

## SUMMARY

- Substance use is prevalent problem in the US, with 19.7 million Americans aged 12 and older battling a substance use disorder (SUD) in 2017
- Recovery from substance use is most successful when building recovery lifestyles, which are characterized by healthy functioning and improved quality of life
- Recovery capital is the access to tools to cope with emotions and sustain recovery and is vital to long-term success
- Individuals in recovery face a variety of nutrition-related disorders, including malnutrition, disordered eating patterns, and poor mental health
- Despite these issues, nutrition programming often not offered in recovery settings
- Potential for proper nutrition to be one method of building recovery capital
- Before program implementation important to gather stakeholder perceptions and readiness

## OBJECTIVES

- Determine the role of nutrition in recovery from the perspectives of recovery program directors and individuals in recovery in order to inform how to implement a nutrition program in a recovery setting.

## METHODS

- 2 recovery programs, WVU Collegiate Recovery (WVU CRP) and West Virginia Women's Sober Living (WV WSL) participated
- Cognitive interviews with program directors
- Focus groups with individuals in recovery
- Questions included their perceptions of the role of nutrition in recovery, what would help them follow a healthy diet, and what they would like to see implemented
- Thematic analysis using NVIVO Version 12.0

## RESULTS

- Individuals in recovery N = 16
- Program directors N = 2
- 4 Topics, 16 themes, 24 subthemes
- Example quotes provided below

### Topics for Thematic Analysis

Problems with Current Program and Ways to Improve

Role of Nutrition in Recovery

Diet and Cooking Early in Recovery

Diet and Cooking Later in Recovery

### Problems with Current Program and Ways to Improve

- **WVU CRP Program Directors**
  - **Theme 1: Faculty Support.** *"I would also like faculty involvement and sort of connection in really developing relationships with different faculty members because I know that can have a real profound impact on a student's time at and I really think that's a powerful asset to students in recovery."*
- **WVU CRP Recovering Individuals**
  - **Theme 1: Life Skills Training.** Subthemes of Nutrition and Budgeting. *"Horrible budgeting habits. It's like right from the beginning, it's laying the foundation of what it's going to be like when they move out. So I think that would be really beneficial to program participants."*
- **WV WSL**
  - **Theme 1: Life Skills Training.** *"How to grocery shop, pay bills, like budgeting classes and things like different classes that really teach you how to start life over again, honestly we are starting from scratch."*

## Role of Nutrition

- **WVU CRP Program Directors**
  - **Theme 1: Modeling Behavior.** *"We have a responsibility as a program to at least encourage reasonable eating habits by what we provide here in our space."*
  - **Theme 2: Necessary for Recovery.** Subthemes of Handling Cravings and Getting Healthy Again. *"You've got to get your body healthy to overcome anything, let alone cravings."*
  - **Theme 3: Implementing in Recovery.** Subthemes of Addressing Costs, Consistency, and Social Benefits: *"Another thing would be consistency or repeated programming because obviously eating is somewhat fundamental and you know to me, the more prominent the nutritional emphasis is, the more likely it will be integrated by students."*
- **WVU CRP Recovering Individuals**
  - **Theme 1: Self-Care.** Subthemes of Feeling Better, Breaking Cycle of Cravings, and Preventing Weight Gain. *"I know that I don't eat healthy, but that does play a big part in being tired and wore out and then you want to get something to give you some energy, you know what I mean, and then you get back into that cycle where you are using again."*
  - **Theme 2: Implementing in Recovery.** Subthemes of Helpful to Recovery, Implement Later in Recovery, Start Simple, and Shopping, Budgeting, and Meal Planning: *"I think it'd have to be simple, would be the main thing is starting really simple. So that it doesn't seem overwhelming cause to me I think about healthy eating and I'm like [heavy sigh] there are just too many factors. It's just too hard."*
- **WV WSL**
  - **Theme 1: Different Priorities.** *"I think it could aid in recovery, but we're not at the point where we'd consider nutrition a priority. We spent many years putting unhealthy drugs in our body but nutrition isn't something we think about."*
  - **Theme 2: What Helps to Follow A Healthy Diet.** Subthemes of Time-Management, Cost-Effective Options, and Group Mealtime. *"We all came from a fast-paced life and you kind of get stuck in that. You have to learn how to slow down and we are all at different levels of recovery."*

## Diet and Cooking Early in Recovery

- **WVU CRP Recovering Individuals**
  - **Theme 1: Fast and Convenient Foods:** *"When I first got clean I was doing what I did when I was using, so I was drinking like, Mountain Dew and Coke, like, constantly, like, all day every day, eating the most sweets, all the fast food, all that stuff. About a year into getting clean I gained a lot of weight."*
  - **Theme 2: Changes in Appetite:** *"Oh yeah, there was a heck of an appetite. I mean when I was using, I didn't eat at all. So I mean when I was using I didn't eat anything at all and drink, I didn't drink anything either, and then I started coming off the drugs, I found I was eating more."*
- **WV WSL**
  - **Theme 1: Changes in Appetite:** *"I think everybody gained a bunch of weight. I need to get it off. I think the problem is when you're not getting high, you just want to sit around and eat."*
  - **Theme 2: Minimal Cooking:** *"They eat out every day. Grubhub knows our exact location and the delivery people know our names."*

## Diet and Cooking Later in Recovery

- **WVU CRP Recovering Individuals**
  - **Theme 1: Quick and Convenient Foods:** *"Mine hasn't really evolved. I have whatever is fast, whatever I can throw in the microwave or I think the most recent thing I spent the most time on is like, Tuna Helper."*
  - **Theme 2: Increased Cooking at Home.** *"I learned a lot of stuff from looking things up and asking people about it and now I don't drink pop at all anymore and I make food almost every night and I've been trying to make healthier food and vegetables and stuff."*

## CONCLUSIONS

- Both programs described need for life-skills training, including budgeting and nutrition lessons
- Nutrition was less of a priority for those in the early stages of recovery
- Potential to incorporate nutrition lessons into a life-skills training program to target all aspects of wellness, independence, and sustained recovery