
Ana Gopoian  
860.349.7074  
ana@tricycle.or

### **Our Contact Information**

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