

Building a Recovery-Ready Nation: Policy Innovations and Advocacy for Addiction Recovery

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BACKGROUND

Facing an ongoing addiction crisis, the United States requires an evolution in its public policy that pivots toward a recovery-centric approach. Current systems focus primarily on acute care, which neglect to address several essential components of solving this crisis. Transition must occur to a system focused on long-term outcomes of people with substance use disorders (SUD). When a person attains 5 years of sustained recovery from SUD, risk of relapse drops exponentially^{1, 2}. The vision of a Recovery-Ready Nation is predicated on the development of comprehensive systems and infrastructure designed to support people navigating (SUDs). This initiative³, lead and developed by Scholar and Faces & Voices of Recovery, is positioned on three central themes: expanding access to addiction recovery by increasing recovery supports and services, removing barriers for social determinants of health, and building grassroots engagement and representation of people with lived experience in decisions that impact them.

OBJECTIVE

This initiative drives policy change at the federal level that will solidify the foundation of a Recovery-Ready Nation. This is accomplished through the launch and implementation of 2023-2025 federal policy and advocacy priorities of a national SUD recovery advocacy group, Faces & Voices of Recovery (Figure 1). This includes legislative and regulatory efforts such as the enactment of the Mainstreaming Addiction Treatment (MAT) Act⁴ to expand access to medication-assisted treatment, increasing appropriations for recovery-focused grant programs, and advocating for policy reforms that recognize and integrate the needs of those in recovery.



Figure 1. Recovery Ready-Nation Strategy

METHODS

This initiative encompasses a comprehensive advocacy strategy, structured around policy analysis, proactive lobbying endeavors, and coalition-building among stakeholders. Central to this approach is the adept use of personal recovery stories, harnessed as tools for advocacy work and legislative influence. At the annual conference of Faces & Voices of Recovery, grassroots champions are equipped with the skills to harness their authentic experiences, crafting persuasive narratives, and formulating actionable requests for policy reform. Beyond annual gatherings, Scholar hosted regular strategy sessions with Faces & Voices constituents, aimed at reinforcing and expanding the pillars that emphasize a Recovery-Ready Nation (refer to Figure 2). These discussions prove pivotal in shaping collective advocacy outcomes. Furthermore, Scholar's initiative thrives on the collaboration created through partnerships with national medical and recovery organizations. These collaborations have been instrumental in establishing an interconnected advocacy front, elevating each organization's voice and amplifying its impact. Among these collaborations, partners came together to organize a Congressional briefing, to educate and influence lawmakers on the urgency for passage of recovery-centric legislation.

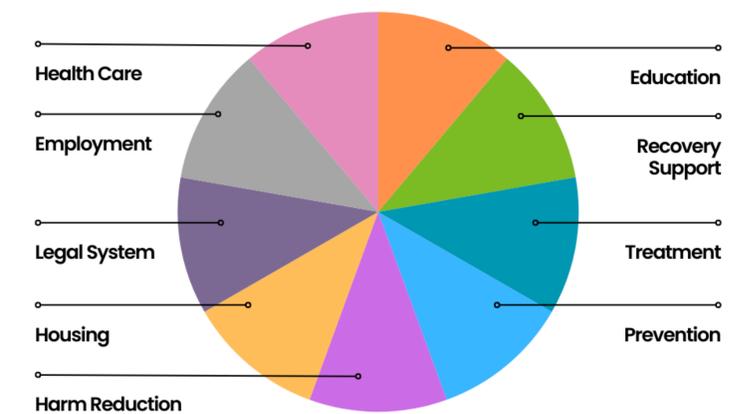
RESULTS

The advocacy efforts have helped facilitate tangible legislative successes, including the passage of the MAT Act and an increase in for several key recovery funding streams, inclusive of a \$4 million increase for the Building Communities of Recovery (BCOR) Grant Program, \$100 million increase for Substance Use Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Services (SUPTR) Block Grant, \$50 million increase for State Opioid Response (SOR), and \$2 million increase for Recovery Workforce Support⁵. These successes have strengthened the national recovery infrastructure and provided essential resources for individuals in recovery. Moreover, Scholar's project has further advanced the reauthorization of the SUPPORT Act as it nears completion, and the establishment of four key principles to address the SUD crisis - two milestone achievements to build a Recovery-Ready Nation. These key principles⁶ were introduced and endorsed by 31 national organizations, including American Society of Addiction Medicine, American College of Emergency Physicians, American Association of Nurse Practitioners, American Psychiatric Association, American Psychological Association, American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry, and Faces & Voices of Recovery. The initiative has successfully engaged stakeholders through various platforms, including a national luncheon during September's National Recovery Month observance and the first in-person Hill Day since the onset of the pandemic, resulting in substantial policymaker engagement. Key metrics from Hill Day include 350 total participants, 235 unique meetings, 115 districts represented, and 40 states represented. Of the 235 meetings attended, 107 of these were with Member or Senior-level staff.

DISCUSSION

The journey towards a Recovery-Ready Nation has underlined the profound impact of advocacy that is grounded in lived experience and community wisdom. The project has further enforced the critical nature of storytelling in policymaking, illustrating how personal experiences can shape and drive the legislative agenda. The integration of recovery narratives has not only informed policymakers but also helped destigmatize addiction, fostering a cultural shift towards compassionate and evidence-based policy decisions. The collaboration across diverse sectors has further demonstrated the value of a united front in advocating for a comprehensive approach to SUDs.

RECOVERY-READY NATION COMPONENTS



CONCLUSIONS

The initiative's accomplishments underscore the significance of dedicated advocacy in achieving policy reform that aligns with the needs of those in recovery and those impacted by SUD. By championing a Recovery-Ready Nation, the project lays out a strategic blueprint for further incorporation of recovery into the national public policy agenda. It affirms that the collective efforts of individuals with lived experiences, alongside experts in the field, are instrumental in creating a resilient, supportive, and prepared society in the face of the addiction crisis.

Keywords: **Recovery-Ready Nation, Substance Use Disorder, Public Policy, Medication-Assisted Treatment, Advocacy, Federal Legislation, Community Resilience, Lived Experience.**

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