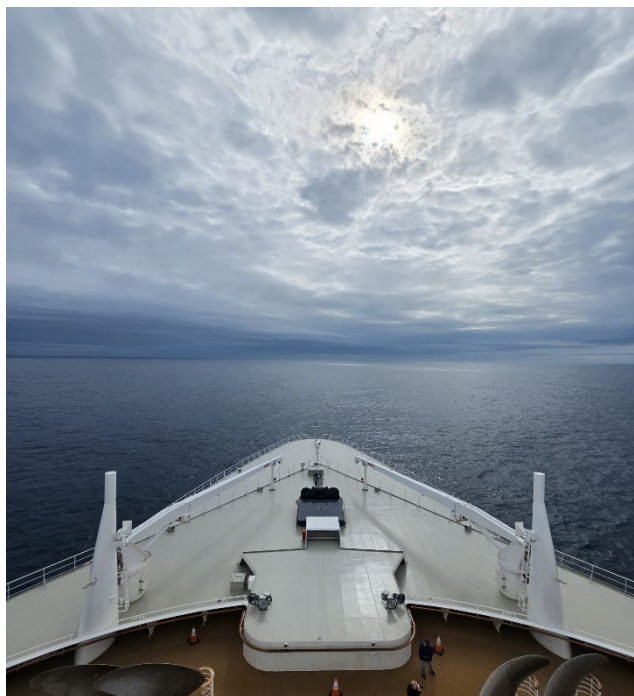


Have We Traded the Recovery Movement for a Peer Service Industry?

"The future of the recovery advocacy movement is not in the professionalization of peer recovery support services." - State of the New Recovery Advocacy Movement, [William White \(2013\)](#)

"Whereas associations are organized to express the properties and capacities of a competent community, systems are organized to produce services and products."
— John McKnight, *Abundant Community: Awakening the Power of Families and Neighborhoods* (McKnight & Block, 2010)

"If the recovery advocacy movement is reduced to a peer recovery support industry and if peer recovery support becomes only a loose appendage to addiction treatment, we as a movement will have failed and a future recovery advocacy movement will need to be rebirthed." - The New Recovery Advocacy Movement: A Twenty-year Retrospective – [William White \(2021\)](#)



"Because peer recovery originated in response to institutional insufficiencies, it is particularly vulnerable to co-optation. Peers can be used to improve metrics without changing practices, to humanize systems without transforming them, and to manage dissent by absorbing it relationally. This does not require bad faith; it is merely how institutions work. It reflects how institutions preserve themselves. Genealogy reveals that co-optation is not an anomaly but a recurring risk inherent to the role." The Historical Emergence of Peer Recovery; Conditions and Contradictions - [Dr Austin M. Brown PhD MSW \(2026\)](#)

"Systems use relationships to produce products and services. Associations create relationships for their own sake. This has the effect of bringing forth the properties of kindness, generosity, and the rest." — John McKnight, *Abundant Community: Awakening the Power of Families and Neighborhoods* (McKnight & Block, 2010)

"Our systems of care are increasingly viewing...peer support as a distinct, formalized, regulated and funded service rendered primarily one to one by a certified person providing narrowly defined interventions for compensation... This is a fundamental departure from its origin." - Those Who Control the Teachings of a Movement's History Control Its Future - [William Stauffer, \(2022\)](#)

Questions to Consider:

1. How can recovery-oriented systems distinguish between the meaningful integration of peer support and the token use of peers as a strategy to sustain business as usual services across our addiction treatment and recovery support service system that do not fundamentally change institutional culture or power structures?
2. Can peer support be successfully professionalized without simultaneously weakening the community associations, recovery advocacy organizations, and mutual aid traditions from which it emerged?
3. What indicators would demonstrate that a recovery system is strengthening recovery community and civic participation rather than merely expanding a reimbursable peer service workforce?
4. As peer support becomes increasingly regulated, credentialed, and funded, what safeguards are necessary to preserve its origins in mutual aid, recovery advocacy, and community mobilization rather than allowing it to become another professional service discipline?

5. To what extent do current funding, contracting, and accountability mechanisms incentivize recovery organizations to function as service vendors rather than as community associations capable of fostering mutual support, leadership development, advocacy, and collective action?
6. If peer recovery support services disappeared tomorrow, what elements of recovery community would remain, and what does the answer reveal about whether our investments have strengthened community capacity or merely expanded service capacity?
7. What is to be the role of recovery community organizations (RCOs) and centers (RCCs) in guiding the future of peer support services?
8. As we become increasingly virtual and disconnected from human contact, how can the recovery community come together as it did at the beginning of the century?

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