

A photograph of two women sitting on a couch and talking. The woman on the left is seen in profile, wearing a pearl necklace and a blue top. The woman on the right has curly hair, wears glasses, a white shirt, and a light pink blazer. They are in a room with indoor plants and a bulletin board in the background. The entire image has a blue overlay.

Successfully Bringing Harm Reduction and Addiction Services to Price Hill: Report Addendum

Engaging Black and Latino Community Members in Recovery



Contents

03

Who We Engaged

9

Representation

04

Overview of
Recommendations

10

Long-Term Support and
Accessibility of Services

06

Experiences of People in
Recovery

13

Advertising and Visible
Presence to Build Trust

07

Preventive Solutions

Who We Engaged

Three focus groups with 31 everyday experts:

- 14 African-Americans who have experienced addiction
- 8 Latino individuals who have experienced addiction
- 9 Service providers, including one individual in recovery

Overview of Recommendations

01 **Invest in preventive solutions including counseling, mentorship, and other interventions which address root causes of substance abuse (e.g. poverty, trauma).**

- Establish structures for education about addiction and recovery services in schools.
- Invest in preventive interventions—particularly counseling and other mental health services—that are available free of charge.
- Connect youth who are at risk for developing addiction to mentorship opportunities.
- Partner with other organizations to improve access to food and affordable housing in order to both help prevent the distress which could lead to addiction and create space for stress-free recovery.
- Work with partners to create a culture of substance-free recreation in Cincinnati in order to reduce the social pressure to use substances and improve outcomes for people in recovery.

02 **Prioritize representation of Black and Latino providers and providers who are themselves in recovery, and seek to reduce turnover among staff providing addiction support.**

- Encourage addiction support services to hire more Black and Latino people.
- Work to improve turnover rates within the addiction and mental health services industry.
- Advocate for the hiring of recovered addicts to addiction services roles.

Overview of Recommendations

03 **Improve recovery services by providing long-term support and ensuring their accessibility to all who are in need (i.e. people without insurance or those who are undocumented).**

- Create treatment options which promote long-term success by identifying mental health factors contributing to substance use and creating a plan for life after treatment.
- Improve service coordination between stages of addiction treatment which are led by different organizations.
- Advocate for more diversion and rehabilitation programs, rather than incarceration, for people convicted of drug use.
- Create a pipeline from recovery to employment.
- Create programs for the families of those struggling with addiction in order to support them and help them learn how best to support their loved one.
- Take steps to ensure addiction support programs are available to everyone who needs them, regardless of immigration status.
- Invest in recovery services that do not require patients to have insurance.

04 **Utilize advertising and a direct, visible community presence to spread the word about addiction services and build trust.**

- Create accessible advertisements for AA and other addiction recovery help, and establish a hotline akin to the suicide hotline that people can call for information.
- Establish a consistent physical presence over the long term in targeted neighborhoods.

Experiences of Black and Latino Community Members in Recovery

Participants shared that some major barriers they faced when seeking help were the shame and stigma surrounding addiction, as well as the fear of criminalization.

"For me, a barrier would be shame and guilt. And secrecy...We don't talk about [addiction]. That stigma is still there. And in my case, it's in families and we just gloss over it." -R, Recovered Addict: Black Community

"The barriers that I've found for myself that were hard to get over is the shame of being an addict. Not having the proper people to turn to. When I moved here, I had no family. So I moved in with people that I did not know...I had no clue where to go or how to reach out." -L, Recovered Addict: Black Community

"We'll start seeing a big change when they stop criminalizing drug addiction." -C, Recovered Addict: Black Community

Many participants felt that their addictions stemmed from other challenges in their lives, like experiences of abuse, mental health.

"For me...[the barrier] is mental health...I started drinking and that progressed. Until you really deal with the core of the problem...I see that as a barrier. ...what I did was kept suppressing until I couldn't no more." -S, Recovered Addict: Black Community

"A lot of problems that Black people and Latinos face are before we even got started on drugs. Molestation, low self esteem, physical abuse, verbal abuse, peer pressure. My first experience with drugs...I wanted to fit in and start selling drugs to my boys due to my own insecurities....I was in the streets...I had no one to talk to and had no way to express my feelings." -C, Recovered Addict: Black Community

Many participants named 12-step programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous as instrumental in their recovery.

"AA has been a community where I found the strength to continue my fight." -G, Recovered Addict: Latino Community

"At the age of 27, I found a group...I was in recovery for three months. That's how I was able to stop my use of drugs and alcoholism...I did not know that alcoholism and substance abuse were sicknesses that were progressive and deadly...I am very grateful for AA." -R, Recovered Addict: Latino Community

Participants felt that good support systems, particularly those which include people who have recovered from addiction themselves, are imperative to recovery.

"It all started with a good support system. Good people around...recovering addicts that changed they lives and just used that as motivation....[My friend] inspired me to lead by example and to be a brother." -J, Recovered Addict: Black Community

For many participants, the journey to recovery began when they reached a point of knowing they needed help and allowing themselves to accept that help.

"What changed in me is that I got out of my way....I started being honest...I allowed people to help me....if I'm not willing, it's not going to work." -H, Recovered Addict: Black Community

"I realized that my motivation for getting sober was because I could feel myself slipping away. Of course it affected my children, but I knew that the person I was becoming...was not the person I was supposed to be." -S, Recovered Addict: Black Community

1: Invest in preventive solutions including counseling, mentorship, and other interventions which address root causes of substance abuse (e.g. poverty, trauma).

Establish structures for education about addiction and recovery services in schools.

Participants identified a negative cycle which tends to foster addiction within families. Partnering with local schools and police departments to educate school-age children and their families on addiction could be an effective way to address these cycles of addiction by helping them recognize its signs, identify its root causes, learn how to cope with stress in healthy ways, seek help for themselves or a family member, and more.

"It's important to have education. We don't come with a manual when we're born on how to live life...in AA I discovered the factors that lead to depression. Depression leads people to self medicate... It's also really important to understand the example of our parents so we can break the cycle." -C, Recovered Addict: Latino Community

"When I had my children, I went to programs with my children that would teach them about drugs...and how to say no. It was facilitated by police officers...they would give information about substances. I think that these types of programs that collaborate with the police departments and health departments are great preventative measures because I believe that the problem is not on the outside, it's inside the home." -M, Recovered Addict: Latino Community

Invest in preventive interventions—particularly counseling and other mental health services—that are available free of charge.

Participants were eager to see programs designed to prevent addiction in their communities for the long-term, not simply to treat it. They recommended finding ways to connect people who are struggling financially or even experiencing homelessness to free mental health services in order to proactively disrupt the cycle of addiction. To be maximally effective, these services should be simple to access, requiring no Internet connection and minimal paperwork.

"Providing mental health facilities...for adults and children and persons who are homeless [is the most important thing]." -G, Recovered Addict: Latino Community

"People [don't have] the money to get therapy because therapy is not free. I know a lot of people, if they're messed up on drugs, it's hard for them to understand, to know they need to go get therapy, and it's hard for them to know how to go and get the insurance that they need. They don't know how to go to the center, they don't know how to fill out paperwork. Whenever you do go, they say you need to go online. How can they go online?" -M, Recovered Addict: Black Community

Connect youth who are at risk for developing addiction to mentorship opportunities.

Participants recommended providing mentoring programs, like Big Brother Big Sister, to youth in high-risk family situations or neighborhoods.

"I think it starts in the home...but, those homes that really don't have that structure or that person trying to instill something in the kids growing up are the ones that end up falling into the lifestyle." -C, Recovered Addict: Black Community

"Mandatory Big Brother Programs [are the most important thing]." -J, Recovered Addict: Black Community

Partner with other organizations to improve access to food and affordable housing in order to both help prevent the distress which could lead to addiction and create space for stress-free recovery.

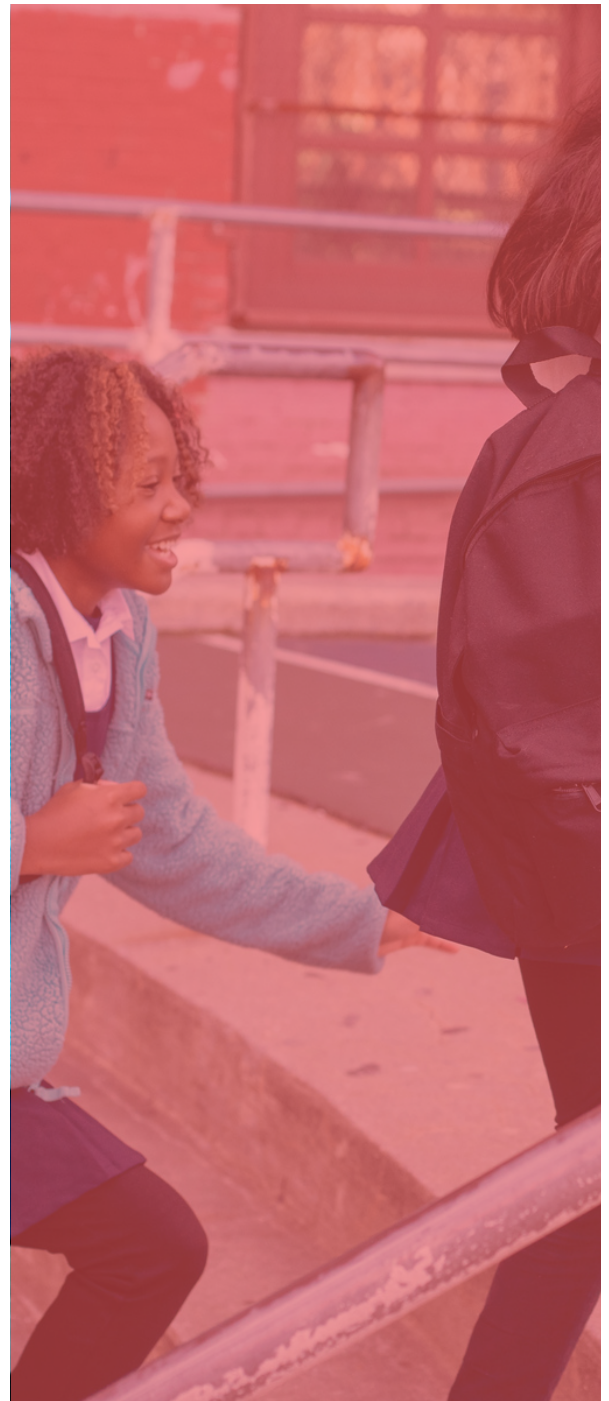
It is crucial to address high stress levels due to lack of access to stable food and housing, which can be a core cause of substance use, according to participants.

"I've been running into a lot of newer users. They've been saying they've been doing it because of stress with everything that's been going on... I've been having better luck with some people addressing the stressors, like they may not have food or having somewhere to live. Taking that stress piece off, they're able to just focus on their recovery." -J, Provider

Work with partners to create a culture of substance-free recreation in Cincinnati in order to reduce the social pressure to use substances and improve outcomes for people in recovery.

A greater variety of sober weekend activities might be helpful to prevent those in recovery returning to substance use, according to participants.

"You think about young people, they wanna go out and have fun at night... Alcohol has monopolized the night scene, especially in Cincinnati. Where do I go on a Friday or Saturday?" -D, Provider



2: Prioritize representation of Black and Latino providers and providers who are themselves in recovery, and seek to reduce turnover among staff providing addiction support.

Encourage addiction support services to hire more Black and Latino people.

Participants shared that they were most comfortable being vulnerable with people who understood their culture and life experiences. Hiring employees of color for outreach to their specific communities could allow people experiencing addiction more easily seek help without a fear of implicit or explicit biases. For Latino community members, the language barrier presents an additional layer of complexity, with which improved representation of Spanish-speaking providers could help.

“The lack of counselors and peer supports of color in the community [is a barrier to recovery]. We all know that if you look like somebody, they’re more receptive to seeking help that they need. I work with the quick response team, and I work with the African American outreach, and there’s a lot of times where I’m the only Black face in the room.” –S, Recovered Addict: Black Community

“If y’all are trying to help [the Black community], you gotta let us help us. And you also gotta give us some funding to help us.” –MB, Recovered Addict: Black Community

Work to improve turnover rates within the addiction and mental health services industry.

Participants felt that repeated changes in treatment and mental health staff can be stressful, and make it more difficult to establish the level of trust between patient and provider that is crucial to keeping people in treatment. Finding structural ways to decrease turnover among staff who interface directly with the community could help improve outcomes for those with substance use disorders.

“With social services and nonprofits, it’s hard to keep your staff. Due to that, the clients see it. How can they trust their therapist, when unfortunately their therapist moves on to bigger and better things... Clients don’t trust us because we don’t stay.” –A, Provider

Advocate for the hiring of recovered addicts to addiction services roles.

Participants felt motivated to seek recovery when they knew people that modeled thriving, happy sober living. Former addicts in addiction services positions could both relate to their clients’ struggles, providing an environment in which they feel comfortable being completely honest, and demonstrate what the reality of successful recovery looks like.

“The most motivating thing that happened that made me want to seek recovery is seeing somebody that [I was in active addiction with]...two years later pull up with a beautiful wife, a job supervising a hotel, and just closed on a house he just bought. So I think the way we can motivate is to go to the communities we got high in.” –M, Recovered Addict: Black Community

“My pastor is a recovered addict. And he’s not ashamed to tell people he’s a recovered addict. He’s been sober for 31 years. You just gotta meet people where they’re at.” –V, Recovered Addict: Black Community

“Another barrier is there’s no picture of a recovering Black man or Black woman that has had an addiction. We don’t know what the face looks like after recovery. If I get recovery, what does it look like afterwards? What does sobriety look like in the Black community? We know what addiction looks like, but what about recovery?” –MB, Recovered Addict: Black Community

3: Improve recovery services by providing long-term support and ensuring their accessibility to all who are in need (i.e. people without insurance or those who are undocumented).

Create treatment options which promote long-term success by identifying mental health factors contributing to substance use and creating a plan for life after treatment.

Short-term interventions do not result in the lasting lifestyle change that is necessary to sustain recovery, according to participants, nor do they typically address deep-rooted trauma or co-morbid mental health conditions that often influence substance use disorders. Additionally, a sober lifestyle will look very different from what many people in recovery are used to, and may be difficult to sustain upon returning to the same social circles and activities frequented before treatment. Ensuring that recovery programming addresses both of these factors could improve outcomes.

"I got sober at 18. I'm 25 now. It was really hard... Treatment centers just had me do 30 days then referred me to aftercare. But the aftercare wasn't very effective because it was just, 'let's sit down and talk about the signs of addiction.' Being a 16 or 17 year old guy, you don't really care. You want to go outside and play with your friends. The social scene for sober fun is not very good... The 30 day program [on its own] has a less than 5% success rate of people that stay sober." –D, Provider

"No one is really doing holistic care... There's treatment centers who have people with no mental health license, no mental health experience. How can we get underneath... and make a long term impact if we're not addressing the underlying causes of trauma, isolation, et cetera?" –B, Provider

"We need good aftercare. We need good residential [care]." –D, Provider

Improve service coordination between stages of addiction treatment which are led by different organizations.

Participants named transition points as a major place at which those in treatment tend to drop off. Collaboration between addiction services providers could help allay this, and improve continuity of care between stages of treatment.

"A lot of times we look at gaps as being on the continuum of care. People getting lost from residential to IOP, IOP to aftercare. Or oftentimes bypassing IOP and trying to go straight into aftercare, or never going to aftercare. That's definitely a problem. The continuum of care, the handoffs." –B, Provider

Advocate for more diversion and rehabilitation programs, rather than incarceration, for people convicted of drug use.

Advocating for policy change to prioritize rehabilitation over criminalization could help those struggling with addiction to recover and stay sober, according to participants.

"They have these mental health issues, they use alcohol and drugs, they get in trouble and go to jail instead of a mental institution...to get the help they need. It's a cycle of nothing is going to go good for them and then they end up in jail forever." –M, Recovered Addict: Black Community

"As far as policy change...[we need] more focus on diversion programs." –C, Recovered Addict: Black Community

Create a pipeline from recovery to employment.

Finding work can be a major challenge for people in recovery, participants shared. Building a pipeline from recovery houses to employment opportunities might help people stay on their feet and support themselves financially.

"Heritage House [is doing it right]...It's 10 months. You don't have to have insurance. The thing is...their sponsor is Bargains and Buyouts furniture store and he has the guys go there and work in the back, and he offered them positions after they completed treatment. That's the way they fund the Heritage House." -M, Recovered Addict: Black Community

"[We need to make sure that] people who need it have access to help that don't have the financial means to get it. Some people are out there just because they have to be...Say, 'We'll offer treatment while you're here', and maybe 60 or 90 days after you're here, you can ask for employment. You can help around the house or whatever." -M, Recovered Addict: Black Community

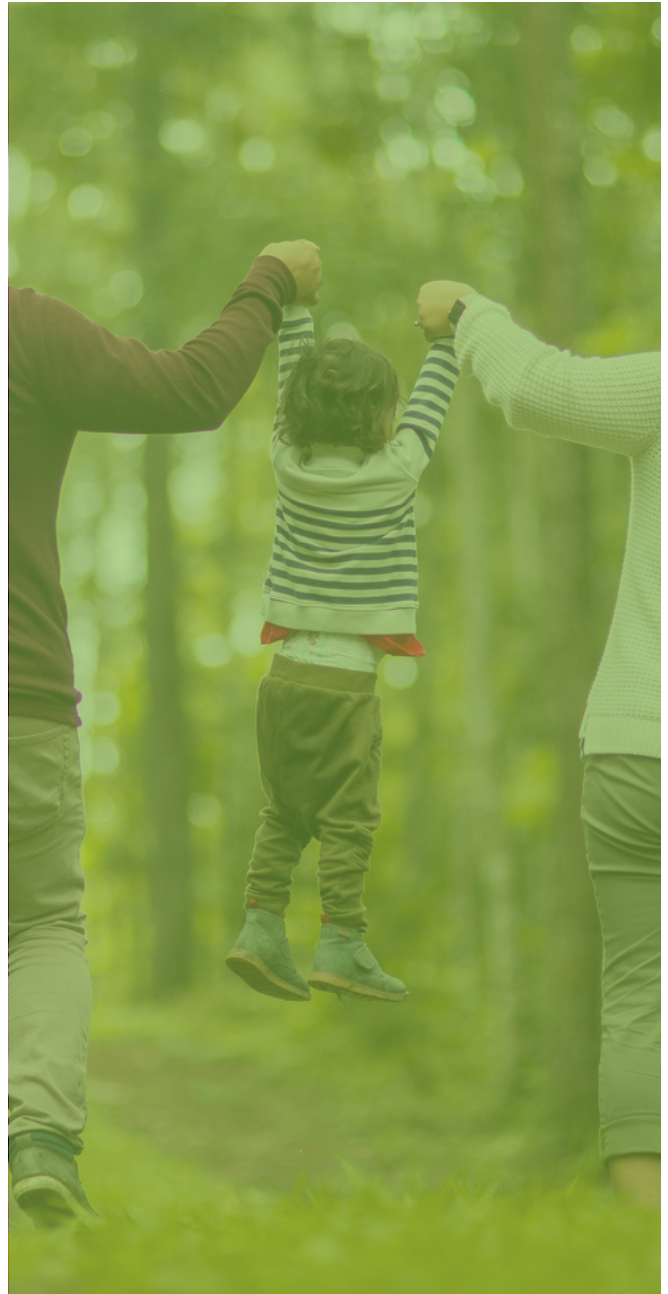
Create programs for the families of those struggling with addiction in order to support them and help them learn how best to support their loved one.

Many participants in recovery shared that they relied on strong family and community support systems in order to be successful, but many family members may struggle with how to support their loved ones or are in need of support themselves. Offering programming for families of those struggling with addiction can help bridge this gap.

"This is a health issue that affects many members of my family. It's not just the person who is using substances, sometimes the family gets sick, too....We can learn how to support our family members that are recovering." -C, Recovered Addict: Latino Community

"[My significant other] didn't know I needed to be in long term treatment. I didn't know that I was supposed to be in long term treatment. Feeling compelled to stay in the household to take care of the family was something. Seeing two of my facility treatment brothers had the same thing happen to them. Their significant others put pressure on them to come home and they went home and...died of an overdose." -JJ, Recovered Addict: Black Community

"This is a health issue that affects many members of my family. It's not just the person who is using substances, sometimes the family gets sick, too.... We can learn how to support our family members that are recovering."



Take steps to ensure addiction support programs are available to everyone who needs them, regardless of immigration status.

Addiction services are important for people on the path to recovery, regardless of their immigration status. Participants shared that measures like requiring a social security number can exclude undocumented people or other marginalized groups from seeking help. Finding ways to remove these barriers could help make prevention services more accessible to those most in need.

“Sometimes, some Hispanics cannot receive help because they don't have a social security number.” –G, Recovered Addict: Latino Community

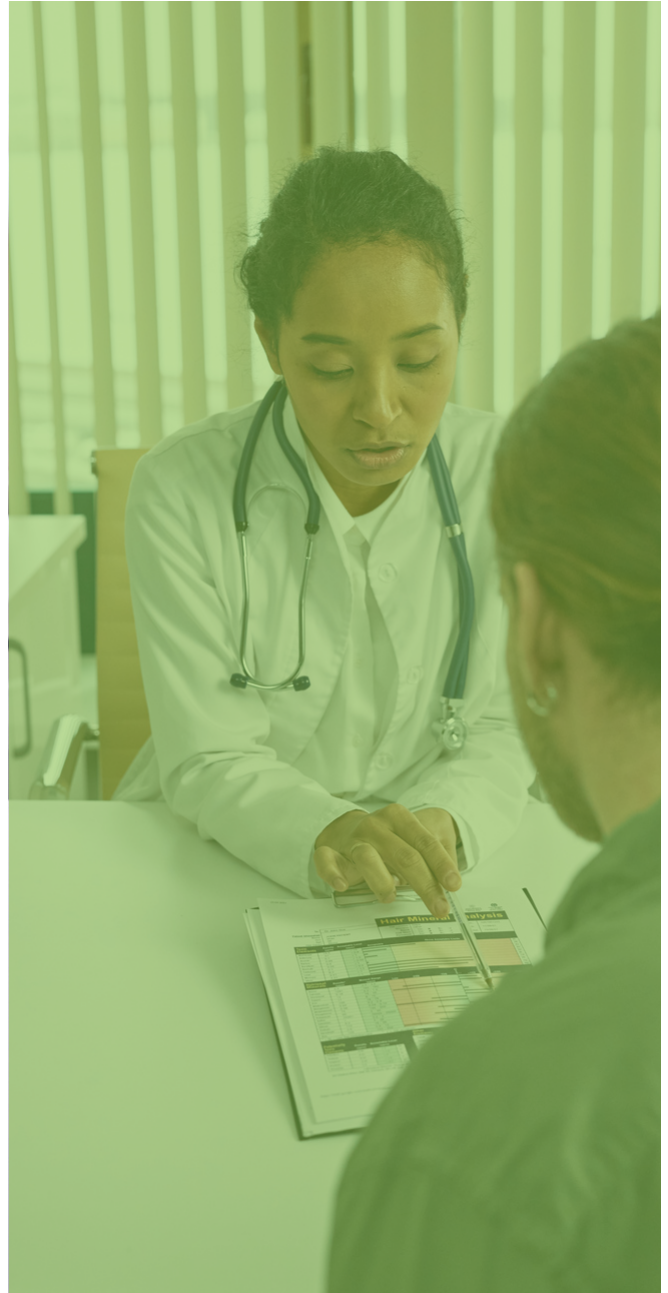
Invest in recovery services that do not require patients to have insurance.

A common reason that participants felt they were unable to seek help is that they did not have insurance or the financial means to pay for recovery services out of pocket. Funding recovery services that do not require insurance could open doors to more people who need help.

“I’ve ran into a lot of people that I used to get high and drink with, and the biggest barrier, to be honest with you, is insurance. I went to a place a couple years ago called Woodhaven in Montgomery County, Dayton and I seen several people get kicked out after several attempts at trying to get their insurance. They’d kick them out of some of these treatment facilities.” –M, Recovered Addict: Black Community

“Providing treatment without barriers and leaving the insurance out of it will solve a lot of issues.” –V, Recovered Addict: Black Community

“...I seen several people get kicked out after several attempts at trying to get their insurance. They’d kick them out of some of these treatment facilities.”



4: Utilize advertising and a direct, visible community presence to spread the word about addiction services and build trust.

Create accessible advertisements for AA and other addiction recovery help, and establish a hotline akin to the suicide hotline that people can call for information.

Participants felt that marketing materials like billboards and TV or radio commercials could help spread the word about what alcoholism and drug abuse looks like, as well as how to seek help. Creating a hotline like the national suicide hotline could also help people access help quickly. Ensuring that these materials are accessible to all, especially non-English speakers, is crucial.

"Every last Tuesday of the month...we [New Beginnings] get 30 minutes of free [radio] airtime so that we can bring the message in Spanish to the community." –M, Recovered Addict: Latino Community

"I think what the public health department can do...is to get the information out there. I think the thing that motivated me the most is the commercial from Alcoholics Anonymous...that was a sign that that was where I needed to go for help. ...there should be a hotline for alcoholics...they need something simple, something easy...to get the help quicker." –M, Recovered Addict: Black Community

"I used to think...[alcoholics were] all white men with a trench coat...That's absolutely not me, I didn't have a family history of alcoholism...anybody could be an alcoholic. There should be a commercial that says, 'if you think you have a drinking problem, you have a drinking problem.'...I knew, but I didn't know." –S, Recovered Addict: Black Community

Establish a consistent physical presence over the long term in targeted neighborhoods.

Participants were clear: seeking help takes trust, and building trust takes time. They recommended that addiction services personnel be visibly present in vulnerable communities consistently, with information and support, in order to establish this trust and reach more people in need.

"We have to change the approach. I beat the streets weekly and it ain't gon happen over night. You have to continue to show your face because one day somebody might not be ready, but if they see me for the past 6 weeks, then they're like 'oh, they not going nowhere.'" –S, Recovered Addict: Black Community

"If I were in charge, I'd find places in the community to have a person that's capable of helping. I would...walk on the streets and talk to people." –M, Recovered Addict: Latino Community

"We have to change the approach. I beat the streets weekly and it ain't gon happen over night. You have to continue to show your face because one day somebody might not be ready, but if they see me for the past 6 weeks, then they're like 'oh, they not going nowhere.'"