



***Introducing***

**The WIRCO Dane County  
Recovery Support Center**

# **WISCONSIN RECOVERY COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION**



**WIRCO**

## **RECOVERY SUPPORT CENTER MANUAL**

By David “Mac” Macmaster

### **BIG IDEAS – GRAND VISION**

Recovery from addictions, now called substance use disorders, and all their related problems and concerns, have plagued us for centuries. What to do about them is a challenge individuals, families and communities continue to struggle with.

Emerging from this dilemma is the notion of recovery communities. New concepts of “Recovery Oriented Systems of Care (ROSC)” and “Recovery Management (RM)” are now the prevalent federal and state approaches to our addiction realities. We welcome them. They are missing links to making recovery more powerful than the pathology of addiction.

Addiction treatment providers have known for decades that recovery from substance use disorders requires acceptance of the nature of addictions as the chronic disorders requiring lifetime management they are. One-time treatments are helpful, but they are not enough. Evidence-based addiction treatment combines skilled therapy, medication assistance and long-term support. That long-term support has usually been scarce and not enough. That is changing.

Recovery community organizations (RCO) like our Wisconsin Recovery Community Organization (WIRCO) are springing up everywhere to provide the comprehensive long-term support that has been missing.

Creative new ideas and services are offered that provide more “wrap around” support services for those in recovery. A grand vision of recovery for everybody is emerging. It is shifting the community from a negative stigma perception of addiction, and those suffering from it, to positive recovery awareness.

Recovery is not only possible; it is happening all the time. The result is a positive new perception of recovery worth supporting. The truth is those in recovery contribute to better lives for both the afflicted and affected from addiction and the problems that go with them.

Voluntary 12-Step mutual help societies like Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and others have provided support for individuals with substance use and behavioral disorders beginning in 1935. They remain a valuable recovery resource asset, and will continue to be there for those wanting to attend and participate. The only requirement for membership is basically a desire to change.

Recovery community Organizations like WIRCO are not in competition with 12-Step or other mutual support programs. We believe there are many pathways to and of recovery that deserve support. Personal recovery from their addictions is the primary purpose of these mutual help programs. They tend to limit their activities to these primary goals.

WIRCO and our Recovery Support Center offer a different recovery focus. We intend to provide support services for lifetime recovery from addiction and the problems that goes with it. These services include assistance finding housing, employment, and the community services that may help them. WIRCO has a special interest in supporting those in jail, prison and treatment when they return to or come to Dane County.

We welcome all the “big ideas” we can discover that helps us turn our “grand vision” of recovery into the life-changing reality it can be.

WIRCO welcomes all those willing to help us build our recovery support programs and services. We welcome all those willing to help us reduce the negative stigma and trauma associated with all addictions and related concerns that harmfully affect individuals, families and our community.

## **DANE COUNTY IS RICH IN RECOVERY RESOURCES**

Dane County is a rich recovery-resources community.  
Challenge: Hardly anyone knows this.

Wisconsin is known to have a wide range of community and health services for our residents with substance use and related issues eligible to receive them. Madison and Dane County have more than our share.

When it comes to potential recovery services consider this:

- Dane County has more than 30 licensed addiction /AODA treatment providers

- There are more than 200 12-step and other mutual help meetings in Dane County every week
- There may be as more than 2,000 12 step and other recovery program members in Dane County or many more. There is no registry or directory that keeps track of how many are in recovery or from what
- Four 12-step meeting centers and at least two other community centers operate in Madison providing affordable meeting space for meetings, social gatherings and services
- A permanent AA intergroup office (MAICO) operates to coordinate AA meeting lists, outreach, newsletters and literature distribution, phone information services, connecting new comers to those willing to accept calls seeking help
- Narcotics Anonymous has a similar central member service function for Dane County for area members and those seeking recovery
- 4 active recovery community organizations (RCO's) for volunteer peer helpers
- Recovery Coalition for Dane County (RCDC)– a merger of addiction and mental health providers and consumers
- The Bureau of Prevention, Treatment and Recovery coordinates state addiction services from their office in the Division of Mental Health & Substance Use in Madison
- There is an Alcohol and Other Drug Use office in Dane County Human Services
- There are many more resources when we consider our mental health and primary health services, court and corrections services and the private sector
- Federal and state employment programs for job placement and vocational rehabilitation

These are a limited selection of Dane County's recovery support services. Our search for more recovery support services will discover many more that already exist.

How can a person entering or re-entering recovery figure out where to go and who to see?

- WIRCO intends to create and expand a recovery directory to put existing recovery resources together to help those in recovery get the help they need
- WIRCO intends to set up focus groups of recovering people to determine missing recovery resources and where current recovery resources need to be improved
- WIRCO intends to train peer volunteers to understand how to help new and existing people in recovery to get to the recovery resources they need and are eligible for

## **FROM STATE TO LOCAL COMMUNITY**

WIRCO was created to be a statewide recovery support program, and hopes to be that eventually. Our reality was and is, we have not obtained the funds and recovery leaders to make this happen.

We re-thought our mission and decided we need to create and succeed with a local (or regional) recovery support program that can be adapted and replicated in other Wisconsin communities; an alpha recovery center if you like. We named it the WIRCO Dane County Recovery Support Center (RSC.)

We are modeling the Dane County RSC after centers developed by and successfully operated by the Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery (CCAR.)

WIRCO was initially created based on information and training provided by CCAR. Later WIRCO board of director members visited CCAR's headquarters in Hartford and two of their community Recovery Community Centers. We decided to develop and implement some of the specific recovery support services CCAR provides from their centers.

WIRCO decided to adapt much of the CCAR recovery support services for Wisconsin in our first Recovery Support Center. Details of the WIRCO vision, mission and guiding principles can be reviewed on our WIRCO website – [www.wirco.org](http://www.wirco.org)

## **EVERYONE IN WIRCO IS IN RECOVERY OR IS A RECOVERY**

Addictions are chronic disorders requiring life-long management and attention. More than 80 years of experience with mutual help (or peer help) prove there are real benefits from one person with addiction helping another person with an addiction to recover. It appears nothing else has proven to be more effective.

Medically based addiction treatment has also been shown to be effective. There are other helpful approaches that have been effective. They reduce the personal, family, and community harm from inappropriate, unwise and addictive alcohol, tobacco, other drug use and related problems.

This is why WIRCO supports the range of pathways that lead to successful recovery, and the practices that support ongoing recovery. We do not discriminate or argue about which recovery approach is better. One of our mottos is, "You are in recovery if you say you are, so how you choose to recover is up to you."

Beyond the difficulty of getting into and staying in recovery, there are the myriad of other life challenges that go with addiction and related problems.

Research and decades of recovery experience reveal many do not make it into recovery and stay in it because of related problems. These include the basic issues of housing, employment, felony convictions, and family dynamics. Co-occurring and co-morbid mental and physical health issues frequently lead to relapse and are barriers to strong recoveries and an improved quality of life.

WIRCO and our RSC were created to take up the challenges of these barriers to recovery in Dane County. The 12-step and other programs specialize in supporting the personal recoveries of their members and those seeking personal recovery from addictions. They are very good at it. All our WIRCO board and members are in recovery and understand the boundaries and separation of roles.

WIRCO will recruit, train and coordinate RSC volunteer peer helpers, sometimes called recovery coaches. Our RSC volunteers will serve on our WIRCO board, our Advisory Council and be coordinated to provide our RSC recovery support services.



### **Definitions and Language Are Important**

## **ANONYMITY AND CELEBRATION**

12-step programs are anonymous. They began their anonymous tradition, not because they were “secret societies” with something to hide. They became anonymous for the protection of their members. In earlier days having a label of alcoholic or drug addict was a very negative label to have. It could get you fired or not hired. It was not a good thing for a person’s reputation.

Anonymity is also a commitment to respect another member’s privacy.

This is a tradition that still serves its purpose. WIRCO has no quarrel with this application of anonymity.

WIRCO is not bound with an anonymity tradition. Our tradition is quite the opposite: it is to shout about our successful recoveries from the rooftops. Our recovery stories counter the stigma our diseases have produced. We are not bragging about our recoveries. We are grateful for them. We are telling our stories because they need to be told. We share our stories publicly so the community will support our personal and family recoveries and help us make recovery more obtainable for those needing support and acceptance.

Recovery is not easy to get and keep. We suffer from chronic disorders that need lifelong attention that supports recovery and prevents relapse.

Sometimes it is more important to keep our recoveries private and anonymous for our own good and for the good of the reputations of mutual help and other recovery support programs we participate in.

At other times it is equally important to tell our personal recovery truths and stories publicly, so those that need and deserve recovery know real recovery is possible and where to get it.

When large numbers of persons and families in recovery tell our recovery stories publicly we provide the evidence that large, functioning recovery communities exist. This powerful message provides the positive impression that recovery is worth supporting and is out in the open for all to see and benefit from.

## **ADDICTIONS COME IN BUNCHES**

One of our WIRCO volunteer directors coined this “addictions come in bunches” concept. He shared his own recovery includes recovery from more than one addiction and related difficulties. This concept is part of WIRCO’s model of recovery support. We want everyone with an addiction or related issues to be welcome and be equal partners in our program.

Our WIRCO “big tent” model for recovery support communities recognize the need for lifelong recovery support; that we will seldom be dealing with just one addiction or challenge. We believe it will take all the time it takes to deal with this tendency to have one addiction migrate to another when one is successfully addressed.

We developed our All Recovery Meetings to provide a time and place for dealing with whatever recovery issues we bring to the meetings. WIRCO recognizes those in recovery have different and changing recovery support needs at different stages of our recoveries. For us, recovery is a process we can benefit from if we remain engaged in what we need to improve the quality of our lives, prevent relapses and become the best versions of ourselves we can create.

## **FROM STIGMA TO SUPPORT**

The original mission of Recovery Community Organizations was to reduce, and hopefully one day eliminate, the negative stigma of addiction and all the trouble they cause individuals, families and communities.

This stigma reduction campaign has been very successful and led to the creation of a number of recovery advocacy organizations like the international Faces & Voices of Recovery. Stigma reduction programs, many federally and state funded, have been in existence for 20 years.

Stigma reduction and recovery advocacy remain a key component of the “recovery oriented systems of care” approach, now the foundation of the recovery component in the prevention, treatment and recovery model for addressing addiction and related issues in public health.

The next phase of recovery support is the need for specific recovery support services as an equal plank in the recovery advocacy program.

WIRCO was created to address these 2 specific core recovery advocacy components. WIRCO’s Recovery Support Center will be a center that reaches out to the community with ongoing stigma

reduction. Our RSC reaches within to develop, identify and provide all the recovery support services our RSC can offer.

## **BIG TENT RECOVERY**

WIRCO is different from most other Recovery Community Organizations. Most RCO's focus on alcohol and other drugs as the recoveries causing the most trouble in the community; threaten public safety and produce much unwanted negative social behavior. They have the worst reputations in the opinions of many, and need to be the major priorities in recovery support. The current national concern over the opiate epidemic and drug overdoses reinforces this perception of the priority these disorders need to receive.

WIRCO does not challenge this reality; only wishes to expand "recovery" to include more suffering from other addictions and behavioral health disorders. WIRCO promotes tobacco free recovery, problem gambling recovery and recovery from other related disorders and compulsive behavior disorders. WIRCO supports family recovery from addictions and related disorders. We say, "You are in recovery when you say you are."

We ask those that come "How can we support your recovery today?"

The road to recovery has many paths connecting to that road. WIRCO has an open door to our "Big Tent" recovery center.

Anyone entering WIRCO and our Recovery Support Center receives an "equality" status and is welcomed as a recovery family member no matter what they are recovering from.

## **ALCOHOL AND DRUG FREE RECOVERY**

Most of our original WIRCO board directors and members come from alcohol, drug and other recovery. We want to supplement what AA, NA, Alanon, GA, NicA and other mutual help programs do so very well. We leave personal recovery from these devastating disorders to them and the recovery support they offer and help when and where we can.

WIRCO's volunteer peer helpers help with other issues important to people in recovery beyond their personal recovery programs. We know there is a range of critical needs people in recovery have at the beginning and continuing through their lives in recovery.

It is very difficult to stay clean, sober, in recovery when we don't have a safe, affordable place to live; when we have no job and can't find one; when we have a felony record; when our family life and major relationships are in a shambles and when we don't have enough money to support ourselves.

There are other challenges that happen throughout our recoveries like sickness and death of loved ones, divorces, our children in trouble, loss of financial independence, mental, physical



problems and other life complications that make living life on life's terms very difficult where we need support and solutions. WIRCO wants to help with these issues. We also know we may need to maintain progressive recoveries; addressing our other addictions as we are ready to deal with them.

Our volunteer peer helpers don't provide direct services that solve these problems, but they may be able to find solutions and provide referrals to those that specialize in these challenges.

Hopefully WIRCO can respond to those we greet with "How can I/we support your recovery TODAY?" with suggestions and solutions.



## **TOBACCO FREE RECOVERY**

### **Why Does WIRCO and our Recovery Support Center Emphasize and Support Tobacco-free recovery?**

Almost everybody knows tobacco is harmful. This fact is not news. What is news is how vulnerable those with alcohol, other drug and mental health disorders are to get sick and die from tobacco caused and related diseases.

Only recently have we discovered the prevalence of tobacco use in these populations. We learned from 80- 92% of those admitted for addiction treatment of alcohol and other drugs smoke and use other tobacco products. This compares with data that reveals smoking tobacco has been reduced to approximately 15% in the general population.

Studies report that approximately 50% of those that smoke for 20 years or into early middle age die from tobacco caused or related diseases. This means those with other alcohol and other drug disorders that smoke get sick and die at more than 4 times than those dying from tobacco in the general population. Other studies reveal that death from these tobacco diseases result in the loss of from 10 to 25 years of their expected life spans.

Bottom line: Those addicted to nicotine get clean and sober only to die early from tobacco.

Similar research reveals those with mental health disorders are also vulnerable to sickness and death from tobacco at very high rates. They are getting sick and die from tobacco at from twice to four times the death rate in the general population. Risks are extremely high for those suffering from both substance use and co-occurring mental health disorders.

Members of our WIRCO Board of Directors are very aware of these tobacco related facts. They are leaders in the challenge of integrating tobacco treatment and recovery in our Wisconsin and national addiction and mental health services.

They discovered primary tobacco use disorders are not eligible for inclusion in our Wisconsin addiction treatment services regardless how severe and life-threatening the circumstances. These reported policies and practices are historically true.

Our WIRCO board leaders learned Wisconsin addiction treatment providers can treat nicotine concurrently with other addictions. Only 2 of Wisconsin's addiction treatment programs are providing recommended evidence based tobacco treatment and recovery services. Wisconsin is not the only state that excludes tobacco use disorders in their addiction treatment programs; it is an example of a national tobacco exclusion policy in addiction treatment.

The USA developed its current tobacco programs in the 1960's after the Surgeon General's annual report linked smoking cigarettes to lung cancer.

The USA began its current addiction prevention and treatment programs in the 1970's following passage of the Hughes Act. Nicotine addiction was not recognized as an addiction at that time, so tobacco was not included in alcohol and other drugs that became eligible for addiction treatment.

An opportunity came to include nicotine and tobacco in addiction treatment in the 1980's when the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual 111 was published. The DSM is the manual accepted as the authoritative designation of mental health disorders that included alcohol drug dependence. For the first time the DSM included nicotine abuse and dependence as drug dependence disorders. However, the addiction field opted to continue its exclusion of tobacco and nicotine in addiction treatment services, which is a policy that continues to the present.

These discoveries led to WIRCO's decision to include tobacco-free recovery as equal to alcohol, drug and other recoveries.

WIRCO's conclusion is that addiction treatment and addiction recovery field has excluded tobacco recovery too long. WIRCO is not going to continue this discriminatory practice in our recovery support program.

Those with tobacco, as one of the recognized and listed substance use disorders in the past and present issue of the DSM; will be welcomed members of our recovery community organization, whether they have other addictions or not.

A prominent addictionologists commented, "Treating tobacco and nicotine dependence in our addiction treatment will save more lives than anything else we do in addiction treatment."

We believe him. WIRCO is grateful to be one of the first if not the first to advocate for tobacco recovery in our Recovery Community Organizations (RCO.) WIRCO will continue to advocate for a prominent presence of tobacco and nicotine recovery in our invitations for those seeking the best recoveries possible.

Our WIRCO Recovery Support Center will provide tobacco stigma reduction activities in Dane County. WIRCO will also provide tobacco recovery support services for those with tobacco use disorders seeking recovery from this addiction kills more of us than die from all the other addictions combined.

## **WIRCO SUPPORTS RECOVERY FROM GAMBLING DISORDERS**

For the first time problem gambling has been recognized as an addiction in the DSM5. This makes gambling disorders eligible for treatment services in the public health system. WIRCO and our RSC welcome those seeking support in our recovery community family.

Many problem gamblers have other addictions to contend with including substance use and mental health disorders. For many, addictions really do come in bunches. Our RSC is a resource for groups seeking a place to meet for a specific focus like problem gambling. Gambling recovery can also be a recovery issue for those participating in our All Recovery Meetings and peer helper support.

WIRCO expects we will continue to discover and have knowledge of the Dane County human services and other resources valuable to those with complicated problem gambling problems and issues for themselves and their families.

WIRCO will have a gambling disorder section on our WIRCO website for postings and information that might be helpful to individuals and families with gambling related issues.

## **WIRCO SUPPORTS FAMILIES IN RECOVERY**

Families are victims of addiction. The persons with an addiction and those that care about them are all victims of addictions.

Every family member is harmfully affected by the addiction of family members. Families have their own recovery challenges. Some may be victims and survivors of a family addiction and also suffering from an addiction of their own. Coping with someone else's addiction is a skill set family members learn in family recovery programs like Alanon, Families Anonymous and other mutual help programs.

Personal recovery from an addiction is well served by the proven practice of one alcoholic/addict helping another person struggling to find and keep recovery. Families' meeting together to help other families with their struggles to overcome addiction and create recovery is also effective and continues the value of the concept that "recovery is a WE program."

WIRCO recognizes that addiction is a family disease. Our Dane County Recovery Support Center and our volunteer peer helpers exist to support family recovery. Peer helpers with experience in family recovery issues lead families to the community services and access to our recovery community and the support and encouragement members of our recovery community provide.

Families in early recovery benefit from the experience of “family interventions” and options shared by other families that have been through the intervention process. Other family volunteers know some families can only cope with the ongoing active addiction of their family members making the best of their unwanted circumstances.

There are ongoing family issues in recovery no matter how long we are in recovery. It is important to have recovery friends that understand these issues and support us as we cope the best we can with life on life’s terms. The RSC is a place where ongoing family recovery support can happen.



## **RECOVERY SUPPORT CENTER SERVICES**

We have considered why WIRCO was created and why we are developing our Dane County Recovery Support Center. We exist to serve the “recovery community” with the services and solutions that establish and promote a life-long recovery life style.

Now, let’s describe the specific services we are developing to support all the stages of recovery from early to long-term recovery support.

Remember WIRCO is a “big tent” recovery support program. WIRCO and our RSC services are open to all those that accept their need for recovery from their addictions and related problems. “You are in recovery if you say you are.” If RSC visitors do not have a desire to acknowledge their need for recovery, our WIRCO peer helpers will do our best to direct them to community services that may be better resources for them than WIRCO can provide.

WIRCO exist to support recovery from addictions and related problems. That is our exclusive mission. Recovery support is the lane we are in. We are not a club, drop-in center or treatment program. We are committed to staying in our lane, but we do our best to be helpful to all those that find their way to us.

Here are the WIRCO Dane County Recovery Support Services we are developing:

### **ALL RECOVERY MEETINGS (ARM)**

## **EVERYONE IN WIRCO IS IN RECOVERY OR IS A RECOVERY ALLY**

We have re-stated WIRCO is a “big tent” recovery support community. Our RSC schedules ARM meetings that welcome all that declare they are in, or desire to be in recovery.

Our RSC ARM’S are there to help those attending develop a recovery lifestyle that supports their recovery from addictions and related problems. ARM helps those attending deal with the problems and issues that are associated with addiction and the co-occurring disorders and situations that are common to most with addiction and mental health related disorders.

A monthly calendar provides the days; dates and times ARM meetings are scheduled. The RSC plans to eventually schedule ARM meeting twice-daily 6-7 days/week.

Those in recovery are in different stages of their recoveries. There is a blend of new comers and those with longer-term recovery in typical ARM meetings providing the range of recovery experience that meets the needs of those attending. Support friendships develop among members. Members discover common issues that are important to them.

This often leads to special issue groups where members work together on issues they are all working on. These special issue groups arrange their meetings and work sessions separate from ARM meetings, and may be facilitated by RSC’s volunteer peer helpers or may be self-facilitated. An example of a special interest group could be members with histories of ineffective financial management.. They may recruit a local expert in financial management, or perhaps WIRCO may have a volunteer with that expertise to work with the group.

Other examples of special interest groups could be members willing to form a softball team or plant and maintain a community garden. The ARM meeting will be helpful as members find different reasons for connecting.

ARM meetings are not traditional 12-Step meetings, but ARM has adopted the 12-Step meeting concept that provides respectful opportunities for those willing to share their recovery experiences without interruptions, cross talk and uninvited advice. Each person is given an opportunity to share with an understanding there it is important to limit their shares so all may share in the time set aside for the meeting.

## **PRE-RELEASE RECOVERY SUPPORT**

Who needs recovery more? A case can be made that anyone with an addiction/substance use disorder can benefit from recovery. But there are those with special needs that need and deserve recovery. Recovery is never easy. Those incarcerated in jails and prisons and their families often have a very difficult road to recovery that works for them.

Many prisoners are released with inadequate support and resources and end up incarcerated again because they are unable to make the fresh start they need. WIRCO has peer volunteers very familiar with the challenges of staying clean and sober under these conditions. They have learned how to find the personal and family help they needed to make it to recovery and

maintain their recovery and freedom. Our volunteer peer mentors are willing to share this recovery support experience.

Our WIRCO board of directors is very aware of the challenges those with addictions and co-occurring disorders face when they are released and want to help prisoners get re-established in successful recoveries.

WIRCO is developing a pre-release mentor program to assist prisoners get the personal recovery support that makes their continuing freedom from incarceration more likely and achievable.

WIRCO recruits volunteer peer helpers that commit to develop personal one to one relationship support for prisoners scheduled to be released to Dane County. WIRCO volunteer mentors commit to providing this one to one support for pre-release, release and continuing recovery support for a duration agreed to by both parties.

Other pre-release recovery support programs are components of the WIRCO RSC program. Those in addiction treatment and related health services need to transition from treatment to recovery in a planned path that reduces the risk of relapse.

## **WIRCO TELEPHONE RECOVERY SUPPORT**

WIRCO is replicating a successful telephone recovery support program developed by CCAR. Addiction treatment providers are provided sign-up forms they can offer patients returning to or are from Dane County. Those in treatment are offered free phone recovery support calls from the WIRCO RSC. Those accepting this WIRCO service sign the agreement; provide phone numbers where they can be called, and the times they think will be most convenient for them to be called. They also provide the time and day they are discharged or released. They may also provide an email address for support contacts from WIRCO.

WIRCO volunteer peer helpers are assigned to be the telephone "recovery buddy" and begin the phone support as requested by the person accepting this service. Telephone recovery support may continue as long as agreed to.

This phone support is based on the WIRCO/CCAR greeting, "How can I support your recovery today?" This voluntary phone support has proven to be an effective way to connect those released/discharged to existing recovery resources in Dane County and provides the personal recovery support one addicted or family member can give another.

This telephone support service is part of the pre-release mentor program can add another dimension for the person returning from incarceration.

## **BUILDING AND EXPANDING COMMUNITY RECOVERY CAPITAL**

We have noted and identified some of Dane County's rich recovery resources we consider our "recovery capital."

WIRCO's Dane County RSC is increasing our directory of recovery-related resources and intend it to be a reliable resource for those in recovery and those individuals and agencies are what WIRCO calls recovery allies.

Recovery Allies support reducing the stigma and negative perceptions of addiction and related problems. They also understand and support our WIRCO recovery mission. We consider our recovery allies as friends we can trust to help us help those in and those needing recovery.

WIRCO plans a "WIKIPEDIA" approach to our Recovery Support Directory. We want to be able to add details about each recovery resource as our volunteer peer helpers learn more about them, those most helpful in those programs and how best to access and maintain positive relationships with them. These ongoing additions to our recovery support directory are similar to progress notes in a treatment plan or project being managed.

This calls for the development of a flexible data base program that can be maintained and provide the updates we hope to add.

We believe this recovery database will include government, human services and health agencies, local community programs that may be helpful getting those seeking services and resources can find information on those programs and services. The database may also include individuals, members of WIRCO, the Dane County RSC and other groups and categories that make searching more convenient.

When we ask "How can we/I support your recovery today? We want to be able to have not only personal recovery support and sharing, but some realistic suggestions for where potential help and services may be.

Our WIRCO RSC recovery resources directory will utilize current directories and build on them. Fortunately such directories exist and are being developed by others. WIRCO is not in competition with other developing recovery resources. We believe our volunteer helpers will benefit from having our recovery resources directly close at hand and a directory they are helping create as well as utilize.

## **RECOVERY NAVIGATORS**

Recovery Navigators are WIRCO volunteer peer helpers trained to understand the probable needs of those new to recovery and perhaps in crisis. They are educated about our current recovery resources and able to assist those needing them to find and access them.

While Dane County has many recovery resources as previously noted. The problem is very few people in or out of recovery know who and where they are. WIRCO knows there are basic needs people in recovery and everybody else need.

WIRCO does not provide any of them aside from our RSC support. Our RSC does not provide food, shelter, financial assistance, transportation, and employment or therapy services. We know who does provide these services and can provide navigating services. We will get better at doing this with the experience day to day requests from those seeking WIRCO RSC services, support and encouragement.

WIRCO discovered this recovery navigator service is largely an un-met community need, a service gap if you like.

There are literally hundreds of individual, more likely thousands in recovery in Dane County. Each of these individuals and their recovering families live here. Think of the individual and family experience and recovery skills these people possess. Think of all the work, professional and other skills and knowledge these people in recovery have.

Now, what a miraculous gift it would be if we could find these previously anonymous and invisible recovery resource people. How many lives can we save? How many people would find a better quality of life if we had more people helping others into recovery?

How rewarding would it be if WIRCO could provide opportunities for them to offer their recovery skills and experience as volunteer contacts in our Recovery Resources Directory; to partner with our recovery navigators to connect them with those who seek the recovery they have already found and enjoy?

Those in AA, NA, Alanon and other mutual help programs will continue their personal addiction and related recovery sponsorship and services with their tradition of anonymity. WIRCO will always respect the tradition and practice of anonymity, and encourage our members in recovery to never reveal any involvement we may have with AA, NA or other 12-step programs in our public contacts or media.

## **RECOVERY RENEWAL RETREATS**

Our WIRCO RSC recovery support program will include quarterly and some times monthly recovery renewal retreats for WIRCO members and the recovery community.

These scheduled recovery retreats offers opportunities for those in recovery to focus on recovery practices that enhance the quality of life for those in new and long-term recovery. They provide a place and time for spiritual, emotional, and physical growth and healing. Retreat sites are selected for the privacy and atmospheres that promotes a relaxing environment. Retreats may be one day or weekend gatherings, and may expand to “recovery camps” for individuals, families and groups.

WIRCO Recovery renewal retreats provide opportunities for individual, family and groups to expand their recovery relationships and have new opportunities for social connecting and shared times of fun blended with serious personal work.



## **SKILL TRAINING FOR VOLUNTEER PEER HELPERS**

WIRCO is developing a program that trains volunteer peer helpers in basic and advanced helping skills.

WIRCO's Recovery Support Center volunteers first learn how to listen and understand first before offering advice or solution suggestions. These communication skills provide the basis for developing helping relationships. They give peer helpers the confidence to feel competent as they address the needs and issues people bring to the RSC.

One RSC service is providing assistance as visitors and WIRCO recovery community members seek the recovery and other resources they need. This is where RSC recovery navigators serve as guides for those seeking recovery services. Helping RSC volunteers understand where Dane County recovery resources are located and who they are is part of their WIRCO training. Peer volunteers are asked to increase the RSC recovery resources directory by adding the recovery resources they have found that may not yet be known to others.

The WIRCO volunteer peer helper training plans to create new opportunities for those desiring advanced recovery support skills to receive the necessary training. Some may wish to become recovery coaches or certified peer specialists. WIRCO plans to help those seeking this advanced training find pathways and financial resources to accomplish this process. WIRCO may apply for applications that accept WIRCO as a qualified vendor of these advanced helping skills training.

## **WIRCO RECOVERY ADVOCACY AMBASSADOR PROGRAM**

WIRCO intends to strengthen Dane County's recovery support resources by advocating for improvement in the recovery-promoting environment.

WIRCO identifies barriers to recovery and proposes solutions that overcome them. Two examples of WIRCO's recovery advocacy priorities are:

1. Changing a state regulation that excludes primary tobacco use disorders from receiving treatment for this disorder in our Wisconsin addiction treatment system
2. Having felony convictions become life-long barriers to employment for those in recovery from the addictions that caused the offenses and are no longer threats to public safety

WIRCO recovery focus groups will explore other issues that need to be addressed so access to and support for recovery are improved and sustained.

Determining what are barriers to recovery is one thing; doing something about them is another. WIRCO Recovery Advocacy Ambassadors action team will have lobby functions and take their solutions to the appropriate decision makers in local, state and federal government for consideration.

WIRCO recovery ambassadors will make recovery-promoting presentations to community groups, business organizations and others, seek support for WIRCO and recovery support services. These presentations also provide support for the various proposals WIRCO makes for improving recovery opportunities for those seeking them and eliminating barriers that make recovery more difficult.

WIRCO is increasing its membership so its advocacy for improved recovery resources will be more credible. Hundreds of tax-paying WIRCO individuals and families in recovery campaigning in person for these improvements is a force to be reckoned with. With a hundred or more WIRCO supporters present at a county or state hearing is difficult to ignore when they are willing to not only sign petitions, but testify at these hearings.

Wisconsin has lost almost all of the associations that once advocated for better addiction prevention, treatment and recovery services that existed for decades. This means there is little or no functional advocacy for recovery related issues. The WIRCO Recovery Advocacy Ambassadors intends to provide one recovery advocacy face and voice that will make a difference and reveal the positive face of recovery to those needing to know we exist so they can support our recovery mission.

## **WIRCO RECOVERY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER**

A successful radio executive created a motto for his sales representatives, “What goes untold goes unsold.”

This is true for Recovery Community Organizations like WIRCO. We have positive messages about recovery to share. We need to share them, so we are creating our WIRCO Recovery Communications Center to get our stories out to the media, our members and the public.

Our WIRCO board of directors has media and communications experience and skills. Our WIRCO Media Director is a professional media and website expert. We have 4 published writers serving on our WIRCO board. We are combining more than 150 years of recovery experience with our knowledge and skills creating messages and outreach with videos, social media, graphics and related media.

Our communications team leaders have already recorded and distributed high quality, high definition recovery stories. WIRCO will expand this component of our outreach program to assure recovery stories from all the different recoveries in our “big tent” recovery community are shared.

We are developing podcasts and other video and audio messages and printed materials and recovery products. WIRCO will train our volunteer peers so they understand and can participate in the recording, writing and production work we expect will expand in the future as our membership grows with more willing peer volunteers seeking ways to help.

Our WIRCO Recovery Communications Center is an exciting part of our vision for WIRCO's statewide services created to provide the positive message that recovery is a powerful community resource that deserves support and recognition.

[WWW.WIRCO.ORG](http://WWW.WIRCO.ORG)

Welcome to our WIRCO website in its present form. This is just our first version of this website. A more comprehensive version of this website is a future WIRCO objective with pages dedicated to different recovery memberships like tobacco recovery, problem gambling recovery and others. WIRCO Media Director and President, Robert Ingraham, created our website and maintains it for us.

Please visit and explore our website for glimpse of what we are doing and hope to do. Please check into our WIRCO Face-book page too.

## **SOMETHINGS TO PONDER**

Nobody serving on our WIRCO Board of Directors, or has served on it, has been paid to provide our services.

One board member donated a few speaking fees for presentations he made. That same board member designed, produced and performed at a WIRCO RSC fundraiser and donated the money to the WIRCO RSC. That member is Patrick Kempfer. You can read more about Pat on our WIRCO website Board page. Pat serves as Recovery Support Center Project and Volunteer Coordinator.

You can also read about Robert Ingraham, Jim Wrich, Steven Dakai, Rose Gruber, Vicki Edgren, Scott Stokes, and David "Mac" Macmaster on our website.

All other funds have been donations from our board members and founding friends like Sheila Weix from Marshfield, an early WIRCO board member. We are seeking more and better funding for WIRCO, our RSC, and future expansion.

60 Wisconsin recovery advocates created WIRCO five years ago. That leadership group is down to 6 now. If 6 volunteer recovery peer helpers can report how much has been accomplished without any public funds or big money donors, think of how much will be done with adequate funding and 200 active WIRCO leaders and members can accomplish.

## **WIRCO**

***Big ideas and a grand vision***

# You bet!

