



# Recovery Coaches in Emergency Department

## Vermont Recovers Together

Division of Substance Use Programs

January 2025

The Vermont Department of Health, Division of Substance Use services (DSU) funds and coordinates a program that integrates recovery professionals, called Recovery Coaches, in emergency departments (ED). Recovery Coaches are people in recovery, allies or family members who have been trained to guide a person on their path to recovery, using motivational interviewing and other evidence-based practices. Since patients in this crisis setting may be at a place of heightened reception to change, placing Recovery Coaches in this environment can help people get the support they need while in that readiness state.

### KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **There were 60 Recovery Coaches employed across all 14 Vermont EDs between July 2023 – June 2024.**
- **2,397 Vermonters were served October 2023 – September 2024.**

## How the Program Works

Recovery coaches in EDs is a holistic approach to providing Recovery support services in a crisis environment. Recovery Coaches are either on-call or have strategically scheduled shifts in all 14 EDs throughout Vermont. The Recovery Coaches are asked to meet with patients who are admitted into EDs for a substance use-related issue, or they are diagnosed with substance use disorder during their visit. When Recovery Coaches meet with patients in EDs, they use motivational interviewing skills to identify the person's needs, provide them with support in engaging in treatment, recovery or harm reduction services, and provide them with referrals for other services such as housing, transportation and mental health support.

If the patient consents, the Recovery Coach will follow-up with them following their discharge from the ED for 10 or more days after discharge or until they request that the follow-up be modified. During follow-up sessions, the Recovery Coach will continue to support the person in finding their preferred path to recovery. The follow-up process is the key to this program's success by ensuring regular support following the initial emergency.

Between October 2023 – September 2024, 2,397 Vermonters admitted into EDs for a substance use-related issue or diagnosed with substance use disorder were assisted by Recovery Coaches.

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**2,397 Vermonters were helped by Recovery Coaches in EDs**

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## Program History

The Recovery Coaches in EDs started in July of 2017 with three EDs. The program steadily grew until all 14 of Vermont's EDs were participating. With the program established in every ED in Vermont hospitals, we ensure statewide equity in access to this service.

For more information, contact [AHS.VDHDSU@vermont.gov](mailto:AHS.VDHDSU@vermont.gov).