

**Recovery
Vermont**

**The Vermont Certified
Recovery Coach Academy**

Curriculum Overview and Exam Review

A 46-hour training that emphasizes:

Motivational Interviewing
Resource Provision
Professional Ethics
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
Multiple Pathways
The Science of Addiction
... and much more.

The Vermont Recovery Coach Academy is the state's training for the recovery workforce.



Vermont's Recovery Coach Certification is internationally recognized and supported by the International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium (IC&RC), the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), the Vermont Department of Health, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs (ADAP), and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). We are grateful for their partnership!

A note on the International exam

This is an important document. It provides an overview of the academy and will serve as a super helpful guide for you when studying for the international recovery coach certification exam. We've highlighted topics that may be on the exam with a big gold star

Have any questions...at any time? We're here to help! Contact Director of Workforce Development, Lisa Lord. Lisa is here to help you every step of the way for your Certification! Email: lisa@recoveryvermont.org

INTRODUCTION

The Vermont Recovery Coach Academy (VRCA) is the premiere training for Vermont's recovery workforce. It provides a comprehensive 46-hour program of evidence-based methods for supporting clients in their diverse processes of recovery. The VRCA is recognized by the Vermont Department of Health and SAMHSA and it is Vermont's training for reciprocal 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 in the theory that the opposite of addiction is connection.

Recovery 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 for effective coaching. Modules on motivational interviewing, ethics and boundaries, science of addiction, diversity and equity, resource provision, trauma-informed care, and stigma reduction create a powerful, thorough, and well-rounded program. In addition, our team helps participants to explore their personal beliefs, values, talents, biases, and needs related to substance use disorder, recovery and working with others.

Recovery coaching happens in various settings-- in Vermont's recovery centers, in emergency departments, recovery residences, treatment facilities, recovery-friendly workplaces-- and the workforce continues to grow and expand to key areas such as domestic violence centers, police departments and health care settings. Additional training is available for work in specialized focus areas.

Admissions Criteria

- One year of continuous recovery (if applicable)
- An approved supervisor: An experienced professional in the recovery field to oversee, provide feedback, and supervise one's recovery coach practice during and after the VRCA. In addition, if currently working or volunteering in recovery resource or recovery-adjacent resource, approval from this supervisor is required.
- Basic computer skills
- Strong internet connection (if training is online)

The Classroom and On-Line Experience

Adult Learning: Active Learning

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, empathy and compassion, resource provision, confidentiality and other key skills are practiced here.
 - Additional skill practice, exercises, and activities: Other active practice in the curriculum includes case studies on ethics and boundaries, identifying and working with biases, stigma reduction efforts, being an ally, wellness plan development, identifying values, 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, reinforce, 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 recovery coach workforce to guide clients who seek to begin or sustain long-term recovery from substance use disorder or process addictions. 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 Recovery Coach.
- Understand the very narrow lane of recovery coaching: Motivational Interviewing and Resource Provision.
- Identify the principles, values, and components of addiction recovery, including multiple pathways, harm reduction, and addressing common barriers.
- 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 and apply Motivational Interviewing as the 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.
- Build awareness and skills in inclusive and culturally competent practices, addressing bias, stereotypes, privilege, and power as they relate to recovery and the coach's role.
- With the client, navigate toward resources (employment, stable housing, medical care, etc.) and explore advocacy where needed, as means for 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.
- Facilitate 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 the recovery coach, including skills and competencies, supervision, and continuing education and certification.
- Articulate an understanding of the ethics, boundaries, and legal considerations of the 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 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 to prepare for the international exam.
- Understand the Vermont Recovery Coach Certification Board's role, and how to contact it.
- Review volunteer and paid roles and opportunities in the field of 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 substances or process addictions. Priority and focus are given to applicants currently working in recognized recovery (or recovery-adjacent) resources, who are referred by their employer/supervisor.

It is important to note:

- The VRCA does not endorse and does not prepare its participants for independent coaching work—every coach must work under supervision. Careers in recovery coaching do not include working as an independent contractor as a Recovery Coach.
- Qualifications and qualities that will support one’s application to VRCA include:
 - At least a year of recovery (if applicable)
 - Referral from the recovery-related organization where one currently serves
 - 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.

Recovery Vermont offers additional specialty coaching trainings for the intersections of SUD and: the Family; Corrections and Reentry; the Emergency Department; Intimate Partner Violence; Mental Health, and more. Recovery Coaches can also receive further focused training in the areas of Supervision and Motivational Interviewing.

Different types of Recovery Coaches

There are two classifications of Recovery Coaches in Vermont: Recovery Coaches who have not been certified, and Certified Recovery Coaches. All Recovery Coaches in Vermont are ultimately responsible to the ethical standards in the Code of Professional Ethics, and to the Vermont Recovery Coach Certification Committee (Vermont’s chapter of the International Reciprocity and Certification Consortium).

All Recovery Coaches must:

- Have successfully completed the Vermont Recovery Coach Academy
- Have signed and are abiding by the Vermont Recovery Coach Code of Professional Ethics
- Are working under supervision at a recognized recovery (or recovery-adjacent) resource.

In sum, Recovery Coaches are in the practicum period of their profession

Certified Recovery Coaches who have earned their internationally reciprocal certification through the Vermont body of the IC&RC must:

- Have successfully completed the Vermont Recovery Coach Academy
- Have signed and are abiding by the Vermont Recovery Coach Code of Professional Ethics
- Are working under supervision at a recognized recovery resource

- Have compiled 500 hours of supervised work experience
- Have successfully passed the international IC&RC exam
- Maintain a clear set of continuing education standards to renew their certification every two years

THE VERMONT RECOVERY COACH ACADEMY CURRICULUM

The VRCA is an active, engaging, practical curriculum including twelve 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 units capture the core proficiencies (competencies) essential for successful recovery coaching. The daily course outline may draw from more than one unit to achieve a layered learning effect in which participants are able to apply the day's subject matter to their practice sessions.

Unit 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.
- Learn how to offer resources while maintaining the spirit of MI in coaching.
- Use motivational interviewing to develop boundaried peer-to-peer empathy and peer focused resources.

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.

Unit II: Practice Coaching

This unit 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.

Practice Coaching is more than a unit; 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 several hours of facilitated practice coaching.

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

- Deepen their practice and apply MI methods to new situations.
- Discover best-practices in structuring recovery coaching sessions.
- Understand the importance of space, expectations, and time.

Unit 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. In this unit, students will also explore the reasons behind this requirement, the critical value of supervision, and the critical boundaries of workplace rules.

Learning Objectives: Participants will be able to:

- Relate the basic principles contained in the Vermont Recovery Coach Code of Professional Ethics.
- Know where to find the answers for detailed ethical questions for their practice.
- Identify the two things that are within our lane: motivational interviewing and resource provision.
- Define how ethics, values, morals, laws, and boundaries are understood in recovery coaching.
- Appreciation of personal choices in morals and values.
- Appreciation of the universality of ethics and boundaries.
- Understand why boundaries can mitigate compassion fatigue.
- Define supervision as a necessary and helpful boundary.
- Understand that they will only be able to serve as a Recovery Coach within an approved organization, and with the formal oversight of an approved 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 Recovery Vermont on one's supervisor and workplace.

Unit IV: 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.
- 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.
- Define stigma and its potential negative impact on others. Learn the power of stigma-reducing terms in Recovery Coaching.
- Understand that advocacy is a form of social justice.

Competencies Trained in this Unit:

- 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.
- 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.
- Learn what stigma-reducing language is appropriate.

Unit V: 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.
- Identify the anatomical locations of structures involved in pleasure/reward and motivation, and comment on their behavioral/evolutionary significance.
- Discuss withdrawal symptoms of various substances.

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.
- Define stigma and its potential negative impact on others. Learn the power of stigma-reducing terms in Recovery Coaching.
- Discuss the stigma related to harm reduction

Unit VI: Multiple Paths of Recovery



This module explores the concept that recovery is a multi-dimensional and layered process that is unique to everyone. 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.
- Learn about Recovery Vermont's approach and definition of recovery.
- 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.
- Understand that we do not use our experience to dictate or recommend solutions to others: everyone's recovery is unique.
- Define a peer and the role of peers in recovery coaching.

Unit VII: 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 traumas.
- 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 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.

Unit VIII: Building Recovery Capital

This module addresses the importance of helping the client to gather recovery resources. This empowering practice helps the client to acknowledge what resources already exist in their lives, and what resources they need to continue a successful recovery. We will explore:

- The four types of Recovery Capital as explained by William White.
- How the use of Motivational Interviewing allows the client to hear the existing supports they possess.
- Case Studies for the coach to analyze and practice listening and providing resources to their client.

Learning Objectives: Participants will be able to:

- Define the four types of recovery capital.
- Understand how recovery capital helps support one's recovery.
- Articulate and identify a client's existing recovery capital through the use of case studies.

Unit IX: Recovery Resources

Using the Ask-Offer-Ask technique of Motivational Interviewing, this unit 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

Unit X: The Path of a Recovery Coach and Recovery Coach Certification

This unit 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 for recovery coaches. It also

includes information about the role that Recovery Coaches can play in advocacy in personal relationships, in the community, and at the policy or governmental level. Additionally, participants will learn about how to become a Certified Recovery Coach (CRC) which includes details on continuing education, supervision, and the certification exam.

Learning Objectives: Participants will be able to:

- Identify various settings where recovery coaching is included as a service.
- 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 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.
- Learn about the levels of Recovery Coaches which includes Recovery Coaches and Certified Recovery Coach (CRC).
- Discuss the pathway to become a CRC which includes information on continuing education, supervision, and licensure exam.

On-line Learning

In addition to the in-person learning, other lessons are completed on-line that reinforce these concepts and add new knowledge. This self-directed learning takes place on Recovery Vermont's Learning Management System, Moodle. Within Moodle students will access various modules while they are enrolled in the Recovery Coach Academy. While each module varies in content, generally the modules include reading assignments, YouTube videos/lectures, worksheets, and writing assignments. Completion of this coursework is mandatory, and participants will not receive a diploma until a Recovery Vermont staff member verifies all requirements are fulfilled. While the assignments are required, they are not graded.

Fundamentals of Recovery and Recovery Coaching

1. SAMHSA's Aspects of Recovery 
 - a. Participants learn about the four major dimensions that support a life in recovery which include health, home, purpose, and community. A writing reflection is required within this module.
2. SAMHSA's Guiding Principles of Recovery 
 - a. Participants learn about the ten guiding principles of recovery. A writing reflection is required within this module.
3. SAMHSA's Four Domains of Recovery Coaching 
 - a. Participants learn about the four domains of Recovery Coaching which include advocacy, ethical responsibility, mentoring/education, and recovery/wellness support.
4. Recovery Coaching History Nationwide and in Vermont
 - a. Participants discover the history of how Recovery Coaching manifested within the nation and Vermont.
 - b. Participants are provided a definition of Recovery Coaching.

The Practice of Recovery Coaching

1. Recovery vs. Treatment 
 - a. Participants discover the differences between the scope of practice of recovery supports and treatment and why it is essential to understand and honor them as a Recovery Coach.
2. Stages of Change 
 - Participants learn about the Stages of Change. 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
- 3. Servant Leadership
 - a. Participants learn to define the leadership style known as servant leadership. A writing reflection is required within this module.
- 4. Motivational Interviewing (MI) 
 - a. Participants expand on the knowledge gained from the MI lecture and practice. Practice worksheets are provided to enhance student learning.
- 5. Diversity Equity, and Inclusion
 - a. Participants expand on the knowledge gained from the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion lectures.
 - b. Participants review best-practices for white-led organizations to promote health, equity, and racial justice in health advocacy.
- 6. Multiple Pathways of Recovery 
 - a. Participants review several types of common recovery paths. A writing reflection is required within this module.
- 7. Resource Provision 
 - a. Participants discover what is needed within their Recovery Coach “toolbox” and how to establish their own resource base. A writing reflection is required within this module.
- 8. Trauma-informed Care
 - a. Participants expand on the knowledge gained from the Trauma-informed Care lecture.
 - b. Participants learn SAMHSA’s guiding principles to trauma-informed care.

Health and Science

1. The Science of Addiction
 - a. Participants expand on the knowledge gained from The Science of Addiction lecture. A writing reflection is required within this module.
2. The Effects of Stress on the Brain and Compassion Fatigue
 - a. Participants can define compassion fatigue and how it impacts those in the healthcare field.
 - b. Participants learn how stress can impact one’s ability to function and complete day-to-day tasks.
3. Recovery Wellness Plans 
 - a. Participants learn about and define Wellness Plans and how to use them as part of their recovery coaching practice.
 - b. The benefits of developing a wellness plan are discussed.
4. Self-Care
 - a. Participants learn about the importance of self-care as a method to avoid compassion fatigue.

- b. Participants discover the importance of modeling self-care to their clients.
 - c. A writing reflection is required within this module.
5. Mental Health & Co-Occurring Disorders 
- a. Participants learn about how to best coach client who present with both substance use disorder and mental health challenges.
 - b. The role of resiliency when working through difficult situations is discussed.

Ethics and Standards of Practice

- 1. Ethics and Boundaries
 - a. Participants review and agree to the Vermont Recovery Coach Code of Professional Ethics
- 2. Duty of Care 
 - a. Participants learn the essence of the Duty of Care and what to do if they fear their client is a harm to themselves or others.