



The U.S. Department of Education's

**HIGHER
EDUCATION
CENTER**

for Alcohol,
Drug Abuse, and
Violence Prevention

PREVENTION UPDATE

Meeting the Needs of Students in Recovery

Overview

In its 2002 report on college drinking, the [National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism](#) describes U.S. college campuses as supporting a culture of drinking. Staying clean and sober in an environment where drinking and, to a lesser extent, other drug use is an accepted behavior presents real challenges to students who are in recovery from alcohol and/or drug addiction. The [collegiate recovery school movement](#) began with the development of school-based recovery support services at Brown University in 1977 and Rutgers University in 1983. Programs at Texas Tech University's Center for the Study of Addictions (1986) and Augsburg College's StepUP Program (1997) further advanced campus recovery services. Other campuses have taken steps to meet the needs of students in recovery. Currently 15 campuses are members of the [Association of Recovery Schools](#). A number of campuses provide a range of services to support students in recovery, including providing alcohol-free residence halls or substance-free floors in selected residences halls and making space available on campus for Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings, as well as providing counseling services. Additionally, the [White House Office of National Drug Control Policy](#) has called for expansion of community-based recovery support programs, including recovery schools.

What Science Tells Us

[Researchers from the Harvard School of Public Health](#) estimate as many as 31 percent of college students meet diagnostic criteria for alcohol abuse. Another 6 percent were found to be alcohol dependent, displaying signs of abuse in addition to symptoms like tolerance—needing more of a substance to achieve the same effect—or withdrawal. Data also show that even students who do not reach this threshold can still have a serious problem with their drinking. These students most likely represent a substantial proportion of the estimated 40 percent of college students who engage in heavy drinking at least once every two weeks (defined as four or more drinks for women and five or more drinks for men in one sitting). According to the [2002 National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#), 11 percent of all adults with some college experience were classified with alcohol or other drug dependence or abuse in 2002, and 1.2 million of those people were between the ages of 18 and 25. There is no research information on the number of students who are currently in recovery or participating in campus-based recovery services nor on the number of campuses that provide such services.

StepUP Program at Augsburg College

In 1997 Augsburg College in Minneapolis, Minn., created the [StepUP Program](#) to address the special needs of students in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction. At that time, the resources for recovering college students were extremely limited. The StepUP Program includes alcohol and other drug-free housing, a minimum sobriety requirement, weekly individual meetings with staff, a contract calling for standards of behavior, and weekly peer-led community meetings. An important feature of the program is the peer-led StepUP Governing Board and the Review Board, which oversee the program. In the academic year 2009–



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2010 StepUP served 90 students within the 72 spaces in the residence hall; in 2010–11, it is starting the year with 76 students and over the next five years plans to fill 105 spaces.

Patrice Salmeri, StepUP program director, credits the effectiveness of the program, which has a relapse rate averaging around 15 percent, with its ability to house recovering students right on campus. “Students are able to participate fully in campus life, but they come home at night to a supportive environment and be with those who have similar situations.”

Recovery Housing at Rutgers University

At [Rutgers University](#) in New Brunswick, N.J., students in recovery can live with students like themselves and receive emotional, social, and environmental support in maintaining their sobriety. Students in Recovery Housing socialize together as well as with other friends. There is an emphasis on doing well in school and having a fun sober time in college.

Recovery Housing is a strictly confidential housing option where anonymity is protected. In addition to being alcohol and other drug free, the residence hall is a smoke-free environment. In order to get into Recovery Housing, students must be interviewed by a counselor in the Alcohol and Other Drug Assistance Program for Students (ADAPS). Eligible students must agree to comply with all the guidelines of Recovery Housing. Students new to recovery have individual sessions with a counselor during the first semester. In addition, a resident assistant who is in recovery lives in the house with the students.

Collegiate Recovery Community at Texas Tech

The [Center for the Study of Addiction and Recovery](#) at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas, has developed a Collegiate Recovery Community that provides “a nurturing, affirming environment in which individuals recovering from addictive disorders can find peer support while attaining a college education. Students participating in this community have access to extensive services to support their decision to remain in recovery and to improve their general life skills.” Students attend Twelve Step meetings held regularly on campus. Recovering students can thus participate in a continuing care program, without having to postpone or eliminate the possibility of achieving their education goals.

The Early Sobriety Group at Brown

At Brown University, Providence, R.I., students in recovery from chemical dependency can participate in the [Early Sobriety Group](#), which is a weekly, one-hour meeting that provides a safe, confidential space for students to discuss matters related to recovery in general and to life at Brown in particular. The group's ultimate objective is to help students develop the social support necessary for sustained recovery so that they may continue their studies at and ultimately graduate from Brown.

Higher Education Center Resource

- [Substance-Free Residence Halls](#) (1996)

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