

Re-Entry and Recovery Specialist Program

Building an Integrated Team to Navigate the Legal
System for People with SUD

Tim Bourdon

Abby Rittenour

Chad Wellins



from **RESEARCH** *to* **RECOVERY**
PRESENTED BY RAMS IN RECOVERY

MAY 20 & 21, 2026





3

major opioid settlements have resulted in funds being provided to the Commonwealth

McKinsey
~ \$13.68 million

National Settlement
totaling \$573 million

McKesson, Cardinal
Health, &
AmerisourceBergen
~\$230.44 million

National Settlement
~\$21 billion

Janssen Pharmaceutical
~\$53.48 million

~\$5 billion

Total Funds: \$612 million

The Opioid Abatement Authority was established in 2021 by the Virginia General Assembly to oversee these funds and distribute them in the form of grants, donations, or other assistance. All funds are provided to abate and remediate the **Opioid** epidemic within the Commonwealth

Criteria for Offices

As program is grant funded, limited to only addressing those identified as having Opioid Use Disorder.

Determined by using the DSM-V assessment

Offices selected where the opioid death rate exceeded the state average

High number of opioid deaths

High Opioid Caseload

2023-2024

7 participating offices



2024-2025

15 participating offices*



2025-2026

14 participating offices + 1 office with a client advocate (PFJ)



- Charlottesville
- Chesapeake
- Chester
- Covington
- Culpeper
- Danville
- Dublin
- Fairfax
- Franklin
- Fredericksburg
- Goochland
- Hampton
- Harrisonburg
- Henrico
- Hopewell
- Lynchburg
- Martinsville
- Midlothian



Katie Thompson
Executive Director of Virginia Programs

Join our team and help make recovery possible for more Virginians.

Recovery Corps launched in Virginia in 2022. Since then, we've supported over 1,500 individuals on their recovery journeys. We're looking for Recovery Navigators and Recovery Project Coordinators to support those starting their recovery journeys in the communities listed below.

Bring your passion to support people in recovery and we'll provide all the training.



THE CHALLENGE IN VIRGINIA

In Virginia, there were 21,881 substance use disorder-related emergency department visits in 2023. Recovery Corps is working to impact those numbers.

[Learn About Becoming a Partner Site](#)

Recovery Corps in Virginia

Our 2024-25 Impact



1,200+

Individuals received support from Recovery Corps



614

Participants reported positive change in their recovery

- Newport News
- Norfolk
- North Chesterfield
- Petersburg
- Portsmouth
- Pulaski
- Richmond
- Rocky Mount
- Ruther Glen
- South Boston
- Staunton
- Suffolk
- Warrenton
- Waynesboro
- Williamsburg
- Winchester
- Woodbridge
- Wytheville

Recovery Navigator Parameters - VIDC Offices

RECOVERY NAVIGATION

CAN:

Assisting client in getting accepted into a treatment facility

Assisting client in applying for public assistance programs

Assisting client with transition between Medicaid

Assisting client with seeking Education/Job Training

Assisting client with seeking employment

Connecting client with seeking mental health support

Connecting client with SUD counseling

Assisting clients in seeking and arranging transportation to and from treatment

Connecting clients with local food banks and other mutual assistance programs.



PEER SUPPORT

CAN:

Set realistic goals, schedule action steps with expected completion dates, and track the client's progress to meeting and achieving these goals.

Track client's recovery capital on a bi-weekly basis

Utilizing motivational interviewing techniques to encourage clients to move through the stages of change and advocate for their continued recovery and maintenance of sobriety

Help clients identify strengths and encourage empowerment and confidence.

Giving the client autonomy and action in their own recovery to promote mind-body recovery and resiliency.

The Recovery Navigator Plays a Unique Role on the Defense Team

They do what nobody else in the office does.

- squarely **focus** on the client's **recovery**
- get to **know** clients on a **deep** level; **nurture** their **spirit** and **Mental Health**; particularly while **incarcerated**
- bring **lived experience** that may otherwise be **lacking** in our **representation**
- work with treatment **resources/support networks** and **communicate** with **jail** staff to identify **problems** and find **solutions**
- play an **integral** role **humanizing** the client to the **prosecution** and the **court**
- check in** with the client **regularly**; **address** the ongoing **trauma** of criminal justice **system** involvement; high prevalence of **ACEs**

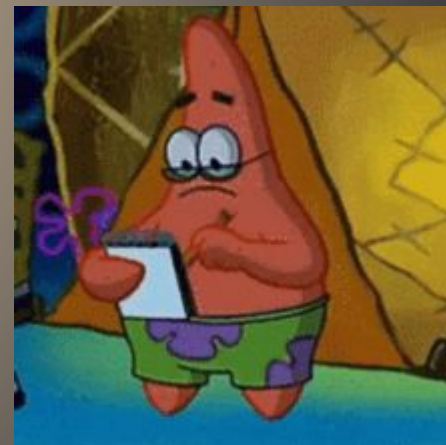
2025-2026 Recovery Corps Outcome Form

Participant Name: _____

Date: _____

Recovery Capital						
Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
There are more important things to me in life than using substances	1	2	3	4	5	6
In general I am happy with my life	1	2	3	4	5	6
I have enough energy to complete the tasks I set for myself	1	2	3	4	5	6
I am proud of the community I live in and feel part of it	1	2	3	4	5	6
I get lots of support from friends	1	2	3	4	5	6
I regard my life as challenging and fulfilling without the need for using drugs or alcohol	1	2	3	4	5	6
My living space has helped to drive my recovery journey	1	2	3	4	5	6
I take full responsibility for my actions	1	2	3	4	5	6
I am happy dealing with a range of professional people	1	2	3	4	5	6
I am making good progress on my recovery journey	1	2	3	4	5	6

(Optional) In the last 30 days, how many days have you used substances? _____





Quality of life					
Statement	Not at all	A little	Moderately	Mostly	Completely
How satisfied are you with your quality of life?	1	2	3	4	5
How satisfied are you with your health?	1	2	3	4	5
How satisfied are you with your energy level for daily life?	1	2	3	4	5
How satisfied are you with your ability to perform your daily activities?	1	2	3	4	5
How satisfied are you with yourself?	1	2	3	4	5
How satisfied are you with your personal relationships?	1	2	3	4	5
How satisfied are you with your financial resources to meet your needs?	1	2	3	4	5
How satisfied are you with the conditions of your living place?	1	2	3	4	5

Self-Esteem										
Statement	Not Very True of Me									Very True of Me
I have high self-esteem	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Self-Efficacy										
Statement	Not Confident At All									Absolutely Confident
How confident are you that you'll be able to stay in recovery the next 90 days, or 3 months	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

- **name:** SN
- **attorney:** Chad Wellins
- **location:** treatment
- **last contact:** 05/.. phone
- **goals:**
- **short:** treatment (long-term); out of jail for **birthday w/family**; drivers **licence**
- **long:** **waitressing**, salon
- **strengths:** non-judgemental, **trustworthy**, funny, **helpful**, **honest**, **direct**
- **support:** **mom**, **dad**, **stepdad**, **siblings**, gf; friends (A..., C..., G...F (x2), P...)
- **status:** 05/..; **memo** done and will be sent to **court** on 05/..; .. **can transport** if released; **pitch** at sentencing hearing go **straight** into **treatment**; bed-to-bed; more **squarely address** problem; condition of prob. w/time suspended; she hasn't done well on probation (thwarting); not interested in furlough; only long-term
- **court:**
 ../__/25: revocation, ...; ../_/25: revoc, CW

to do:

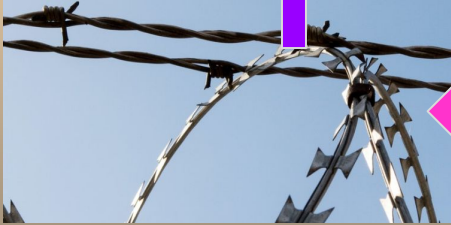
- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 05/08 SN confirm w/A.. ● 05/08 SN email P... thanks but no thanks ● 05/08 SN case notes; service log; goal update; ● 05/01 SN call her ... and ask about possibly transport if she's released ● 05/01 SN update A... on progress; ask about transport; ● 04/30 SN save draft of memo to drive and share with CW ● 04/30 SN ask CW: could we ask ... to hold her until thursday to wait for transport from ... if it's too late to arrange on Weds?; | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 04/30 SN draft memo w/GW in way to CVRJ ● 04/29 SN update mom ● 04/29 SN ... arrange interview ● 05/08 SN confirm w/A.. ● 05/08 SN case notes; service log; goal update; ● 04/30 SN save draft of memo to drive and share with CW |
|---|--|

- 04/29 SN update mom
- 04/29 SN ... arrange interview
- 04/28 SN respond to Nat Cap email
- 04/29 SN get proof of DOC probation and criminal history to A...;
- 04/29 SN call RH; K... if haven't heard back yet
- 04/29 SN email to CW about N.. G..
- 04/29 SN address for N.. G.. (sent email to m waiting response)
- 02/24 SN go to ... ROI, referral for Nat Cap
- 04/24 SN describe rules at N.. L...; thoughts?
- 04/25 SN ROI, quest. to N.. G..
- 04/25 SN referral to P...
- 04/25 SN update mom after talking to Rs
- 04/24 SN follow up with VA Rs
- 04/24 SN list VA Rs that take her insurance
- 04/23 SN convo w/GW to discuss plan
- 04/23 SN case notes; service log
- 04/18 SN call R in email
- 04/18 SN update mom via phone or email; legal sit. and info about R; left message
- 04/18 SN service; outcome; goals; case notes
- 04/18 SN call/visit; update; outcome; goals; inpatient
- 04/16 SN update from CW on other charges?
- 04/16 SN email mom insurance info
- 04/16 SN call insurance provider tomorrow with her card and ask for inpatient providers; put email from file in her file at FR office

- 04/15 SN call mom (left vm on 04/..)
- 04/11 SN called mom left message; see notes
- 04/04 SN visit; get WAYS of using drugs for referral sheet; continue mitigation info collection; check goals before going; set GOALS of sharing in meetings and others when finishing visit; outcome log
- 03/27 SN service log; goals M... meetings 2x/week
- 03/26 SN meet to complete mitigation screening?
- 03/26 SN prep mitigation screening AL, CW version
- 03/24 SN get her SSN
- 03/24 SN case notes
- 03/24 SN knack new part. Demo. outcome service goal
- 03/21 SN intake
- 03/19 SN prep folder
- 03/19 SN read file
- 03/19 SN Case notes



Former Client Interview - 04/24/26



Alternative to Incarceration
Treatment Program



Discussion Questions:

1. What three adjectives could you use to describe her emotional state?
2. What goals could you identify from this interview?



*What do you wanna say
to the people there?*

Recovery Navigator Testimonials

Laura Fears:

a. The peer-to-peer [ex.] model is what helped me most in my recovery, and it fills my heart to be able to do this every day. I can tell that I am making a difference in my participants' lives. I am giving them a voice and choice in their treatment and ultimately their life. 1.

Bridget Drake:

b. Even when someone is not ready for treatment or recovery right away, there is still so much value in showing up consistently for them, building trust, and reminding them they are still worthy of support.

Karessea Bagwell:

c. By sharing my story, I help others see that change is possible, that cycles can be broken, and that they are worthy of a better life.

d. The outcomes we witness, the data we collect, and even the smallest steps forward reaffirm that this work is meaningful and necessary. Every positive change, no matter how small, makes the effort worthwhile and deeply fulfilling.

Sal DeRogatis:

e. This work has never been about money. It has always been about doing something I truly love: helping others, offering hope, and guiding people toward healing and wholeness.

value

story

opportunity

positive

purpose

healing

model

effort

trust

treatment

growth

Roles in the Public Defender's Office

- A **Public Defender** is a **civil servant** employed by the **state**.
- There are **29 PD Offices** in VA. Indigent cases **not** handled by PDs are taken by court-appointed **private** attorneys.
- The standard Defense **Team** is made up of **four** primary actors:
 - **Paralegal** - writes **motions** for court, performs legal **research**, preps for **trial** and **hearings**
 - **Mitigation Specialist** - writes **sentencing memorandums**, **interviews** clients and other relevant individuals, coordinates **treatment** for clients as an **alternative** to **incarceration** (typically post trial/sentencing)
 - **Investigator** - **interviews** potential **witnesses**, conducts **field work**, photographs **crime scenes**, makes **FOIA** requests, **screens** potential **juror** lists
 - **Attorney** - provides a **zealous** legal **defense** in all phases of **litigation** from **bond/bail** through **sentencing** and **appeals**



Cohesive Legal Defense

What does the Recovery Navigator bring to our defense team?

- **time** and **training** to **interview** client and explore pertinent **issues/goals** that other **staff** may be **unaware** of
- **time** for **outreach** in the **community** e.g. **treatment** facilities, medical **professionals**, clients' **loved ones**, **witnesses**, **social workers...**
- **improved** client/team **rapport** in ways that can **enhance** legal **outcomes**
- an **outlet** for the clients in **challenging** situations
- the **ability/experience** to **relate** to clients and be a **source of hope**

Skill: OARS

Open questions

Affirmations

Reflections

Summarizing

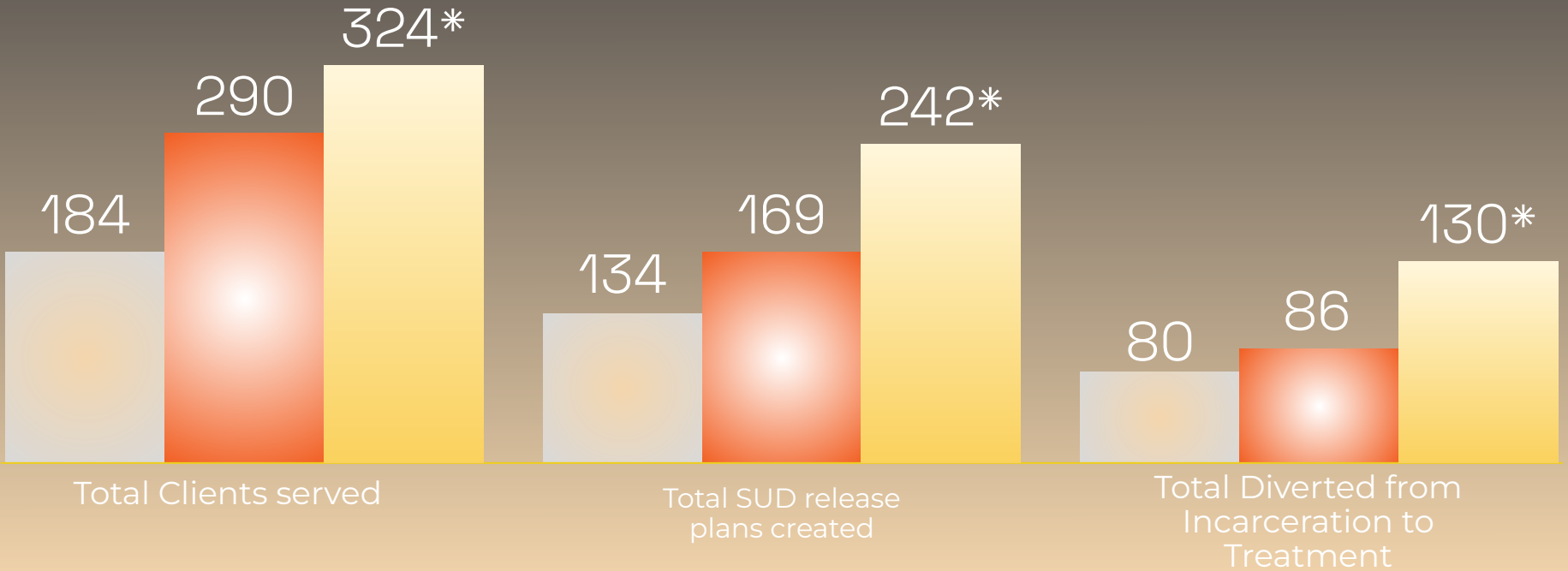
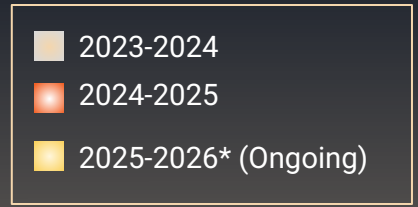


Re-Entry and Recovery Supervisor

- Ensure Grant Compliance
- Ensure compliance with VIDC policies and Procedures
- Liaise between the VIDC and Recovery Corps
- Data reporting
- Monitor OAA data entries
- Track navigators progress through term
- Regular virtual supervision meetings
- Quarterly Site Visits



Data

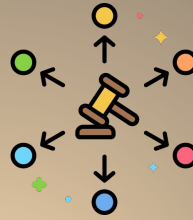


Challenges and Limitations



Judicial Discretion

- Diversion to treatment/housing
- Deferred disposition
- Sentencing



Charges outside of jurisdiction

- May not have a public defender
- Cannot influence decisions outside of our role

Eligibility Criteria



- Recovery Court
- First Offenders

Limited/Unavailable programming within jails



- MH counseling services
- Educational and Vocational training-
- SUD counseling
- Medications for Opiate Use Disorder (MOUD)

What the data doesn't show

Realistic Plan

Clients having a realistic plan for sustainable recovery beyond their legal circumstances

Autonomy

Client autonomy in mind in selecting their pathway to recovery

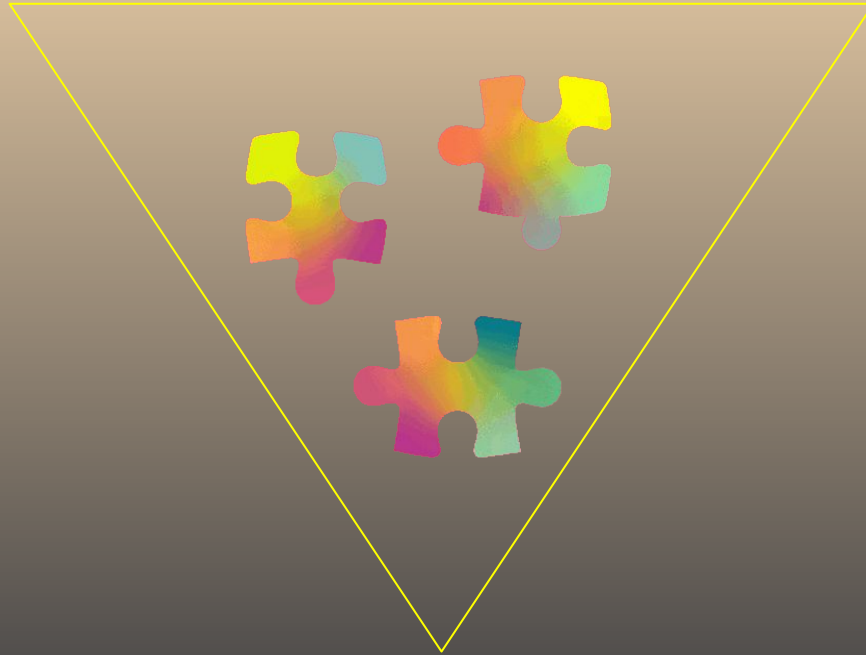
798 Clients

who have received meaningful support to address recovery in a way many client's have never experienced before.



Navigator

Office Staff



Re-Entry and Recovery Supervisor

US

Thank you.

