



THE VERMONT CERTIFIED
RECOVERY COACH ACADEMY

Curriculum Overview

Not for distribution or reproduction

A 46-hour training that emphasizes:

The Power of Peers

Motivational Interviewing

Practice Coaching

Boundaries

Wellness Plans

Recovery Resources

... and much more.

With thanks to:

ADAP - Vermont Department of Health

SAMHSA

IC&RC

Vermont's Recovery Centers

VTARR

INTRODUCTION

The Vermont Recovery Coach Academy (VRCA) is Vermont's training for the peer recovery workforce for alcohol and other drug addiction. It provides a comprehensive 46-hour program of evidence-based methods for supporting clients in sustainable recovery. The VRCA is recognized by the Vermont Department of Health and SAMHSA and it is Vermont's training for national certification through the IC&RC.

SAMHSA defines recovery as, "A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and strive to reach their full potential."¹ In addition, we believe the opposite of addiction is connection.

SAMHSA defines a peer as, "An individual with lived experienced or a family member of one with lived experience."

Peer-based coaching can provide such connection and guidance at key junctures in the change process. Our instructors create a supportive atmosphere where participants gain skills essential to effective coaching. Modules on motivational interviewing, wellness plans, ethics and boundaries, diversity and cultural competence, and trauma-informed care create a powerful, flexible program. In addition, our team helps participants to explore their personal beliefs, values, talents, biases and needs related to addiction, recovery and working with others.

Peer recovery coaching happens primarily in Vermont's recovery centers, and in emergency departments, recovery residences, and treatment facilities. Additional training is available for work in specialized settings and with particular peer groups.

Admissions Criteria

- One year of continuous sobriety (peer).
- A supervisor: Someone experienced in recovery coaching to oversee and provide feedback and supervision for your practice during and after the Academy. If currently working or volunteering in peer recovery, approval from your supervisor is required.
- Basic computer skills, a valid email address, and access to a computer.

The Classroom and On-Line Experience

Adult Learning: Active Learning

¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. SAMHSA's Working Definition of Recovery. PEP12-RECDEF, Rockville, MD: Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012.

Recovery Vermont and the staff and faculty of the VRCA are committed to the use of teaching methods that address multiple learning styles, and the needs of adult learners. These include understanding our participants as:

- Diverse and valued.
- Internally motivated, self-directed, and goal oriented.
- Having life experiences that can enhance the learning of all.
- Valuing opportunities to apply and practice concepts and skills in their work and lives.

The Learning Environment includes:

1. Practice and Application of Skills (approx. 55% of curriculum)
 - Coaching Practice: Great emphasis is placed on learning and practicing coaching skills directly with other participants in the program, supervised by an experienced instructor. Motivational Interviewing, stages of change, using your story, empathy and compassion, and other key skills are practiced here.
 - Additional skill practice, exercises and activities: Other active practice in the curriculum includes wellness plan development, identifying and working with biases, cultural competence, being an ally, identifying values, ethics and boundaries, and more.
 - Discussion and Sharing: Full group, small group and one-on-one.
 - Personal reflection: Specific opportunities to self-assess and review.
2. Mini-lectures, short videos (approx. 35% of curriculum)

Key concepts and information that lay the foundation for practical application, including the science of addiction, harm reduction, trauma-informed care, and unconscious bias.
3. On-line Learning: (approx. 10% of curriculum): Exercises, reading and resources that complement and expand on the in-class experience.

VERMONT RECOVERY COACH ACADEMY PROGRAM GOALS

The Vermont Recovery Coach Academy's mission is to prepare a strong Vermont peer recovery coach workforce, to guide clients who seek to begin or sustain long-term recovery from addiction to alcohol or other drugs (substance use disorder/SUD). The learning goals and objectives are to prepare participants in the following areas:

[Fundamentals of Recovery and Recovery Coaching](#). Participants will be able to:

- Describe the roles and responsibilities of a peer recovery coach.
- Identify the principles, values and components of addiction recovery, including multiple pathways and addressing common barriers.
- Describe the Stages of Change and how they apply to coaching and the recovery process.
- Refine the art of self-disclosure and sharing lived experience in a way that supports a client-centered approach to coaching.
- Understand and identify the roles and limits of recovery coaching in the continuum of treatment and services for substance use disorders and mental health.

[The Practice of Recovery Coaching](#). Participants will be able to:

- Practice a compassionate, strengths-based, solutions-oriented approach to coaching as clients begin or continue a recovery path. Use Motivational Interviewing as foundation for an approach that incorporates strategies for reducing risk and building recovery capital.
 - Develop with client an understanding of the coaching relationship, including expectations, goals, limits and requirements.
 - Tailor coaching goals and methods, and recovery plans, to address each client's Individual needs and personality, including stages of change.
- Build awareness and skills in inclusive and culturally competent practices, addressing bias, stereotypes, privilege and power as they relate to recovery and the peer coach role.
- With the client, navigate toward resources (employment, stable housing, medical care, etc.) and explore advocacy where needed, as means of strengthening clients' recovery capital.
- Receive feedback on practice coaching sessions from trainers and other participants, and prepare for an ongoing relationship with a supervisor when working as a recovery coach.
- Based on clients' needs and readiness, provide education and information in key areas. This may include the recovery process, healthy behaviors, and accessing available resources.

[Recovery Health, Science and Wellness Education](#). Participants will be able to:

- Describe substance use disorder as a health condition and be familiar with the science and biochemistry of addiction.
- Experience facilitating the development of effective wellness plans with their clients.
- Understand trauma-informed care and build trauma-sensitive practices into their coaching.

Ethics and Standards of Practice. Participants will be able to:

- Understand the practice expectations and standards for the role of peer recovery coach, including skills and competencies, supervision, and continuing education and certification.
- Articulate an understanding of the ethics, boundaries and legal considerations of the peer recovery coach role.

Self-Awareness and Development (as a recovery coach)

- Develop and strengthen their practice in self-awareness, growth, and self-care as an integral part of peer recovery coaching and the coach- client relationship.
- Explore personal strengths, values, beliefs, and biases, and use self-knowledge in the coaching role.
- Expand on their ability to self-regulate in stressful or traumatic situations.

The Path of a Recovery Coach. Participants will be able to:

- Describe recommended ways to practice, and to obtain supervision and guidance.
- Be skillful at staying current with developments in the field of substance use disorder and recovery.
- Be responsible for continuing education and personal growth through classes and other resources.
- Identify resources, including the Study Guide, to prepare for the national exam.
- Understand the Vermont Recovery Coach Certification Board's role, and how to contact it.
- Review volunteer and paid roles and opportunities to in peer recovery coaching.
- Celebrate their achievement and the relationships they have developed during the VRCA.

Who Attends the VRCA?

VRCA participants are people who currently provide or wish to provide recovery coaching in supervised settings for people seeking recovery from alcohol and other drug addiction. Priority and focus is given to applicants currently working in recovery centers and related settings, who are referred by their employer. Consideration may also be given to applicants who work in other settings where recovery supports are provided.

It is important to note:

- The VRCA does not endorse and does not prepare its participants for independent coaching work. Careers in recovery coaching do not include "hanging out a shingle" as a recovery coach.
- Qualifications and qualities that will support your application to VRCA include:
 - 18 years of age and older
 - At least a year of sobriety and recovery work
 - Referral from the recovery center or related organization where you currently serve
 - A commitment to lifelong learning and personal growth.
 - A clear interest in a career path in recovery coaching and/or related service.
- Completion of the VRCA is only one factor in determining readiness to serve as a recovery coach or other recovery worker. Certification, and the standards and qualifications of the employing or sponsoring organization also apply.

We encourage anyone interested in a career path of recovery coaching, or in the content offered in the VRCA, to attend one of the introductory seminars offered by Recovery Vermont.

Recovery Vermont offers a separate coaching program for family members and loved ones of people with SUD who wish to work with their peers.

Certification (What is a "Certified Recovery Coach"?)

Successful completion of the Recovery Coach Academy results in a certificate of completion. This certificate is required by many employers for recovery coach, peer recovery specialist, and related positions. It is also recognized by the Vermont Department of Health and the national Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

The Vermont Recovery Coach Academy is Vermont's training for national certification through the IC&RC and includes preparation for the IC&RC exam.

The Vermont Recovery Coach Certification Committee is currently developing guidelines and standards for recertification and continuing education.

THE VERMONT RECOVERY COACH ACADEMY CURRICULUM

The VRCA is an active, engaging, practical curriculum including 12 modules and a minimum of 46 instructor-led hours. Practice in direct coaching skills occurs in all five days of the program, and each training segment incorporates discussion and activities designed to ensure participants bring their life experience and learn from others.

The program is designed to be offered either in an in-person or an on-line class environment. Class work is supported by out-of-class and post-academy requirements as a prerequisite to completion. The following modules capture the core proficiencies (competencies) essential for successful peer recovery coaching. The daily course outline may draw from more than one module to achieve a layered learning effect in which participants are able to apply the day's subject matter to their practice sessions.

Module I: Motivational Interviewing

This module will introduce VRCA participants to the spirit, principles, and tools of Motivational Interviewing (MI) including OARS skills. The module will support participants in developing basic MI strategies and applying basic MI techniques using real-play practice, lecture, group discussion, video, and case studies.

Learning Objectives: Participants will be able to:

- Understand and apply the spirit and key principles of MI in coaching.
- Identify basic OARS skills.
- Demonstrate skills with OARS.
- Identify the difference between change talk and sustain talk.
- Develop and demonstrate skills supporting clients in exploring and resolving ambivalence.

Competencies Trained in this Module:

- Apply the spirit of MI and OARS skills to coach-client interactions.
- Express empathy and compassion without judgment.
- Refrain from advice giving and solution offering.
- Respect the client's autonomy.
- Build a competent world view for the client.

Module II: Practice Coaching

This module expands and deepens the practice and growth established in Motivational Interviewing, applying OARS skills to new situations, and sustaining effective motivational interviewing skills in longer and deeper conversations with coaches. It

incorporates the Stages of Change model and its use in motivational interviewing by understanding what is required for readiness to change.

Practice Coaching is more than a module. It is also an educational approach! Students receive supervision from trainers, as well as feedback on their practice coaching sessions from trainers and course participants. Students at the Academy get over 12 hours of facilitated practice coaching.

Learning Objectives: In addition to Module I, participants will be able to:

- Deepen their practice and apply MI methods to new situations.
- Define the attributes of each Stage of Change.
- Understand the progressive nature of change from pre-contemplation to contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance, and relapse.
- Perceive what needs to happen to progress to the next stage.
- Determine readiness to change.
- Comprehend various motivational methods to support the change process.

Module III: Recovery Coaching Ethics and Boundaries

This module is designed to impress upon and educate VRCA participants on the central role of ethics and boundaries in our profession. Participants will learn about Vermont's formal ethical guidelines and will learn that boundaries don't keep us from each other but give us the freedom to safely and professionally bring our services to bear.

Learning Objectives: Participants will be able to:

- Relate the basic principles contained in the Vermont Recovery Coach Ethical Guidelines.
- Know where to find the answers for detailed ethical questions for their practice.
- Identify the three things that are within our lane: motivational interviewing, resource provision, and wellness plans.
- Define how ethics, values, morals, laws, and boundaries are understood in recovery coaching.
- Appreciation of personal choices in morals and values.
- Appreciation of universality of ethics and boundaries.

Module IV: Supervision and Workplace Rules

Recovery coaches must work under the guidance of a supervisor. This is made explicit in the national standards, in our state's standards, in our state's recovery coach ethics, and in the belief and practice of each of our recovery centers. In this module, students

will explore the reasons behind this requirement, that critical value of supervision, and the critical boundaries of workplace rules.

Learning Objectives: Participants will be able to:

- Define supervision as a necessary and helpful boundary.
- Understand that they will only be able to serve as a recovery coach within an authorized organization, and with the formal oversight of a trained supervisor. They will be accountable to the organization and the supervisor for compliance with all workplace rules and expectations. This applies to volunteer and paid coach positions.
- Explain how supervision and workplace rules are boundaries that provide lanes to keep us safe and productive.
- Understand the common workplace rules among our state's recovery centers and recovery residences.
- Articulate the prohibition on being a "free agent" recovery coach and understand the communication channels for updating the recovery community on one's supervisor and workplace.

Module V: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Recovery Services

This module introduces VRCA participants to the fundamentals of diversity, inclusion, equity, cultural competence, and allyship. It provides experiences and tools to recognize, work through and grow beyond common assumptions and biases, and to support the strengths and individuality of those they coach.

Learning Objectives: Participants will be able to:

- Define diversity, equity and inclusion as presented and in their own terms.
- Distinguish between equity and equality.
- Apply the concepts of diversity, equity and inclusion meaningfully to the coaching role.
- Describe unconscious bias in terms of its potential negative impact on others, and the science of the human brain that makes unconscious bias a common phenomenon.
- Identify areas of unconscious bias in themselves and others.
- Apply the concept of mental models in the context of unconscious bias.
- Define cultural competence and identify culturally responsive practices they can apply in coaching and everyday life.
- Apply effective inclusion, cultural competence. and allyship practices to the motivational interviewing frame.

Competencies Trained in this Module:

- Define: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Unconscious Bias, Cultural Competence, and allyship.

- Identify what living/working in an inclusive way might look like for them.
- Relate culturally competent and inclusive practices to recovery coaching.
- Practice a tool for identifying and overcoming assumptions and biases.
- Apply at a basic level culturally responsive practices to include in recovery coaching.
- Create a personal plan for building inclusive practices into our recovery coaching work.

Module VI: Substance Use Disorder as a Health Condition (The Science of Addiction; and Harm Reduction)

Part I of this module introduces the scientific concepts at the core of understanding addiction as a disease centered in the central nervous system. Part II explores the concept of harm reduction as a means to assist clients on their road to recovery. Both parts pay special attention to how these concepts can be used to communicate effectively with clients, and to better understand their needs in light of this health condition.

Learning Objectives: Participants will be able to:

Part 1 Science of Addiction:

- Define addiction in scientific/medical terms.
- Discuss neurotransmitters and their role in the brain's response to substances, as well as in the formation of tolerance.
- Understand dopamine's role in the pleasure centers of the brain, as well as in motivation.
- Locate the anatomical locations of structures involved in pleasure/reward and motivation, and comment on their behavioral/evolutionary significance.
- Discuss withdrawal syndromes of various drugs of abuse.

Part 2 Harm Reduction:

- Define harm reduction.
- Discuss the core principles of harm reduction and their focus on individual communities.
- Identify the needle exchange programs available in Vermont, and what other services are available.
- Discuss the safe injection site movement around the world and its current status in the United States.
- Understand the use of naloxone nasal spray for opioid overdose.

Module VII: The Power of Peers

The federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) defines a peer as, "An individual with lived experience or a family member of one with lived experience." This module explores the unique power and empathy that comes from peer-to-peer coaching. We explore the fact that being a peer does not make one magically ready to coach; but being a well-trained peer can work wonders in supporting recovery.

Learning Objectives: Participants will be able to:

- Define a peer and the role of peers in recovery coaching.
- Understand the special empathy that comes from being a peer coach.
- Identify the difference between sharing one's recovery story with clients and sharing one's "addiction" stories with clients.
- Understand that we don't use our experience to prescribe solutions to others: everyone's recovery is unique.
- Demonstrate ways to model recovery.
- Use motivational interviewing to develop boundaried peer-to-peer empathy and peer focused resources.
- Understand and express the power and programs of our statewide web of peer-driven recovery centers as central resources.

Module VIII: Multiple Paths of Recovery

This module explores the concept that recovery is a multi-dimensional and layered process that is unique to each individual. We explore the highly differentiated and widely available array of recovery programs, from 12-step recovery to Buddhist recovery, and why this is important to recovery coaching. Group discussion and case studies on the importance of keeping an open mind as a recovery coach will help support participants' understanding of this topic.

Learning Objectives: Participants will be able to:

- Articulate an understanding of the concept of Multiple Pathways.
- Demonstrate skills through group discussion, case studies, and practice working with peers who use different approaches in their recovery.
- Demonstrate openness to all recovery pathways.
- Demonstrate the ability to offer proper resources to clients, with consideration and respect for their pathways.

Module IX: Trauma Informed Care

This module helps recovery coaches to understand the basics of trauma and PTSD and provides concrete strategies for working with clients in a trauma informed way. It also addresses strategies for the coach's own self-care when working in stressful or traumatic situations; for maintaining and reestablishing boundaries under stress; and for use if a coach experiences a trauma response themselves.

Learning Objectives: Participants will be able to:

- Identify types of trauma.
- Understand and articulate the components of trauma.
- Identify behaviors that may suggest someone's trauma response has been activated, and strategies for supporting clients under such circumstances.
- Identify behaviors and practices to use with any client while coaching in order to minimize the possibility of triggering or activating a client's trauma response.
- Develop and practice personal self-regulation & resourcing techniques to use both when working with others, and in stressful situations.

Competencies Trained in this Module:

- Create a safer space for people who have past or current trauma experiences.
- Supplement Motivational Interviewing techniques and skills with trauma informed guidelines.
- Take responsibility for one's own self-regulation when working with others and in stressful situations.

Module X: Wellness Planning and Self-Care

This module addresses both the importance of self-care as someone working in a caregiving field, and tools for facilitating development and implementation of a wellness plan for the peers the Coach works with. We will explore:

- The signs of caregiver burnout, and how to best bolster one's daily routine as a measure of prevention; and
- Supporting peer wellness by integrating the Stages of Change model and Motivational Interviewing with the use of a wellness planning tool, so peers may learn to approach their own wellness in a self-directed, sustainable way.

Learning Objectives: Participants will be able to:

Caregiver Self-Care:

- Define self-care.
- Understand the signs and implications of caregiver burnout.
- Articulate approaches to self-care they can implement for themselves.

Wellness Planning:

- Articulate the importance of wellness planning as a part of peer recovery coaching.
- Demonstrate the ability to facilitate peers' development and use of a wellness plan using the model provided.
- Demonstrate the ability to integrate motivational interviewing skills, the Stages of Change model, and wellness planning.

Module XI: Recovery Resources

Using the Elicit-Provide-Elicit technique of Motivational Interviewing, this module will help students learn how to offer resources to their client in a non-prescriptive manner.

Learning Objectives: Participants will be able to:

- Identify recovery resources that exist in their part of the state.

- Activate strategies to build relationships with local and regional resources that are important to clients' ability to build recovery capital.
- Provide their client with resources in a non-prescriptive manner
- Share about new recovery resources in their area of the state
- Demonstrate resource provision through observed practice coaching

Module XII: The Path of a Recovery Coach

This module is designed to help participants prepare to integrate what they have learned into roles they already have or hope to take on as they emerge from the Academy. It provides information about volunteer and paid positions as peer specialists and recovery coaches. Content will include guest presenters from some likely environments, which may include recovery centers, emergency departments, residential treatment facilities, recovery residences, and/or correctional environments. It also includes information about the role of recovery coaches in advocacy in personal relationships, in the community, and at the policy or governmental level.

Learning Objectives: Participants will be able to:

- Identify various settings where recovery coaching is included as a service.
- Engage with practitioners and supervisors of coaches.
- Identify what readiness to practice looks like from an employer's perspective.
- Describe several components of a typical recovery coach job description.
- Describe the role of advocacy and allyship in peer recovery coaching, and at least one way they can act as an advocate and as an ally.
- Identify at least three ways to stay current with the field of addiction and recovery.
- Articulate a commitment to continuing education and personal development.
- Identify a variety of sources for continuing education and learning, including webinars, classes, mentoring and receiving supervision and coaching.

On-line Learning

In addition to the in-person modules, other lessons are completed on-line that reinforce these modules and add new knowledge.

Fundamentals of Recovery and Recovery Coaching

1. SAMHSA's Aspects of Recovery
2. SAMHSA's Guiding Principles of Recovery
3. SAMHSA's Four Domains of Recovery Coaching
4. Recovery Coaching History Nationwide
5. Recovery Coaching History in Vermont

The Practice of Recovery Coaching

1. Recovery vs. Treatment
2. Servant Leadership
3. Motivational Interviewing
4. Stages of Change
5. Cultural Competence
6. Multiple Pathways of Recovery
7. Resource Provision
8. Group Facilitation

Health and Science

1. The Science of Addiction
2. SAMHSA's Guiding Principles of Trauma-informed Care
3. The Effects of Stress on the Brain
4. Recovery Wellness Plans

Ethics and Standards of Practice

1. Ethics and Boundaries
2. Duty of Care

Self-Awareness/Self-Development

The Path of a Recovery Coach

1. Practice and review
2. Study Guide for the IC&RC National Exam