

HireAbility Opioid Employment Pilots Chittenden and Orleans Counties

MARCH 6, 2024

Why are effective employment services needed for individuals in recovery from opioid use disorders?

A 2021 SAMSHA Report on Substance Use Disorder and Recovery with a Focus on Employment noted that **employment is reported as a top life priority by people in all stages of recovery.**

Individuals demonstrate:

- Lower rates of recurrence
- Higher rates of abstinence
- Less criminal activity
- Fewer parole violations
- Improvements in quality of life
- More successful transition from long-term residential treatment back to the community

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: Substance Use Disorders Recovery with a Focus on Employment and Education. HHS Publication No. PEP21-PL-Guide-6 Rockville, MD: National Mental Health and Substance Use Policy Laboratory. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2021.

Why are effective employment services needed for individuals with opioid use disorders?

SAMSHA identifies four dimensions to recovery:

- **Health:** Overcoming or managing one's disease(s) or symptoms
- **Home:** Having a stable and safe place to live
- **Community:** Having relationships and social networks that provide support, friendship, love, and hope
- **Purpose: A job and independence, income, and resources to participate in society**

Employment is a key determinate of both physical and mental health.

SAMSHA. Recovery and Recovery Support. <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/recovery>. Accessed 2/15/24.

Why are employment services necessary for individuals with opioid use disorders as a prevention strategy?

Opioid overdose fatalities disproportionately affect adults ages 25 to 44 in Vermont.

According to the 2021 Vermont Social Autopsy Report:

- Only 33% of Vermonters who died from an overdose were employed in the six months prior to their death.
- The annual median income of these same Vermonters was only \$12,760 compared to \$31,136 for Vermonters overall.

Living in poverty and being unemployed are likely factors in overdose deaths.

Getting individuals into **employment** and increasing their incomes are key public health protective factors for **reducing overdose risks**.

State of Vermont, VDH. Vermont Social Autopsy Report. 2021 Data Analysis. August 2023. (Updated September 2023) [2021 Vermont Social Autopsy Report \(healthvermont.gov\)](https://healthvermont.gov)

The HireAbility Opioid Pilot Design and Implementation

This project uses a **wraparound approach**. The core members of the team are:

- **The Vocational Counselor (VC):** The VC is the lead case manager for the team, and will develop an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). They have specialized training with substance use disorders.
- **The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Clinician:** The EAP counselor help participants identify barriers to employment, risks or triggers to relapse, and coach participants through the stress of acquiring employment and changing their life patterns and routines.
- **The Employment Consultant (EC):** The EC may support with resumes, mock interviews, job shadows, employer outreach and progressive work experiences.

All members of the team are dedicated full time to the Opioid Pilot.

The HireAbility Opioid Pilot Design and Implementation

- The pilots launched after the July 1, 2022, funding award. The first referral was received in November 2022.
- The teams in Chittenden and Orleans Counties have established relationships with over **twenty** local partners including recovery centers, community mental health agencies, treatment court, rehabilitation programs, probation and parole and many others.
- Referrals have been coming in at an encouraging rate and the program is developing a strong profile in these communities.

Data Milestones and Outcomes to Date

This program ramped up in a very short time frame. It will be another year before we can begin to assess program results. Early referral and program participation data is very promising.

The following data is as of December 2023:


- **215** individuals have been referred to the pilots
- **111** have opened HA cases and engaged in services
- **29** have been placed in employment
- **12** have enrolled in education or training programs
- **3** have completed a credential.

Marketing on Social Media

HireAbility deployed a targeted marketing and social media campaign in Chittenden and Orleans counties.

- The 30 second video was viewed by over 15,000 duplicated individuals in Orleans County and nearly 32,000 in Chittenden County.
- 9,000 people watched the video and clicked the link to view the HireAbility VT website
- Largest viewing demographic was females 65+ for both Orleans County and Chittenden County followed closely by 25–34-year-old men.

Marketing Video to Promote HA services on Social Media and Radio

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CAREER SUPPORT FOR VERMONTERS

HIREABILITYVT.COM/GET-STARTED



While in opioid recovery,
you may have employment concerns

Additional Marketing Materials

Tabletop
pop up
banner for
out posting
purposes



 **HireAbility**
VERMONT

WHERE RECOVERY MEETS OPPORTUNITY

EXPLORE OR REDISCOVER YOUR CAREER WHILE IN RECOVERY FROM OPIOID USE

HireAbility Vermont is a **FREE Employment and Career Development Resource** that understands the challenges you face while recovering from an opioid use disorder.

-  **LOCAL, CONFIDENTIAL SUPPORT**
We are here to help you navigate any employment challenges you may face—whether ongoing recovery care and appointments, education concerns, transportation issues, gaps in employment, or criminal background.
-  **FREE CUSTOMIZED CAREER SERVICES**
There are no income eligibility requirements to meet with HireAbility Vermont staff.
-  **EDUCATION & TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES**
No goal is too big! We will work with you to identify your career goals and plan a path forward.
-  **EMPLOYERS WHO UNDERSTAND YOUR UNIQUE CHALLENGES**
Connecting you with local employers who share the same desire to help with your career success.

GET THE SUPPORT YOU NEED TO BREAK DOWN BARRIERS TO FULFILLING EMPLOYMENT WHILE IN RECOVERY FROM OPIOID USE:
866-879-6757
HireAbilityVT.com/Get-Started

 CAREER SUPPORT & COUNSELING FOR VERMONTERS RECOVERING FROM AN OPIOID USE DISORDER

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WHERE RECOVERY MEETS OPPORTUNITY

Explore or Rediscover Your Career while in Recovery from Opioid Use Disorder

SUPPORT YOU NEED TO BREAK DOWN BARRIERS TO FULFILLING EMPLOYMENT IS HERE.
AND IT'S FREE.

CAREER SUPPORT & COUNSELING FOR VERMONTERS RECOVERING FROM AN OPIOID USE DISORDER

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The Importance of Effective Partnerships with Employers

HA has long had a dual customer approach that equally values the needs of our participants and the employers who hire them. For HA to be successful we must meet the needs of both parties.

- Employers are receptive to the project and consider participants for employment.
- Employers want more information related to the recovery process, treatment, and how to best support employees in recovery.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

- **Stigma of being in recovery.** To build trust in the recovery community, HA had to be very cautious in how we engaged with local providers and recovery centers.
- **Recovery is not a linear process.** We needed to adapt our pace and process to be available when participants were in a place to move forward.
- **The teaming approach is critical.** If participants relapsed, we learned which member of the team would best support an individual based on need.
- **Maintaining our employment focus has been key to participant's success.** We realized that treatment is the role of the recovery network and our role and value-add is employment/career planning.
- **Having staff with lived and professional experience is essential.** This ensures a well-rounded approach and develops foundational trust in the team supporting participants in their vocational goals.

Participant Success Stories

- Chittenden County Participant

Recommendations for the Future

- Complete a comprehensive evaluation of the employment, health and welfare outcomes of pilot participants.
- Develop and refine practice guidelines and provide a framework for more sites.
- Use Opioid Settlement funds to sustain the pilot sites and add more sites building on the process and outcome findings.