

# SPOTLIGHT: The Alano Club of Portland's Recovery Toolkit Series



## Overview

The Alano Club of Portland has been a crucial presence in Oregon's recovery support landscape since it was established in 1947, offering life-saving services on a no-cost basis to many who are unable to afford formal treatment. Initially, the Club served as a 12-step focused center, but its programming has evolved alongside a growing understanding of many effective means of recovering from a substance use disorder (SUD). In addition to holding more than 125 weekly mutual-aid support meetings, yoga, and meditation, the Club offers the Recovery Toolkit Series (RTS), an innovative, evidence-based, and holistic program for persons in recovery from an SUD.

The Recovery Toolkit Series includes non-clinical, community-oriented seminars, classes, and workshops covering topics such as brain chemistry, addiction, relationships, recovery advocacy, and relapse prevention. This wide array of options enables those struggling with an SUD to determine which programs will benefit their long-term recovery and mental health. While programs are taught by professionals in the field, the Club is non-clinical and community-based. The Club also hosts large-scale sobriety-based events, and provides information and referral services for treatment. Attendance is free, classes are accessible both on-site and online, and the Club is open 365 days a year.

In a state where only 20 percent of those impacted by an SUD receive treatment, RTS is a vital and timely program that builds on the Club's legacy of providing accessible recovery support for the tens of thousands of Oregonians who turn to the Club for healing, hope, and solutions each year.

## How the Program Works

Statistics indicate that 30 percent of people in active recovery are engaged in a 12-Step program.\* The Recovery Toolkit Series provides resources and support for the majority of people who rely on support outside

"The Recovery Toolkit Series fills a significant void in the continuum of recovery support services currently available in the United States. For the majority of people in addiction recovery who don't align themselves with the 12-Step model, finding affordable, community based supports can be next to impossible."

– Brent Canode, Executive Director

of the 12-step paradigm. RTS is a year-long program of evidence-based workshops, seminars and classes that provide education and instruction in therapeutic tools, such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), iRest Meditation, Trauma-Informed Yoga (TIY), Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC), and the Three Principles therapeutic model.

RTS provides an important point of entry for people seeking increasingly diverse supports and assistance along their recovery pathway. Participants are able to curate their own program of engagement, which empowers them to define their own treatment priorities and to develop a set of community resources.

In addition to integrating a wide array of innovative, proven programs, RTS also offers recovery peer support, which is provided by mentors who have been successful in the recovery process themselves and who are credentialed by the Addiction Counselor Certification Board of Oregon. Mentors assist others in initiating recovery, reducing the likelihood of relapse, and enhancing the quality of personal and family life in long-term recovery. In addition to programming that focuses on mental health, RTS also offers practical programs for people rebuilding their lives in recovery, such as exercise and nutrition classes.

**Spotlight Series:** *highlighting innovative programs across the nation enacting a comprehensive strategy to address substance use disorders and addiction.*

## How this Program is Innovative

This pioneering initiative is the nation's first of its kind, and already has gained widespread recognition. Participation in the Recovery Toolkit Series is free, which removes the barrier to treatment for those who cannot afford to pay for formal treatment. Many treatment programs in the US apply a one-size-fits-all model when treating people for an SUD, whereas the Club's position is that a person's recovery status should always come first, which means that their path should be self-directed and their system of supports should be personalized.

The Club offers the largest and most diverse program of mutual aid support in the nation, with more than 125 meetings held each week. Groups that do not follow the 12-step method are offered as well, including Secular Organizations for Sobriety (SOS), Refuge Recovery, Women for Sobriety, LifeRing Secular Recovery, Wellbriety, All-Recovery Support, and SMART recovery.

The Club's board was composed with the intention of having a gender balance among members and representation from underserved populations such as racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQ persons, youth, and low-income people.

## Demonstrating Success

Each month, more than 10,000 people engage in programs at the Alano Club. By developing RTS, the Club has increased its services and supports by 300 percent. RTS also incorporates more diversity in offerings than the previous 12-step focus, and therefore increased the choices of programs by 150 percent.

In 2017, the Alano Club was awarded the Joel M. Hernandez award at the America Honors Recovery Gala in Washington, D.C. for doing innovative and exemplary

work on behalf of the recovery community. The Recovery Toolkit Series was the major driver in Faces and Voices of Recovery's decision to award the Club this honor.

## Stakeholders & Partners

The Alano Club collaborates with the Oregon Health Authority, Multnomah County Addiction Services Department, and national experts in the ongoing development and promotion of multi-dimensional approaches to recovery support.

The Recovery Toolkit Series is partnering with community groups in order to offer additional services at the Club, such as parenting workshops with the Morrison Center, financial planning and literacy workshops with Financial Beginnings, and evidence-based smoking cessation classes with the American Lung Association.

## The Future of RTS

Looking to the future, the Club aims to become the primary hub for recovery-related activities, workshops, seminars, and events in Portland, Oregon. Because there is limited community support outside of 12-step groups, the Club aims to increase access to and diversify its recovery support services. The Club also plans to develop an advocacy program with the capacity to transform the policy landscape in Oregon. Club members continue to encourage other local recovery support services to think progressively and engage in the national conversation with health system stakeholders about evidence-based, innovative models of recovery. The Club plans to partner with leading foundations to develop a "Toolkit for the Toolkit," to facilitate the wide-scale implementation of holistic approaches to recovery support in communities across the US.

## Resources & References

\* Alcohol Use and Alcohol Use Disorders in the United States, A 3-Year Follow-Up: Main Findings from the 2004–2005 Wave 2 National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions (NESARC), *Alcohol Epidemiologic Data Reference Manual*, Volume 8, Number 2, September 2010, NIH Publications No. 10-7677.

The Alano Club of Portland's website: <http://www.portlandalano.org/>