



**2007/2008 Our Common Welfare Program
Community Needs Assessment
Focus Group Results**

YAVAPAI COUNTY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In December 2007 Women In New Recovery’s Our Common Welfare (OCW) Program embarked on a community needs assessment process to explore and capture the views and concerns of various stakeholders regarding the current state of recovery housing in Arizona. The OCW program, through financial support from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, is building a work plan to implement peer-to-peer recovery support services throughout the recovery housing industry in Maricopa and Yavapai counties by 2011. Peer recovery support is offered by individuals (peers) who have achieved sobriety and can share experience, strength and hope with another peer who is in the early stages of recovery. Peer support strengthens individuals’ ability to sustain long-term recovery and re-enter society as productive members of their families and communities.

Critical to the service design process is the gathering of input from individuals and organizations that can benefit from or will be impacted by the program. Through the needs assessment, input was gathered through focus groups, surveys, and discussion/planning groups. To date, four focus groups and numerous surveys have been completed. This executive summary highlights needs assessment activities and results for Yavapai County, Arizona.

OCW facilitated a focus group in Prescott, Arizona, on March 6, 2008, comprised of 16 participants including 13 representatives from recovery housing programs. Many of the attendees were personally in recovery from substance abuse. Attendees participated in the focus group discussion and also provided additional input through surveys which were completed at the conclusion of the focus group. In all, 12 surveys were returned; some were incomplete.

The resulting data are organized and reported under two primary groups—recovery housing providers and other community stakeholders. A detailed explanation of the needs assessment methodology, all data gathered from each event including participant demographics and evaluator’s suggestions for further exploration, are described in the full report.

AUDIENCE

Participants included family members of individuals in recovery; treatment providers; an employer; and other community representatives, in addition to four recovery housing programs.

The chart to the right summarizes the participants’ reported demographics and backgrounds as indicated in surveys.

Participant Characteristic	Housing Providers	Community Representatives
Gender	50% Male, 33% Female (17% unreported)	83% Female, 0% Male (17% unreported)
Ethnicity	67% White, 17% African-American, 17% Multicultural	17% Hispanic, 67% White (17% unreported)
Highest Level of Education Completed	50% Completed an Associates, Bachelors or Masters Degree	83% Completed an Associates, Bachelors or Masters Degree (17% unreported)
Longevity in the Recovery Housing Business	Average = 13 years Median = 3 years	N/A
Formal Education/Training in Substance Abuse Treatment	83% reported some formal education/training	N/A
Personal Experience Related to Recovery	67% have lived in a halfway house 67% are in recovery	



TOPICS EXPLORED

The needs assessment process was designed to gain an understanding of the community’s impressions and recommendations for recovery housing in Arizona.

- Survey Questions:** The survey solicited input on recovery housing features considered to be most critical in supporting residents’ ability to sustain recovery. Community stakeholder respondents ranked these features in terms of their achievability, while housing providers ranked them in terms of their level of importance to sustained recovery. Respondents also provided additional recommendations, suggestions for important (additional) stakeholders to include in future needs assessment activities, and an indication of their personal interest in continued participation in program expansion activities. Housing provider respondents also responded to a question regarding services/components currently offered at their facilities. Copies of the survey forms are included as attachments to the full report.
- Focus Group Discussion:** The focus group discussion provided opportunities to better understand the recovery housing providers’ perspectives in terms of industry concerns, perceived opportunities for improvements, and challenges to such improvements. Participants discussed the types of resources that are critical to recovery; pros and cons of using recovery housing; assumptions on the community’s impression of the recovery housing “industry,” changes needed, and challenges to making such changes. Housing providers also made suggestions as to the level of leadership needed and desired and offered input regarding the support which could be provided by a statewide association of housing providers.

SURVEY RESULTS

The ranking of essential characteristics of recovery housing provides a broad view on what matters most in recovery housing to the providers in Yavapai County. The ranking reported for “most essential” characteristics are listed in the chart below. Community stakeholder participants were also asked to rank the *achievability* of these features. The following chart displays results listed in order of importance and in terms of the greatest level of achievability.

Most Essential Recovery Home Characteristics as Ranked by Yavapai Housing Providers	Ranking of Most Achievable to Least Achievable by Yavapai Community Stakeholders
1. Well-defined program with written rules for residential participation 2. Accessible resources 3. Experienced front line staff with two or more years sobriety 4. Opportunities for sober socialization/recreation 5. Adequate space – safe, clean and well-maintained for community living 6. 24-hour supervision 7. Follow-up – ongoing recovery support 8. Community and neighborhood orientation	1. Tied for 1 st : Adequate space and experienced front-line staff with 2+ years of sobriety 2. Well-defined program 3. Follow-up---Ongoing recovery support 4. 24-hour supervision 5. Sober socialization 6. Accessible resources 7. Community and neighborhood orientation

Note that respondents selected a “well-defined program” as the more important feature, yet identified “adequate space” and “experienced front-line staff” as most achievable.



Services Currently Available and Interest in Adding New Services

Following is a summary list of services or programs already offered by participating housing providers in Yavapai County and a rating of their interests and willingness to offer such services if affordable:

Currently Available Ranked by Majority Response	Interest/Willingness to Add New Services (in order of high to low interest)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Affordable adequate space; experienced front line staff with 2+ years of sobriety and opportunities for sober socialization/recreation (equally rated) 2. Adequate space in terms of basic housing standards; regularly scheduled fire and safety inspections; established ethical standards; 24-hour supervision; a well defined program with written rules; and follow-up/ongoing recovery support (equally rated) 3. Transportation resources; employment assistance; and mental health services; and assistance for prisoner re-entry (equally rated) 4. Community and neighborhood orientation/involvement 5. Accessible health services 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Health care services 2. Adequate space in terms of safety, cleanliness, and well maintained for community living; transportation; mental health services; and community /neighborhood orientation (equally rated)

In summary, housing providers indicated that having a well-defined program with rules for resident participation, supplemented with accessible resources and experienced staff, was among the most essential characteristics of recovery housing. The majority of survey respondents (83 percent) indicated that they currently have adequate space and experienced staff; having a well-defined program follows in frequency of availability (67 percent). This can be construed as an opportunity for enhancing current programs with the added peer support services and resources which are available through the OCW project at no cost to providers.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

What's in a Name?

Much discussion centered on the importance of the industry/facility name, and the connotations (negative and positive) that are associated with commonly used names. Housing providers were asked to choose the term that best defines the service they provide within the recovery community. Several chose multiple types of housing to describe their particular service to the recovery community. The combined responses self-identified with the following, in order of most frequently selected:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. "Transitional Living Facility" | 4. "3/4 House" |
| 2. "Sober Living Environment" | 5. "Halfway House" |
| 3. "Recovery House" | 6. "Boarding House" |

Changes Needed

Yavapai County focus group participants discussed barriers to sustaining recovery, advantages and disadvantages of recovery housing, and recommendations for change within the recovery housing industry. Participants were quite clear on the changes needed to achieve credibility within the community, including:

- a. Monitoring and licensing to bring credibility in the community; requiring certification and/or higher standards of care
- b. Collaboration rather than competition, focusing on similarities
- c. Greater awareness of legislation like the Fair Housing Acts and American Disabilities Act



- d. Addressing city issues and opposition from the neighbors and neighborhood associations—“our neighbors are fearful of us”
- e. Hold houses to a higher standard to avoid licensing

Advantages Associated with a Statewide Recovery Housing Association

Participants were given the opportunity to consider the ways in which a statewide recovery housing association would best be able to serve the recovery community in addressing the existing challenges identified throughout the focus group discussion. Participants provided concrete examples of the benefits to be gained through the creation of this type of association, such as:

- a. Facilitate communication
- b. Direct web site that is communicative/interactive – a “one stop” resource site for the industry
- c. Create an organization to monitor and maintain standards
- d. Help those in the community to know which are the credible houses; make the information available to the community
- e. Get accreditation/certifications of houses

A Desire to Get Involved

Housing provider participants consistently expressed appreciation and relief over the opportunity to convene as a group. They discussed feeling isolated and at times uncertain in their role as business operators and expressed a strong interest in continuing to congregate in future forums for idea exchange, learning opportunities, and sharing experience, strength and hope with others in a similar field.

Finally, suggestions were made for additional stakeholders that need to be at the table as the program planning and rollout continue. Participants were asked to confirm their interest in getting involved in the start up and ongoing operations of peer recovery support services, and to provide examples of the manner in which they want to be involved. Respondents’ interest areas included (in random order):

- Host a community meeting
- Continue to meet as a group/coalition/association
- Bring other important stakeholders to the table, i.e., elected officials, law enforcement, NAMI members, Magellan representatives, HUD, clients, recovery programs, family members, government, school administrators, educators, homeowners associations, and church leaders
- Expand community development
- Host open houses/tours
- Host community workshops and forums
- Participate actively in a coalition
- Participate in the development of a code of ethics and ranking system
- Assist in building partnerships

NEXT STEPS

The OCW Project is continuing the community needs assessment process and is developing several follow up strategies based on the needs assessment results. Examples of next steps include the gathering of input from recovery housing program *residents* to compare resident feedback with the input of housing providers and community stakeholders. Focus group participants (housing providers and community stakeholders) who expressed an interest in remaining involved in the project planning activities will be invited to participate in the next steps. The project will release regular updates in the form of newsletters and email blasts to keep providers and community stakeholders informed and engaged.