

A Place to Go

Why Every Rural Community Needs a Recovery Community Center

Presented by VH Dream Center | Kentucky Overdose Prevention Summit



Upon Completion Of This Activity, Attendees Will Learn...

Learning Objectives:

- Identify key barriers to accessing recovery and overdose prevention resources in rural communities, including transportation, stigma, and limited-service infrastructure.
- Explain the role Recovery Community Centers play in reducing overdose risk through peer support, overdose prevention education, naloxone distribution, connection to treatment and community resources.
- Describe how Recovery Community Centers can support three groups affected by substance use in a community: those affected by addiction, those currently struggling with substance use, and those frustrated by its impact.
- Apply practical strategies for starting or strengthening a Recovery Community Center in a rural community, including building partnerships, starting small programs, and reducing stigma.

Your Car Breaks Down

You're in your hometown.

Your car breaks down on the side of the road.

You have one phone call.

Who do you call?

Do you call the 1-800 number on the back of your insurance card?

Or...

Do you call your neighbor —
the one who owns the tow truck,
the mechanic who lives down the road,
the one who knows your name?

Why We Call the Neighbor

Most of us would call our neighbor.

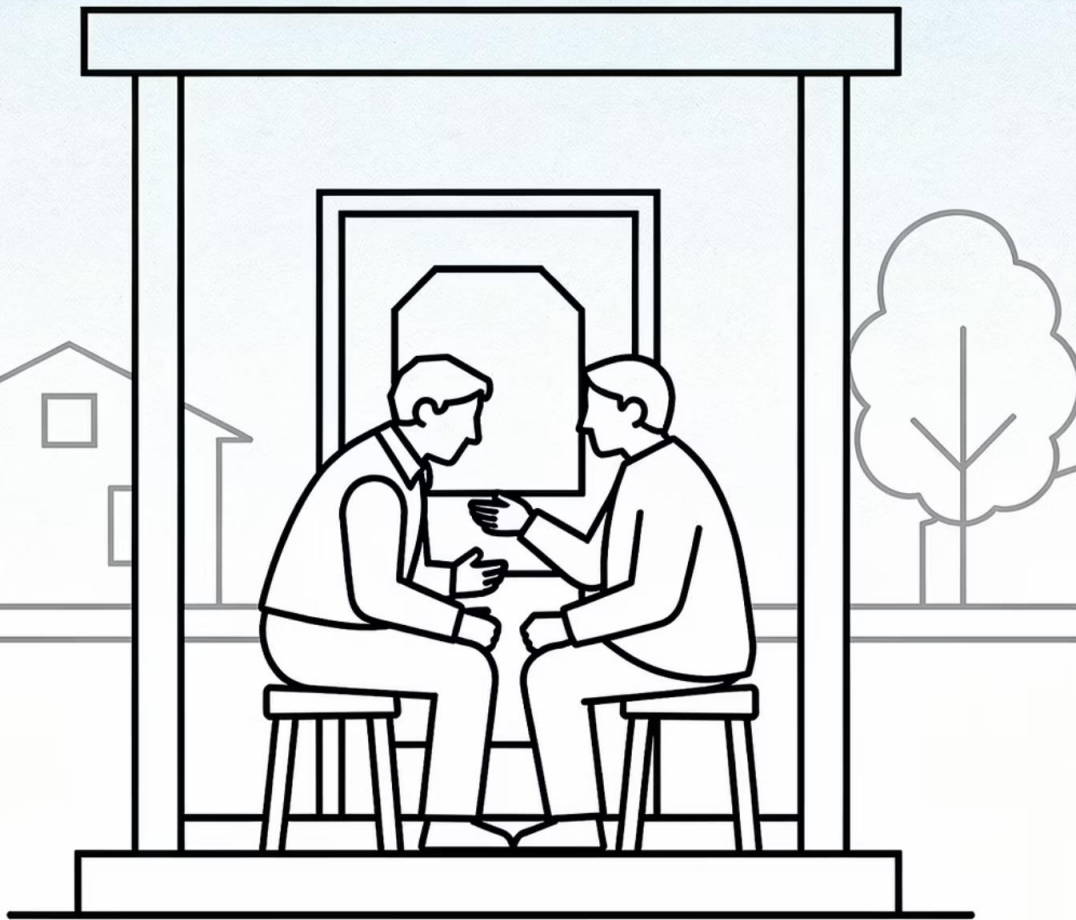
Because when you're in trouble, you trust someone who knows the community, the people, and the roads.

That's exactly how recovery support works.

People don't just need a number to call.

They need a place to go — someone local who knows their name.

A Neighbor vs. a 1-800 Number



A Real Neighbor

- Knows your story
- Lives in your community
- Shows up in person
- Builds trust over time

An Anonymous Hotline

- No shared context
- Disconnected from local resources
- Hard to follow through
- Trust is hard to build

Recovery support is most powerful when it's **rooted in relationship** — not a scripted call center response.

The Barriers Are Real in Rural Kentucky



Transportation

Miles between home and the nearest treatment facility — with no public transit in sight.



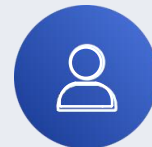
Limited Services

Few providers, scarce beds, and long waitlists stretch resources impossibly thin.



Stigma

In small towns, everyone knows everyone — and shame keeps people from asking for help.



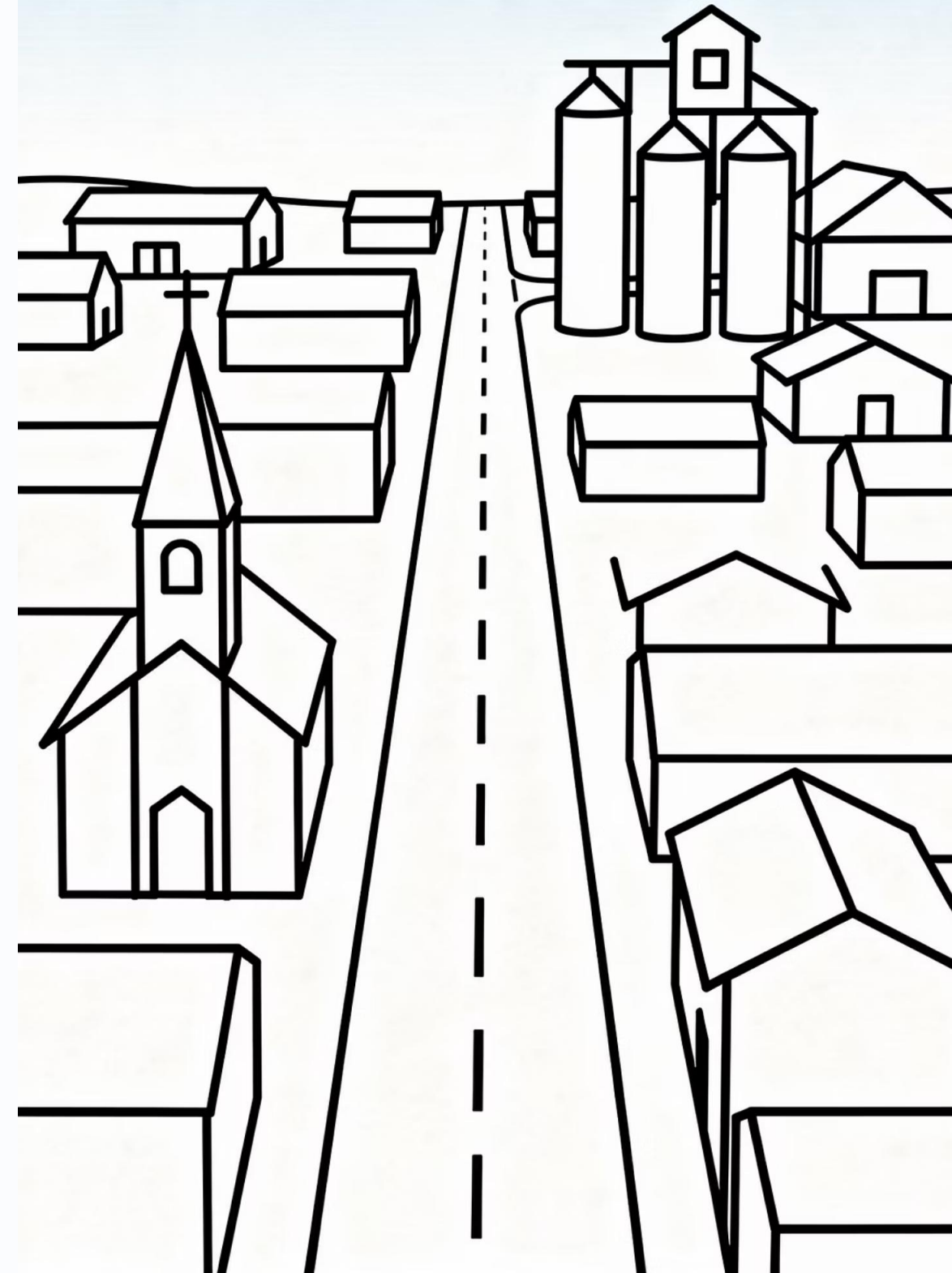
Isolation

Rural communities can feel cut off. Without connection, recovery is nearly impossible.

Addiction Doesn't Care About Zip Codes

Substance use disorder touches **every county, every hollow, every community** — whether the population is 500 or 500,000.

"Rural" doesn't mean protected. It often means **further from help** and deeper into silence.



What Every Community Already Has

No matter how small the town, certain services exist because the community demanded them.



Grocery Store

Food is essential. Communities built access.



Pharmacy

Healthcare matters. Pharmacies followed.



Gas Station

Mobility is a need. Service stations are everywhere.



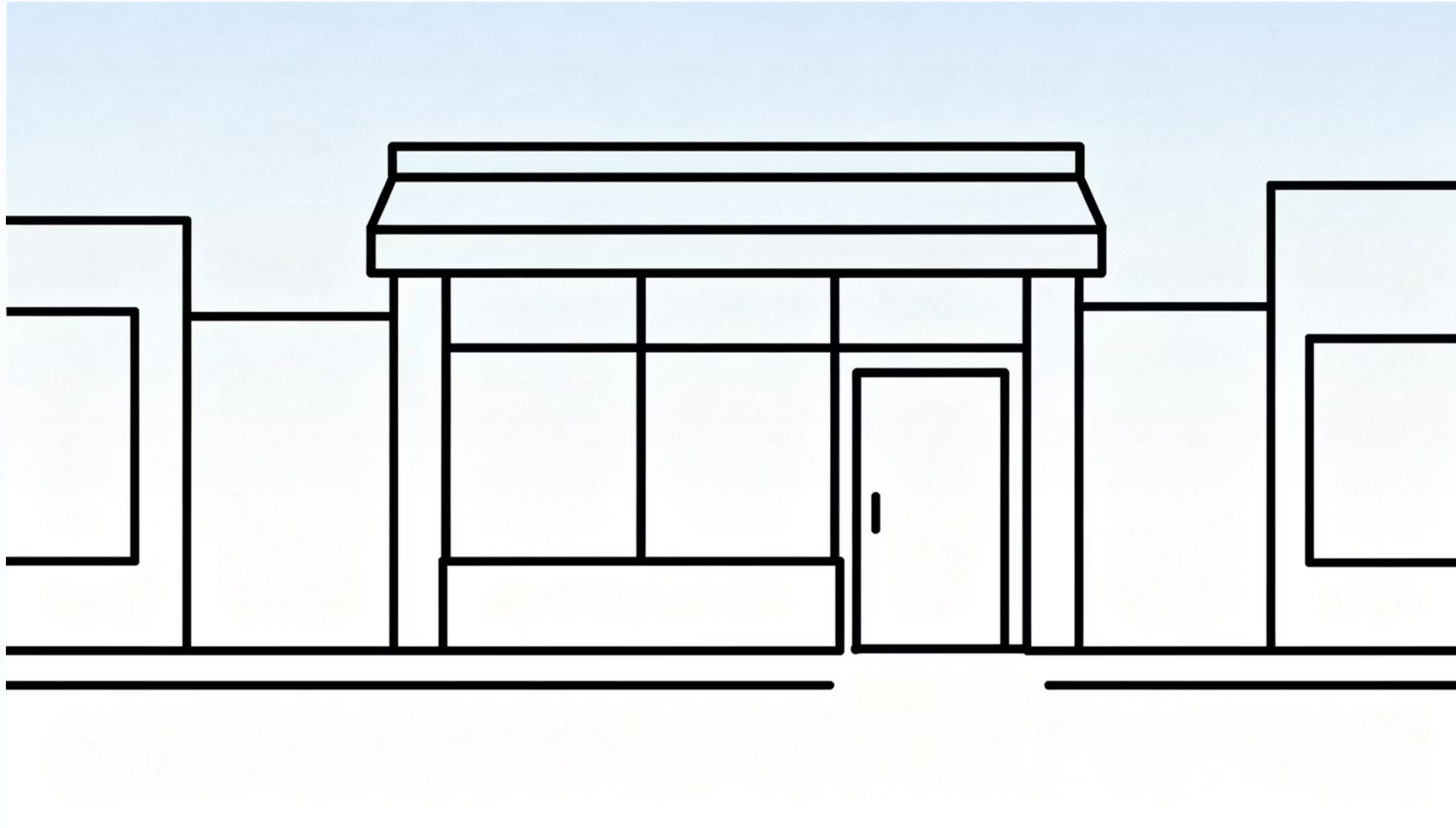
Utilities

Power and water. Non-negotiable infrastructure.



Funeral Home

Communities even provide for their dead.
It's time we provide for the living.



The Missing Piece

Every essential service exists because the community recognized a need and built something to meet it.

Recovery support is no different. People are struggling — **right now, in your zip code**. The question isn't whether the need exists.

□ The question is: **does your community have a place to go?**

Three Groups in Every Community

Addiction ripples outward — touching far more people than just those who struggle with substance use. In every community, there are three distinct groups.

1

 Affected

Families living alongside addiction

2

 Infected

People currently struggling or seeking recovery

3

 Insulted

Community members frustrated by addiction's impact

A recovery community center **serves all three** — not just those in active recovery.



GROUP 1

The Affected

These are the **parents, spouses, siblings, and children** who love someone in the grip of addiction. They carry a weight that rarely gets named — and they're searching for answers, not judgment.

They need support groups, family education, and a community that says: *you are not alone in this.*



GROUP 2

The Infected

People currently struggling with substance use disorder — or just taking their first steps toward recovery. They are not their addiction. They are **someone's child, someone's neighbor, someone with a story worth continuing.**

They need pathways — peer support, treatment connections, and a door that's open when they're ready.



GROUP 3

The Insulted

These are the community members who are **tired, frustrated, and sometimes angry** — the business owners, neighbors, and taxpayers who feel the effects of addiction without understanding its roots.

They don't need to be shamed. They need education, honest conversation, and an invitation into the solution.

Recovery Centers Connect Everyone

One center. Three audiences. A single community brought closer together.

Affected Families

Family support groups, counseling referrals, education on how addiction works — and the comfort of not facing it alone.

Infected Individuals

Peer recovery coaching, treatment navigation, sober housing connections, and a judgment-free space to begin again.

Insulted Community

Town halls, Naloxone training, honest dialogue — transforming frustration into empathy and community ownership.

What Happens at a Recovery Center

Peer Support

Certified recovery coaches who've walked the path and know the way back.

Recovery Meetings

A consistent local space for 12-step and alternative programs.

Naloxone Training & Distribution

Equipping neighbors to reverse overdoses before EMS arrives.

Resource Navigation

Connecting people to treatment, housing, jobs, and benefits.

Re-entry Support

Helping people rebuild after incarceration or treatment.

Community Connection

Events, volunteering, and belonging — the antidote to isolation.

Recovery Centers Save Lives

Overdose prevention isn't just about medicine — it's about connection.



Naloxone on Hand

Centers distribute naloxone and train community members to use it. The neighbor who knows your name may be the one who saves your life.



Overdose Recognition

We teach people to recognize the signs of overdose — because seconds matter and 911 takes time in rural areas.



Reducing Isolation

Isolation is a primary driver of overdose. A recovery center gives people a reason to show up — and someone who notices when they don't.



Peer Recovery Support

People in recovery supporting others in recovery. Shared experience builds trust that no clinical setting can replicate.



Connecting to Treatment

When someone is ready, we help them get there — same day, with a warm handoff, not a pamphlet.



The Victory Hill Dream Center Story

Why It Started

We saw people falling through the cracks — coming out of treatment with nowhere to go, no one to call, and no roadmap. The community had a wound, and nothing to put on it.

What We Built

A center rooted in **relationship, not bureaucracy**. We started small — with willing volunteers, a borrowed space, and a deep belief that people deserve more than a pamphlet and a phone number.

How to Start a Recovery Community Center

You don't need a perfect plan. You need a willing community and a first step.



Find Your People

Identify 3–5 people in recovery, family members, and community champions who share the vision. Start with relationships, not a building.



Build Partnerships Early

Connect with local churches, health departments, law enforcement, and schools. You don't need everyone — you need the right few.



Secure a Space

A borrowed room, a church basement, a donated storefront. The space doesn't need to be perfect — it needs to be welcoming and consistent.



Start with One Program

Weekly recovery meeting. Narcan training. Peer support drop-in. Pick one and do it well before adding more.



Tell the Story

Let the community know you exist. Word of mouth, local paper, social media. People can't come to a place they don't know about.

Start Small. Start Now.

Big impact doesn't require big funding. These five things cost little — and save lives.



Weekly Recovery Meetings

A consistent, free gathering space is the foundation. Show up every week. That's it.



Peer Support

One trained recovery coach can change everything. Lived experience is the credential that matters most.



Naloxone Training

Host a free community training. Distribute naloxone. Teach people what to do when seconds count.



Resource Navigation

Help people find treatment, housing, and benefits. A phone, a list of contacts, and someone who cares goes a long way.



Community Outreach

Hope Bags. Food pantry. Presence at community events. Show up before people are in crisis.

You don't need a grant to get started. You need a door that's open.

Overcoming Stigma

The hardest door to open isn't the one on your building — it's the one in people's minds. Here's what actually moved the needle for us.

1 We Listened First

We went to community members, business owners, and skeptics — not to pitch, but to hear their concerns and earn trust.

3 We Built Unlikely Partnerships

Churches, law enforcement, schools — we found common ground across traditional divides.

2 We Showed Up Consistently

Presence over time builds credibility. We were there on the good days and the hard ones.

4 We Created a Welcoming Space

A place that felt warm, not clinical. Safe, not surveilled. Hopeful, not transactional.

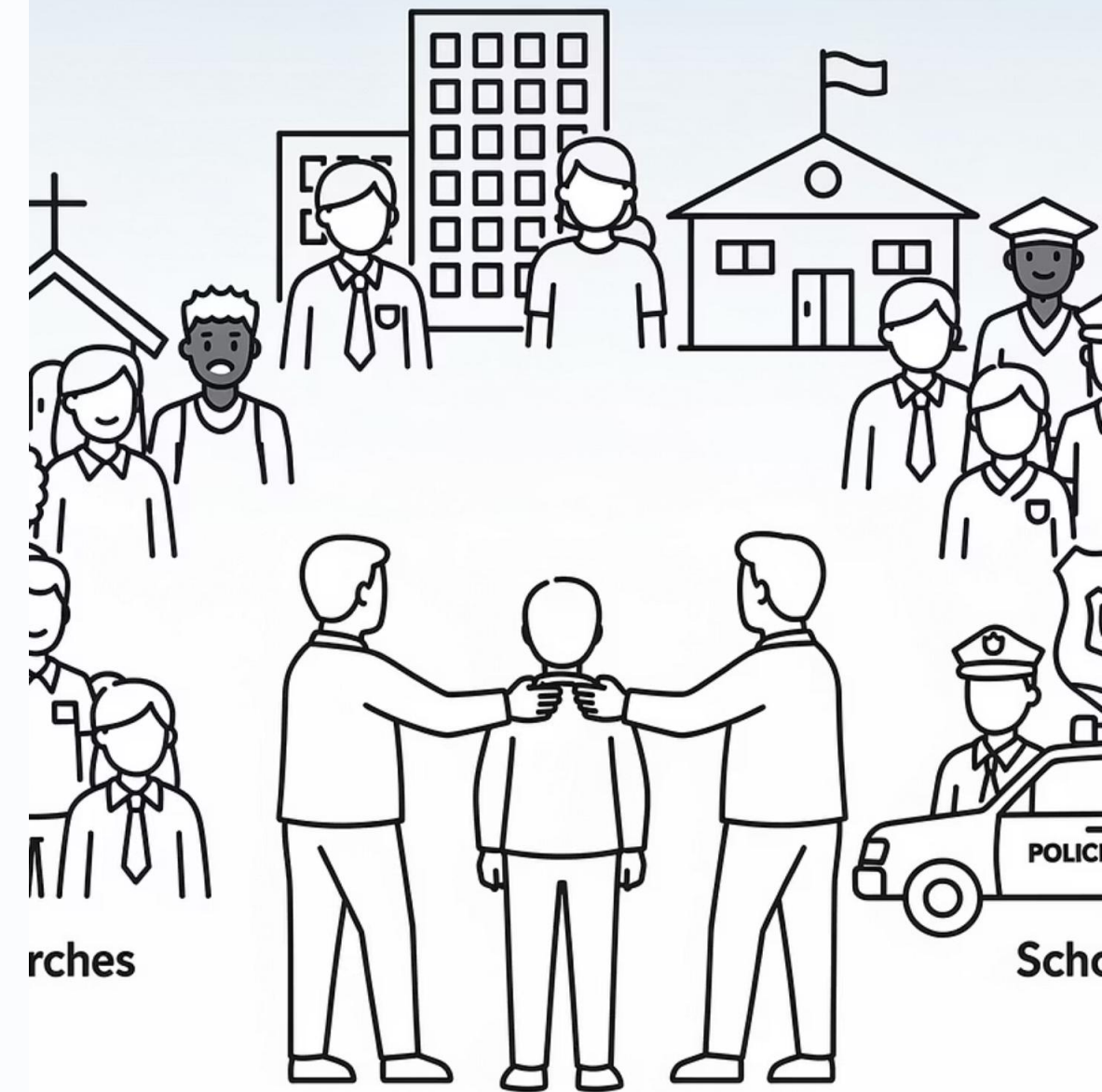
Community Partnerships in Action

Who We Partner With

- Local churches and faith communities
- Small businesses and employers
- County health departments
- Law enforcement and courts
- Schools and youth programs

How It Works

Every partnership begins with a shared belief: **people deserve a second chance.** We show partners how to be part of the solution — whether that's hosting events, offering jobs, or simply opening their doors.





The Hope Bag Project

Hope Bags are life-saving care kits for people experiencing active substance use or at risk of overdose.

Bags are often left behind when overdose risk or active use is present—offering a quiet chance to take a step toward recovery.

Hope Bags are distributed through partnerships with **local law enforcement, EMS, emergency rooms, and community outreach teams** across our region.

It's not just a bag. It's a message: **Someone sees you. Someone cares. Help is in reach. There's a place for you here.**

Real Impact, Real People

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"I didn't think anyone in this town would help me. Then I walked through that door and someone knew my name within five minutes."

”

“

"Our family had given up hope. The VHDC gave us a place to go together, and now our son is two years sober."

”

“

"I was one of the skeptics. Then I took the Naloxone training. Now I keep it in my truck. You just never know."

”

3

Groups Served

Affected, Infected, and Insulted — one center for the whole community

0

Zip Code Exceptions

Addiction doesn't discriminate — and neither does recovery

1

Place to Go

All it takes is one open door to change the trajectory of a life

Recovery community centers aren't a luxury. They are **essential infrastructure** — as necessary as any other service your community provides.



If Someone Needed Help Tonight...

Where would they go tomorrow morning?

If your community can't answer that question with a specific address and a name — then the gap is real, and the cost of that gap is measured in lives.

That's why this work matters. That's why you're in this room today.

A Call to Action

Recovery infrastructure saves lives. Here's how you can help build it — starting today.



Start or Support a Recovery Center

If your community lacks one, start the conversation. If it has one, show up, volunteer, and fund it. Centers run on people, not just programs.



Change the Conversation

Stigma is the biggest barrier to treatment. Use your platform to shift the narrative from judgment to belonging.

Every community deserves a place to go. Be the person who opens the door.



Build the Coalition

Bring together health departments, courts, faith communities, schools, and employers. Recovery is everyone's issue — the table needs everyone at it.



Get Naloxone in Your Community

Every church, school, and business should have naloxone and someone trained to use it. Make it as normal as a fire extinguisher.

Key Takeaways

1

Recovery Is a Community Issue

Addiction touches everyone — affected families, individuals in recovery, and frustrated neighbors alike.

2

Rural Communities Need Infrastructure

A recovery center is as essential as a pharmacy or a fire station. The need is real and urgent.

3

Trust Is Built Locally

Peer support, relationships, and presence matter more than any hotline or pamphlet.

4

The Time to Act Is Now

Every day without a place to go is a day someone falls further. Your leadership can change that.



Questions & Conversation

Victory Hill Dream Center

Thank you for your time, your work, and your commitment to your communities. Let's keep the conversation going.

- ☐ What would it take to build or strengthen a recovery community center in your county?