

## “Peer Support and Recovery Groups”

### Episode Overview

In this episode, I explore how peer support and recovery groups boost treatment engagement, prevent overdose, and strengthen long-term recovery. I discuss studies showing that strong involvement in 12-step programs can enhance psychological well-being and that peer-led outreach is effective in connecting individuals to care. I also highlight the role of peers in emergency departments and the challenges peers face. The episode closes with a reflection on why investing in peer supporters is essential for strengthening overdose response and recovery systems.



- Stronger engagement with a consistent “home group” is linked to high psychological well-being, including self-acceptance and purpose.
- Emergency-department peer support programs increased medication treatment initiation for opioid use disorder (OUD) by about 45% according to one statewide study.

### TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Peer support strengthens connection and motivation.
- ✓ Peer-led outreach plays a major role in connecting people to treatment.
- ✓ Stigma and burnout are major barriers for peer workers.

## References & Future Reading

- Andraka-Christou, B., Totaram, R., & Randall-Kosich, O. (2022). Stigmatization of medications for opioid use disorder in 12-step support groups and participant responses. *Substance Abuse*, 43(1), 415-424.
- Crisanti, A. S., Earheart, J., Deissinger, M., Lowerre, K., & Salvador, J. G. (2022). Implementation challenges and recommendations for employing peer support workers in emergency departments to support patients presenting after an opioid-related overdose. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(9), 5276.
- DeLucia, C., Bergman, B. G., Beitra, D., Howrey, H. L., Seibert, S., Ellis, A. E., & Mizrachi, J. (2016). Beyond abstinence: An examination of psychological well-being in members of Narcotics Anonymous. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 17, 817-832.
- Mamdani, Z., McKenzie, S., Pauly, B., Cameron, F., Conway-Brown, J., Edwards, D., ... & Buxton, J. A. (2021). "Running myself ragged": Stressors faced by peer workers in overdose response settings. *Harm Reduction Journal*, 18, 1-19.
- Mercer, F., Miler, J. A., Pauly, B., Carver, H., Hnízdilová, K., Foster, R., & Parkes, T. (2021). Peer support and overdose prevention responses: A systematic 'state-of-the-art' review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(22), 12073.
- Treitler, P., Crystal, S., Cantor, J., Chakravarty, S., Kline, A., Morton, C., ... & Cooperman, N. A. (2024). Emergency department peer support program and patient outcomes after opioid overdose. *JAMA Network Open*, 7(3), e243614-e243614.