



Family in Recovery Newsletter

UNDERSTANDING INCARCERATION AND SUPPORTING YOUR LOVED ONE UPON RE-ENTRY INTO SOCIETY.

I've recently noticed a common theme among the families that I'm working with: many of their loved ones are incarcerated due to a substance use disorder. I know firsthand how overwhelming and emotional it is to be a family member with a loved one in prison. I find that understanding the situation and navigating the challenges that come with it requires patience, education, and support.

Family members often experience a wide range of emotions when a loved one goes to prison. Some feel relief that their loved one is no longer on the streets, using substances. Others feel guilt, anger, shame, sadness, and helplessness. You may feel grief due to your loved one's absence and the void it creates. Or, if you're a parent, you may be mourning the life you had envisioned for them when they were children. Some of your feelings may conflict with one another. For example, you want to be supportive, yet you feel betrayed by your loved one's actions.

Finding support.

The criminal justice system can be intimidating. Seeking legal support and connecting with advocacy organizations can help you understand your loved one's rights and if there are any rehabilitation options. Some correctional facilities offer substance use treatment programs and, in certain cases, alternatives to incarceration may be available.

During the period when your loved one is incarcerated, writing letters or emails, accepting phone calls, and visiting, when possible, can provide emotional support for your loved one and for yourself as well. (Keep in mind that setting boundaries is vital. Offering your support does not mean permitting harmful behavior.)

Encouraging your loved one to participate in treatment programs while incarcerated can help increase the likelihood that the person will remain in recovery upon their release.

Families may face societal stigma which can make it difficult to talk about their situation. Finding a support system is necessary. Al-Anon, Nar-Anon, Recovering Together, and Family Recovery Coaching can connect you with educational resources and help you build coping skills. They can also introduce you to families who are enduring similar situations. You'll be reminded that you are not alone.

The challenges of re-entering society.

Re-entering society is a pivotal moment for an incarcerated person in recovery, often marked by the risk of returning to substance use and the lifestyle that comes with it. Sadly, many overdoses occur when individuals resume use after a period of abstinence in prison. This makes it essential to have lifesaving Narcan readily available, both on hand and at home.

Connecting your loved one to a treatment program immediately upon release is crucial for long-term recovery. Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) remains the gold standard for supporting individuals with opioid use disorder on their path to sustained wellness.

During this stage, your loved one may face barriers to employment, housing, and reintegrating into society. This is when they need your encouragement the most. Treatment/therapy, medication, and community support are all great ways to improve your loved one's chances of a successful recovery.

It's important to seek support for yourself as this can be an extremely stressful time in your life as well. Prioritize your mental and emotional well-being whether it's with your own therapist, a Family Recovery Coach, or a support group that can help guide you. Understand that you cannot "fix" your loved one or control their actions. However, you can support them in healthy ways by encouraging and loving them. Supporting them may be challenging, but it is also an opportunity for positive change.

Helpful suggestions.

Encourage open, judgment-free communication so that your loved one feels safe to discuss their struggles, goals, and challenges. Remember to be patient. Their substance use disorder did not appear overnight and it won't magically disappear overnight either.

Celebrate your loved one's small victories! Understand that return to use absolutely does not equal failure. Maintain hope but protect your own emotional well-being. Finally, you must fully acknowledge that recovery is the responsibility of your loved one. You can be a supportive parent, spouse, partner, or friend while insisting they take ownership of their healing journey.



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

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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