



Capacity Building for Collegiate Recovery

Second Edition



Transforming Youth Recovery

One Community, One School, One Student At A Time

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INTRODUCTION

There is a general belief that institutions of higher education currently lack the resources needed to adequately support students who are working toward academic goals while in recovery from substance use disorders. In other words, a lack of resources is contributing to the limited number of collegiate recovery programs that are flourishing in the United States.

This premise has led many to approach efforts to expand collegiate recovery programs from a problem-solving perspective—we need to identify and bring forward a distinctive set of standardized resources (solution) to address the needs of college students in recovery (problem).

Our research, however, indicates that supporting college students in recovery consists largely of heightening awareness of potentially helpful resources, many of which are already available within collegiate communities, and building relationships to assemble existing resources into new institutional practices. This insight has challenged us to move from a *problem-solving approach* to an *asset-based approach*. It is an approach that starts with the appreciative frame. There are already things that are in your midst—talents, services, resources—that can contribute to and support the effort you wish to make to help students in recovery reach their full potential. You just need a way to find those things and make them known.



“The program was established when two students came to the then director of our class program and said, ‘It’s really hard to be in recovery and be on a college campus.’ They put their heads together and just came up with a pilot program.”

—Program Director

On every college campus, there is a certain capacity for helping students in recovery to succeed. These capacities reflect the diverse ways that college-specific partnerships and coalitions can form to create activities, services, and programs that best support their students. Our intention is to inspire you to cultivate those relationships that we have seen capable of overcoming institutional barriers to openly serving and supporting students in recovery.

Every institution of higher education is rich in the experiences it has to offer. Typically, only a fraction of an institution’s resources are fully accessed by students – whether you are in recovery or not. What we have found is that students in recovery, when openly supported, take advantage of experiences that others often overlook. By working to provide access to helpful resources, encouraging new relationships, cultivating peer support services, imparting life-skills, and celebrating the pursuit of educational goals, every collegiate recovery effort has the ability to dramatically impact the entire college community. In fact, coming together to build capacity for collegiate recovery can change the way people view, think, and talk about everyone’s potential within the community.

Capacity building starts by taking an asset-based approach. This approach recognizes that groups and communities of people change in the direction of their inquiries. The effort centers on building relationships and connections among advocates for the change you are seeking. When you empower groups and communities of people to become active agents, rather than objects of change, novel practices emerge. We don’t assume that we know what is best for people in their settings and context. We find what is helpful and useful to people in their communities, create pathways to entry for others to follow, and then remove any barriers to access and advancement.

Ultimately, capacity building is teaching groups and communities of people to learn to help themselves.





THE LANGUAGE OF CAPACITY BUILDING

To undertake capacity building for collegiate recovery, we start with certain definitions that will guide your efforts:

First, there are assets, which is any person, place, or group that can assist and support students in recovery. An AA meeting on campus would be an asset. A dedicated space for students to gather would be another asset.

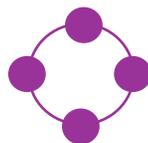
Second, there are practices that can be created by assembling the available assets into an offering or relationship of some kind. Holding AA meetings in the dedicated space at a regular time with timely announcements would be a practice.

You build capacity by finding, making visible, and assembling your community-based assets into practices and relationships that can help students in recovery to reach their full potential while getting the most out of everything a college experience has to offer.



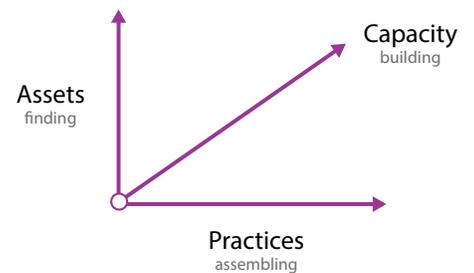
Asset

Any person, place, or group that can meaningfully contribute to supporting and helping those in recovery.



Practice

The assembly of assets into a clearly defined, easily accessible recovery support offering.

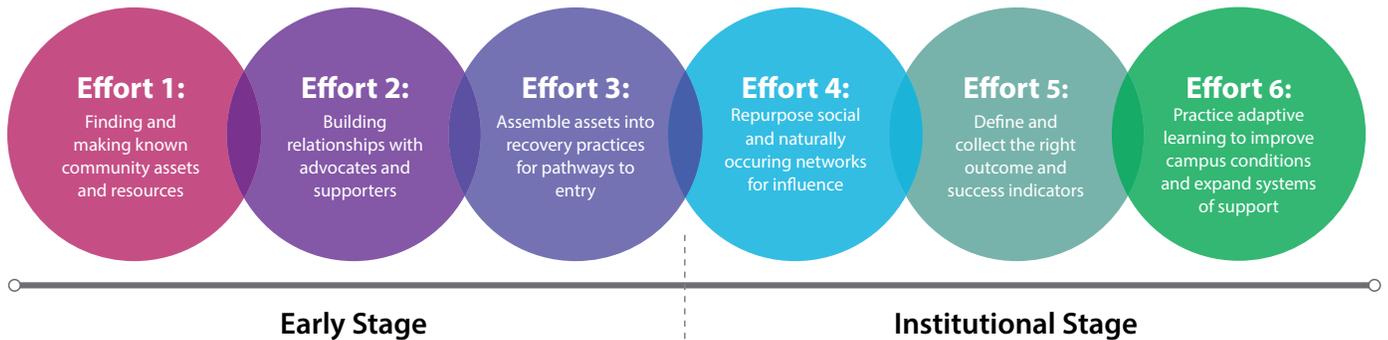


Capacity Building

The efforts that make assets visible and mobilize the community to assemble practices that can help students in recovery to reach their full potential while getting the most out of their college experience.



Continuum of Capacity Building



The approach we discuss in this document is a set of efforts called the continuum of capacity building.

The “early stage” of any collegiate recovery program is characterized by a group of students, with assistance from advocates, finding and connecting with individual and organizational assets within their community. Advocates are usually staff and faculty members at the college, and their role is to support and encourage students as they organize for capacity building. As time goes on, assets are combined and assembled into certain practices that are accessible to any student in recovery on the college campus.

The continuum is a process that students in recovery, and the advocates that support them, can go through to help their college campus accept and embrace the collegiate recovery program.

The amount of time you spend on each effort will vary. To use a simple example, in the early stages of any collegiate recovery program, more time will be spent on finding and mapping your community-based assets. As the collegiate recovery program matures, you might spend more time implementing practices and getting the school to recognize your collegiate recovery community.

Each of these efforts has a goal of benefiting students in recovery. We have found that students in recovery often connect first with each other and then seek assets that can best support their recovery and academic goals. The value of “doing recovery together” is undeniable. For this reason, capacity building should always involve groups of students in recovery at a specific campus working together to make connections on their campus and within the broader community.

There is a point along this continuum of capacity building when awareness and participation provides an opportunity to institutionalize the collegiate recovery program. That is, the college community begins to accept your practices as a necessary part of the healthy and academically rewarding environment everyone values. Typically, early stage collegiate recovery programs transform when a set of practices provide demonstrated value to institution and the institution, in turn, formally endorses the program by accepting and promoting the program to current and prospective students and families. Institutionalization (when the college or university contributes funding and includes the program in planning) is not a necessity for all efforts, but is viewed as an important consideration for long-term sustainability.



It is important in your early stage efforts to remain mindful that you are working to find practices that work for students. At first, new practices can be introduced and validated by the students. Over time, it is students themselves who will generate the most valuable practices for sustaining their recovery and pursuing their academic goals.

You may find it helpful to reference the lifecycle for collegiate recovery programs on four-year campuses, which is presented below. In our experience, the biggest mistake those in early stages can make is to ignore this path. Too often, many try to skip ahead on the lifecycle without realizing the consequences of doing so. It is important to maintain focus on the process versus the end results. It is a process intended to start small and grow gradually in early stages. For this reason, we call attention to the early stage capacity building efforts that initiate a path toward endorsement and institutionalization, and support the lifecycle steps necessary to reach maturity and sustainability.

Lifecycle of a Collegiate Recovery Program

	NOTION	ESTABLISHMENT	MATURITY	SUSTAINABILITY
Growth	Students and advocates invite people with whom they have developed relationships.	An increasing number of referrals into the community come from students in recovery.	The majority of referrals into the community and the practices of the community come from students in recovery.	The collegiate recovery community is self-sustaining and may contribute to the creation of smaller, focused coalitions.
Practices	Initiation of support services, discussions, and activities that students in recovery express interest in.	Collegiate recovery practices shift from serving individual needs to being group-focused.	Implementation of practices from similar communities to best serve the majority of students in recovery.	Sharing of practices so that similar communities can initiate like services for students in recovery.
Sense of Community	Not yet.	Peer network established; community guidelines recognized.	Community norms adopted and local coalition established through outreach and activities.	Connection to broader national movement of students in recovery at institutions of higher education.
Goal	To cultivate a small-group of highly active students in recovery as the foundation upon which to build a community.	To create a sense of community among students and supporting advocates.	To prepare, if appropriate, to institutionalize the collegiate recovery program.	To identify potential sub-groups which can form to strengthen the coalition of supporters for students in recovery.



EARLY STAGE EFFORTS FOR CAPACITY BUILDING

GETTING STARTED

CAPACITY BUILDING STARTS WITH THE GROUP

Everything we have seen and heard about supporting students in recovery has led us to the importance of starting with a community focus. Peter Block, a noted author in the area of community building writes, “We are a community of possibilities, not a community of problems. Community exists for the sake of belonging and takes its identity from the gifts, generosity, and accountability of its members. We currently have all the capacity, expertise, programs, and leaders required to end unnecessary suffering and create an alternative future.”

For those who already engage in efforts around collegiate recovery, promoting capacity-building activities may seem obvious. Emphasizing the support that can emerge from a community of peers, for example, is a known ingredient to thriving in recovery. But there is a power in being explicit about creating a connected environment that encourages the telling of stories that focus on the potential within recovery, versus the perceived deficiencies associated with addiction. There is a strength that builds when community members are collaborating and conversing while they look for assets that can help students in recovery to thrive in the fullness of the college experience. And there is a value in always being grounded in data collected directly from community members—which are the students in recovery themselves. In early stages, the concern is not for formalized programs, but for engaging students in recovery, finding what works for those students, and doing more of it.

The pages that follow outline efforts you and your group of students can undertake as you begin capacity building for collegiate recovery. These efforts include: (1) Finding and making known community assets and resources; (2) Building relationships with advocates and supporters; (3) Assembling assets and resources into recovery practices.





FINDING AND MAKING KNOWN COMMUNITY ASSETS AND RESOURCES

Activity 1: Community Asset Mapping

A key part of building capacity for collegiate recovery is transforming educational institutions and communities into asset-rich settings and environments that have a positive vision for people in recovery. Community asset mapping is a keystone activity for early stage efforts. It refers to the process of going out and finding assets in and around their community—those people, groups, places, and services that you or your group are finding helpful and useful in your recovery. Asset mapping is best known for its contribution to intentional community design and development—the process of engaging people in the enhancement of their specific communities.

A variety of activities can be employed to undertake community asset mapping. Common in all activities is the pursuit of identifying the valued aspects of a community, and then working together to build upon and assemble them in ways that are helpful and useful to students in your recovery community.

The main benefit of asset mapping is the chance to gain a common view of what is important and to hear and appreciate the value others find in specific aspects of a community. This coming together around common assets can change the way people view, think, and talk about their communities. Done to its full potential, asset mapping unites people around a positive identity and a collective cause.

Perhaps most importantly, initiating capacity building efforts in this manner means that communities of people look beyond focusing solely on their needs. Although many are accustomed to thinking about community design, growth, and development in terms of needs, this approach has major limitations. Needs-based approaches tend to divide both people and communities. Articulating needs often becomes a competitive process and often pits communities and organizations against each other. And success is viewed in terms of service outcomes, measured mostly by institutional stakeholders. With an asset-based approach, success is viewed in terms of the capacity to serve and support, measured mostly by relationships.



There is no magic formula for when or how to best start mapping your community assets other than just starting. You will quickly find the value in the conversations you are having and the stories you start sharing.

We have found it helpful to initially approach those individuals and groups that you believe will be most receptive to your idea of building capacity for recovery in your community. As you begin having conversations and acquiring information, stay mindful of three questions:

1. What seems to make an individual or group receptive to your efforts?
2. How might those you meet help others become more receptive to your recovery support efforts?
3. Which stories and messages seem to be most effective in getting individuals and groups on board with your capacity building effort?

The answers to these three questions provide insights that can help enhance your ongoing community asset mapping activities.



A complete set of resources and guides are available to you in the online [Community Asset Mapping Toolbox](#)



The Assets You Are Looking For

The 2015 Collegiate Recovery Asset Survey completed by 91 collegiate recovery programs on four year campuses in the U.S. identified the following nine assets as critical to starting any collegiate recovery effort:

- Individuals available for 1:1 recovery support (coaching, guiding, supporting, mentoring).
- Individuals who are dedicated staff for a collegiate recovery program (faculty, staff, students; full or part-time).
- Individuals who are influential within the University and/or in the broader community and are interested in advocating for students in recovery.
- Mutual aid support groups near or on campus for students in recovery (i.e. AA, NA, GA, and other 12-Step meetings in addition to groups such as Celebrate Recovery, SMART Recovery, eating disorder recovery, Teen Challenge, etc.).
- Physical space for students to get together socially, soberly, and safely (organized meals, dances, bowling, or other age appropriate activities).
- Physical space that is dedicated for students in recovery to gather and meet.
- Organizations, departments, and services that a collegiate recovery program can refer students who need outside services (treatment centers, mental health professionals, counselors, psychologists, etc).
- Organizations, departments, and services that can refer students to a collegiate recovery program (judicial affairs, academic counselors, mental health counselors, treatment centers, etc.)
- Students in recovery who are interested in growing the recovery community on-campus.



See a full list of [38 Assets for Building Collegiate Recovery Capacity](#)



Activity 2: Creating an Asset Inventory

For each unique asset identified you will want to be sure to capture certain details that can help students in recovery find and take advantage of support and enrichment services in and around your campus. To assist capacity building efforts for collegiate recovery across the country, Transforming Youth Recovery has developed the Capacitytype™ data and mapping platform.

Beyond the convenience of having one online location where your assets can be recorded and viewed by your students and community, every asset mapped will be appear on a map from coast-to-coast, and will form the footprint for a national movement behind collegiate recovery.

Using Capacitytype™ on your campus starts with downloading the Asset Inventory Template which you can use to record your community asset information. When you are ready, you can send the completed inventory to the Community Mapping Team at support@capacitytype.com. We will review and publish everything to the map. When done, you will receive an email with instructions on how to add more details to each asset. Included will be instructions on how to share online asset information with students in recovery and others on your campus.



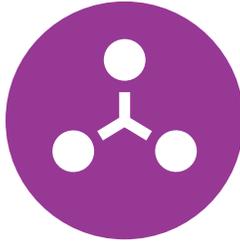
Download the [Asset Inventory Template](#) from the Community Asset Mapping Toolbox

To learn more about asset mapping principles and tips, download this reference from the Community Asset Mapping Toolbox.



Reference [Asset Mapping Principles and Tips](#) from the Community Asset Mapping Toolbox





BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH ADVOCATES AND SUPPORTERS

Activity 1: Practicing Relationship Conversations

It's just you and some students you know. Everyone is in recovery...and going to school...and wanting to get everything they can out of their college experience. And as you talk to each other, there seems to be an idea that recovery, academic progress, and participation in the college experience could all be enhanced by a supportive recovery community. There has been talk of working to establish a collegiate recovery program; if it's going to happen, you're going to have to get organized.

So how do you make sure everyone who is involved is on the same page as you work to build relationships with advocates and supporters?

You are starting to make a shift that must be driven by conversation. At this “notional” stage in your lifecycle, the key conversations are about “relationship” and “possibility”. Here are three types of conversations your group may wish to practice together.

Conversation 1: Your Recovery Story

In a group setting, each group member should tell their story of being in recovery:

- Make it personal, for credibility.
- Keep it simple and in the present tense, so it's real and understandable.
- Be clear about what recovery means to you.
- Use concrete examples from your life to talk about what recovery has given you. Mention the length of time that you have been in recovery.
- Talk about your recovery, not your addiction.
- Be clear that you understand there's more to recovery than not using alcohol or other drugs – that part of recovery is creating a better life.



As a storyteller, you will want to focus on being frank and open but also concise. As story listeners, you should concentrate on listening empathetically — that is, listen for what the story means to the teller and for what decisions the teller has made and the actions they have taken. Some people find it helpful to have these conversations even before they start community mapping — they can help to build the mapping team.

Conversation 2: Making a Commitment

In a group setting, each of you should explain your commitment to changing the way your college community supports students in recovery. Focus on the future rather than the past. Be sure to include these four points:

- Why working to build a supportive environment for recovery and academic success is important to you.
- Why having a collegiate recovery program on campus, and in this community, is a worthy goal.
- What is personally at stake for you in this effort that the group is undertaking together.
- If you were to cut back on your participation at some point, or drop out altogether, what would be the most likely reason for that.

Conversations 1 and 2 will help build the *relationships* you need within your group. They will also help you when an advocate or connector asks you why this effort is important to you.

The next conversation will address what the group will be working toward.

Recovery Story Template

I'm (name) and I am in recovery, which means that I have not used (substance) for more than (length of time).

I am committed to recovery because it has given me new purpose and hope for the future, while helping me gain stability in my life. (Insert concrete examples).

I am now speaking out because recovery has helped me change my life for the better, and I want to make it possible for others to do the same.



Conversation 3: Stating Intentions

In a group setting, imagine a time in the future when you could look back and say, “Much of who I am and what I have accomplished, I owe to the group I helped establish to support college students in recovery.”

In many ways, this future might resemble a combination of what each of you said you had *at stake* in your commitment conversation.

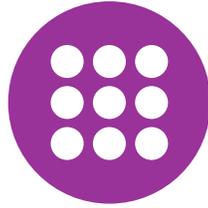
- Working from the future back to the present, create a “from/to” chart that compares the future state to the present state for recovery support services on your campus and in your surrounding community.
- Write a paragraph that “paints a picture” of your intentions to work together toward a desired future state.
- Keep that paragraph in front of you as you go through the following steps.

Having these conversations will help the group to align on purpose and intent; this clarity will help you as you work to build relationships with advocates and supporters.



Download the [Creating a Statement of Intentions](#) worksheet reference from the Community Asset Mapping Toolbox





ASSEMBLING ASSETS INTO RECOVERY PRACTICES

Activity 1: Follow the Steps to Assemble Practices

Up to this point you have focused on those things that can contribute to your capacity for supporting students in recovery on campus. Our attention now shifts to the assembly of discovered assets into recovery practices.

Assembling recovery practices begins by expanding those conversations you started when you set out to find and identify your community assets. Now you will want to talk about how assets can combine to create services, support, and collaborations that are useful to the community of students. The ultimate step is to build coalitions among those who expressed a willingness to openly serve and support students in recovery and take action.

The steps toward assembling assets into practices begin with conversations, but they don't end until practices are supported through coalitions that deepen community awareness and work toward the institutionalization of your collegiate recovery efforts.



THE STEPS TO ASSEMBLY



step one

Have conversations that identify potentially helpful assets

- Conversations are how relationships develop. Among those who have expressed a willingness to help, explore common interests and shared opportunities to get involved in one another's activities.
- Students in recovery are the best advocates and wherever possible should be directly involved in conversations about supporting and serving the community.
- Consider new opportunities to cooperate to meet diverse needs of students – both in terms of recovery and academics.



step two

Combine assets into practices

- Those opportunities that are acted upon become practices – experiences that bring assets to life in the recovery community.
- Identify assets that will be easiest to connect and work with. Quick wins often take the form of speaker opportunities, support groups, social events, newsletters, and referrals.
- Focus on what works for your group of students and ensure you are creating a diverse breadth of experiences and activities that advance recovery and academic goals.



step three

Build cooperation among practices to create a coalition

- The final step is to build cooperation among those contributing to practices by creating a local coalition of support for students in recovery.
- Those people who step up to get involved are good candidates for a coalition. Build relationships between those people, groups, and organizations – unite with a common voice behind a common cause.
- Strive to create a local coalition that has enough 'key players' on campus so that those left out cannot block progress.
- Over time, successful practices are repeated and local coalitions are institutionalized. This is the point when a more comprehensive collegiate recovery program can be considered.



Activity 2: Remove Barriers to Mobilizing Assets

Just as each individual may choose a different pathway to their recovery, each community will have different opportunities available to support those in recovery. Those opportunities are determined during community asset mapping, but this data is not complete until interpreted in the context of what it takes to establish practices and build local coalitions to support recovery efforts in your community.

Specifically, community mapping will help you uncover answers to the following questions:

- **What's possible?**
What do we have now that we can leverage for students in recovery?
- **What's needed?**
What do we need to find or create to meet the needs of our community?
- **What's getting in our way?**
What do we need to address to better connect students in recovery to available assets on campus?

The first two questions inform capacity building for your recovery community. The last question is about barriers to mobilizing assets. It is about identifying what must be done to create a collegiate environment that openly serves and supports students in recovery.

Barriers can come from anywhere within or outside of the community, and may not be uncovered during the community mapping process. It is not until conversations start moving toward practices and coalitions that some barriers to access make themselves apparent.

The chart of common barriers, solutions, and tactics show how the efforts of the capacity building continuum are intended to help you fulfill your intentions for early stage collegiate recovery efforts.

I felt like a lot of these students, they just did the same stuff every day. They weren't really expanding their knowledge. They weren't really opening their mind to what else the world has to offer you – arts, culture, going and doing different things out in the community. Just go, go try different things because you don't know what you like until you go try it. Let's go rock climbing, let's go ride roller-coasters, stuff to get us out of this recovery bubble.

—Student in Recovery

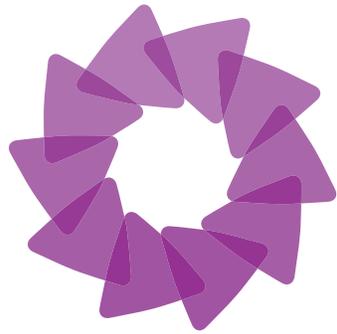


BARRIER	SOLUTION	TACTIC
<p>Limited Time It’s a big world out there, and there is only so much time in a day. Building relationships, practices, and coalitions takes a long time, which can slow progress and momentum.</p>	<p>Prioritize Some assets will be easier to engage than others, some will be used more frequently, and some will be considered more impactful. Collect data from your community – ask students in recovery what they want first.</p>	<p>Students First Students in recovery are the first community asset and play a central role in identifying, prioritizing, and mobilizing community assets.</p>
<p>Shame Students in recovery are the most effective advocates for their community, but sometimes experience shame associated with identifying themselves as someone in recovery to those outside of their immediate community.</p>	<p>Recovery Stories Create environments and opportunities that encourage students in recovery to change their personal narrative from <i>the telling of their addiction story to the telling of their recovery story</i>.</p>	<p>Recovery Messaging Training This training, developed by Faces & Voices of Recovery can help students in recovery to talk about the positive attributes of their recovery identity and community.</p>
<p>Stigma Every recovery community has a stereotype. The challenge is that the default of this stereotype is often negative, which makes <i>every single thing</i> more difficult. At most colleges, for example, the culture of binge-drinking obscures the separation of and sympathy towards those truly struggling with substance use disorders.</p>	<p>Share and Tell While inspiring, stories are difficult to re-tell without some assistance. Provide advocates with the information they need to speak empathically about your recovery community. By sharing with your advocates they can educate their peers, increasing their engagement and knocking down unseen barriers on your behalf.</p>	<p>Build Awareness Stigmas are spawned through ignorance. When people actually meet and connect with students in recovery they often become aware for the first time of their biases, and are forced to reconsider their views. Bring together those individuals and associations that emerge to support you and invite them to work <i>with</i> you to expand outreach and create a healthier college community.</p>

Glossary for Capacity Building for Collegiate Recovery

Asset	Any person, place, or group that can meaningfully contribute to supporting and helping those in recovery.
Asset-rich	An environment or location that has many resources (people, places, or groups) to support and help those in recovery.
Capacity building	The efforts that make local assets known, build relationships among local advocates, and help community members reach their full potential. Ultimately, capacity building is teaching groups and communities of people to learn to help themselves.
Coalition	An alliance of people and groups to carry out an action or intention. In this case, an alliance formed to support students in recovery.
Engagement patterns	Repeated series of events that detail how and when students utilize recovery resources or assets.
Gaps in advancement	Barriers that a collegiate recovery program may face as they work to create or grow their program. These may include funding, student participation, faculty and staff interest, available assets, etc.
Institutionalization	A distinctive milestone as evidenced by open recognition from the institution and the commitment of resources for a collegiate recovery program and community.
Mobilize	The act of engaging and preparing a community to support students in recovery.
Pathways to entry	The steps students take to access recovery resources.
Practice	The assembly of assets into a clearly defined, easily accessible recovery service.
Protective and well-being outcome indicators	Metrics that are used to ensure that students in recovery are thriving.
Social architecture	The design of a local environment, site, or location to ensure it is promoting the desired set of goals.
Sustainability	The ability for a program to be self-sustaining for a long time. This may include things such as inclusion in future institutional plans, funding, staff, space, coordination across institutional networks, active engagement of students in recovery, etc.





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