

# FIRST STEPS TOGETHER

FAMILIES IN RECOVERY SUPPORT

# NEWSLETTER



## ALL PATHS TO RECOVERY

*The theme for this month's newsletter is All Paths to Recovery. We are sharing some of the different types of recovery paths and first hand accounts from across the project of how various recovery models can be helpful.*



Pick a spot on a road map and you'll easily find many ways to get to your destination. The same is true of recovery. There are many different paths you can take on your journey out of the darkness. Sometimes we find one path that works, and we stick to it. Other times we try multiple paths to get where we want to be in our recovery, often at the same time. We may try one, two or all of them before we find what works, it doesn't matter as long as it takes us safely through our journey to sobriety.

**Recovery looks different for everyone and there is no wrong path to get back what was once lost. You may even gain more than you ever imagined possible.**

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## JANUARY TRAINING RECAP

On January 9th, Family Recovery Support Specialists (FRSS), clinicians, supervisors and project directors came together for a day to focus on connections. Trainers from JF&CS's Center for Early Relationship Support provided an overview on using the Home Visitor's FAN, which is a model for facilitating attuned interactions.

**We focused on how to utilize this tool in service to families in order to support moms with parenting challenges while maintaining our own "zone of calm" to allow for reflective capacities as providers.**

In small groups we walked through case scenarios to understand how both the mom and the provider were moving in and out of thinking and feeling states, how different responses and interventions could move the pair into or out of sync, and how the provider could best support the mom in mindful self-regulation, which in turn supports co-regulation between mom and baby.

The day also included an opportunity to provide feedback on the project, as well as preview coming opportunities for learning and connection, including a series of podcasts, and a Group Peer Support (GPS) group for those doing peer work with pregnant and perinatal populations. It is such a great opportunity when we can bring everyone together! We look forward to our next all staff day on May 5th.



# ALL PATHS TO RECOVERY

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I started my recovery journey inside a methadone clinic. I found out I was pregnant and went for the best option for me; **methadone maintenance**.

Once I was stabilized on medication assisted treatment, I began seeing a clinician and attending groups at the clinic. My clinician told me about a program that offered **peer support for mothers in recovery**. Being pregnant, I decided to sign up. I immediately saw the value of working with another mother further along in her recovery journey. I took parenting classes through the program with other parents in recovery and started building my recovery community.

After having my son, I started attending **postpartum support groups**. The groups were not specifically for women in recovery, but my openness about addiction allowed others to share their stories and I found more mothers on the same path as me. From there I found **Celebrate Recovery**, which is a faith-based 12 step program. I fell in love with the step work, the groups and the amazing people that walked alongside me and helped guide me further on my path through recovery. Soon after that I began working as a peer specialist and was able to use my lived experience to support other mothers as they chose their own paths for their personal journeys.

Today, I use **exercise and personal care** to maintain this gift sobriety has given me. Sometimes I need to get back to basics or try something new. Yet I continue moving forward, strong and resilient. On February 10th I will celebrate eleven years since starting on that first path and as bumpy as the road was in the beginning, I can honestly say it was worth it.

**Many paths brought me here and I'm sure there will be more to come that I don't even know yet. I do know there is no wrong way, all paths to recovery work. For those of us in recovery, I hope we can all walk them together, holding hope for those still in the dark, using our strength and experience to light the way.**

Erica Napolitan  
Program Specialist



**Medication-assisted treatment (MAT)**, including opioid treatment programs (OTPs), combines behavioral therapy and medications to treat substance use disorders. [Visit SAHMSA's MAT page for more information.](#)

## PEER SUPPORT FOR MOTHERS IN RECOVERY

**Sober Mommies** is a judgment-free, supportive space for women and mothers in any stage of recovery. We encourage and celebrate ALL pathways to recovery.



The **Moms Do Care** program supports pregnant women on their journey from addiction to recovery. Services are provided for moms by moms who have walked this path during their own pregnancy.

## FAITH-BASED PROGRAMS

**Celebrate Recovery** is a Christ-centered, 12 step recovery program for anyone struggling with hurt, pain or addiction of any kind.



**Refuge Recovery** is grounded in the belief that Buddhist principles and practices create a strong foundation for a path to freedom from addiction.

## EXERCISE PROGRAMS

The **Boston Bulldogs Running Club** is a co-ed club established to provide an anonymous and safe community of support for all those adversely affected by addiction.



**THE PHOENIX**  
RISE | RECOVER | LIVE

**The Phoenix** offers a free sober active community to individuals who have suffered from a substance use disorder and to those who choose a sober life.



## SUCCESS SPOTLIGHT: JEWISH FAMILY & CHILDREN'S SERVICE

This month's success spotlight focuses on JF&CS and their use of Reflective Supervision.

Reflective supervision is a key component in infant and early childhood mental health work. It is a proven model to increase self-awareness and effectiveness for supervisors and staff who are engaged in relationship-based practice. According to Amy Sommer, JF&CS Project Director, **"Separate and distinct from administrative supervision, reflective supervision is an important way to directly enable supervisees to work through difficult things that may come up in their work."**



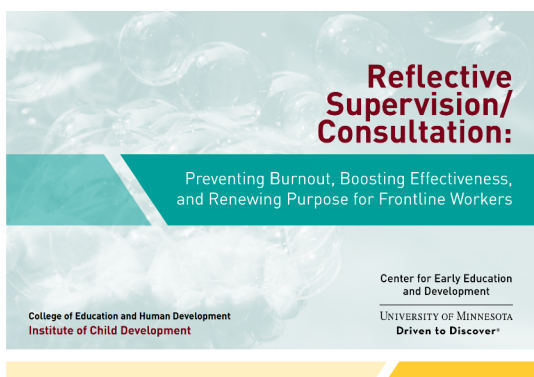
*JF&CS FIRST Steps Together team*

Amy points out that reflective supervision is a parallel process that models treating human errors or challenges with compassion. She says, "Curiosity is key. During reflective supervision, there is no judgement or assessing. The supervisor shows the supervisee the same compassion around how something was hard, perhaps something could be learned from it, and to look at that from the perspective of the strengths that the person involved has." Center for Early Relationship Support (CERS) Clinical Director, Eda Spielman, shared that **"Working with newborns and parents is emotionally challenging work. Providing a supervision model that involves an interest in other people's thinking and motivations is significant to healthy relationships and capacities to change and grow at all levels."**

Reflective supervision is a strong component of JF&CS' program, and the importance of creating time and space for this essential practice is reinforced at all levels. Reflective supervision happens both in group settings, with weekly individual reflective supervision, and twice monthly all-team meetings in which cases and administrative needs are discussed. Amy noted that during these opportunities, when cases are shared, "We try not to ask direct questions or give advice. It's about understanding what it felt like for the provider (the FRSS or clinician), creating a calm space for reflection and making room for people to come up with their own solutions." Then, as needed, they can then move to problem solving, once there has been a time created to explore the feelings of an experience. JF&CS has found this process to be extremely effective in continually building staff capacity and skill sets.

For more information on how JF&CS integrates Reflective Supervision into their work for FIRST Steps Together, you can contact Amy Sommer [asommer@jfcsboston.org](mailto:asommer@jfcsboston.org). Additional information on Reflective Supervision can be found here, [Three Building Blocks of Reflective Supervision](#).

## REFLECTIVE SUPERVISION RESOURCE



The [Reflective Practice Center at the Center for Early Education and Development \(CEED\)](#) at the University of Minnesota has just released [Reflective Supervision/Consultation: Preventing Burnout, Boosting Effectiveness, and Renewing Purpose for Frontline Workers](#). This free e-book introduces reflective supervision/consultation and its benefits for people who work with young children and their families.

## TWELVE STEP PROGRAMS

When I admitted myself to a detox unit to treat my substance use disorder I was full of shame, guilt and self-hate. I felt I had failed as a sister, a daughter, and a mother. All areas of my life were in chaos. Hitting rock bottom consisted of a total loss of finances, career, relationships, a child, and myself. I entered that detox program in a state of despair.

Twelve Step groups came into the detox facility to share their experience, strength, and hope. From the very first meeting I attended, I felt at home. It was the first time I felt as if I truly belonged somewhere. **My brain was unable to comprehend everything that was said, but I vividly remember the relief I felt listening to the participants speak. I was in awe of how these men and women shared about their past without shame. I remember how they smiled and seemed happy. I remember how I could see that they cared about each other. For the first time in years, I felt a sense of hope.**

After my discharge, I began attending multiple Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) meetings a day. In the beginning of my recovery, these moments in an A.A. meeting were the only times I felt "ok". The people in A.A. had never met me, and I felt I had nothing to offer in return for their help. Yet, they held my hand and hugged me. They introduced me to other members and referred to me as their friend. They picked me up and drove me to meetings. They showed up at court dates to support me. They took my phone calls, and spent hours listening to me tell them about the pain I was in. They loved me when I had no love for myself.

Six years later, my life looks much different. I have stayed sober. **Life is never perfect for anyone, but I have no shortage of joy, love, and serenity. I have the most wonderful, supportive friends in the world. The people in A.A. continue to inspire me with their gratitude, and humility, and selflessness.**

Nothing gives me more of sense of freedom than announcing I am an "alcoholic" and "addict" in a 12 Step meeting. While I can successfully function in all my life roles, I still feel the most sense of belonging within the halls of A.A. The 12 Steps are the blueprint for the way I live my life, and I have grown into a person I am proud of. I am the mother I always wanted to be.

Sarah Fitzgerald  
Family Recovery Support Specialist



*Alcoholics Anonymous is an international fellowship of men and women who have had a drinking problem. It is nonprofessional, self-supporting, multiracial, apolitical, and available almost everywhere.*

## MASSACHUSETTS SUBSTANCE USE HELPLINE



The [Massachusetts Substance Use Helpline](#) is the only statewide, public resource for finding substance use treatment and recovery services. Helpline services are free and confidential. Our caring, trained Specialists will help you understand the treatment system and your options

Resources about the many paths to recovery are available on the [MA Health Promotion Clearinghouse](#), including [Multiple Pathways of Recovery: A Guide for Individuals and Families](#)

We need never be hopeless  
because we can never be  
irreperably broken.

John Green

quintony



## SUPPORT FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

When I am in a room where people ask for those in recovery to stand, I remain seated. I know that what is being asked for is people who are in recovery from substance misuse or addiction. But I want to stand because I am also in recovery. I am in recovery from the family disease of addiction. And my path to recovery has been a long and hard fought one. For each of the 20.3 million people in the United States with a substance use disorder, there are parents, children, siblings, partners, and friends who are deeply affected by their use. We too experience losses of self, financial stability, safety, relationships, and health. And we recover from those losses and build/rebuild ourselves through therapy, spiritual practice, yoga, acupuncture, body and energy work, 12 Step fellowships like Al-Anon and Alateen, Co-Dependents Anonymous, Adult Children of Alcoholics, and other recovery paths.

**When I first entered the rooms of Al-Anon, I was shocked to hear people laughing. Why? How? But as I kept coming back, I witnessed the benefits of recovery—knowing ourselves, building community, discovering choices, experiencing healthy relationships, and finding joy.**

In meetings we can laugh at ourselves and each other in a kind and loving way, and we can be happy whether or not our loved ones find sobriety. I often wish when I watch characters go to A.A. or NA meetings in *This is Us* or *Grey's Anatomy*, that there would also be family members shown sitting in an Al-Anon meeting. **Because we too need to see that we aren't alone, we need to see hope, and we need to see that our recovery happens.**

Debra Bercovitz  
Director, FIRST Steps Together  
MA Department of Public Health



**Al-Anon Family Groups**  
[Al-Anon Family Groups](#) meet in over 130 countries to help families and friends of problem drinkers recover from the impacts of a loved one's drinking.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

[In The Rooms](#) is a free online recovery tool that offers 130 weekly online meetings for those recovering from addiction and related issues. We embrace multiple pathways to recovery, including all 12 Step, non-12 Step, wellness and mental health modalities.

[12step.org](#) has a list of 12 step online meetings, the online meetings may take place using different means of communications like text-only chat, voice or video.

[Smart Recovery Online](#) SMART Recovery Online (SROL) is a warm and caring online community where our participants interact and help one another recover from addictive behaviors. Features include: daily online meetings, message board, and 24/7 live chat.

[Recovery 2.0](#) Recovery 2.0 believes in a holistic approach to overcoming addiction. We offer support and training for every stage of recovery and honor all paths to recovery from all addictions.

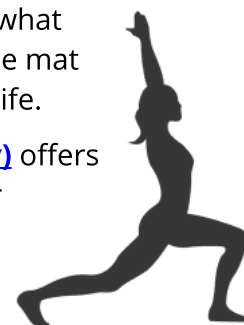


## YOGA FOR RECOVERY

As the [yoga journal](#) writes, "Untangling yourself from the grip of addiction can seem impossible, but yoga can lift you to higher ground."

[Yoga Recovery](#) A mindful, intentional themed yoga practice can help the student use what they learn about themselves on the mat to inform and improve their daily life.

[Y12SR \(Yoga of 12-Step Recovery\)](#) offers a rich and powerful framework for addiction recovery and relapse prevention.



## NEW PODCAST



**[The Brain Architects](#)**, a new podcast from the [Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University](#), will explore what we can do during this

incredibly important period of the early years of child development to ensure that all children have a strong foundation for future development.

## JOURNEY RECOVERY PROJECT



Check out the updated [Journey Recovery Project](#) website. "Wherever you are on your recovery or parenting journey, this website is for you. Here you will find advice, information, and resources to help you take care of yourself and your family."

For more information:

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**JF&CS**  
Jewish Family & Children's Service

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## UPCOMING TRAININGS AND EVENTS

### **FIRST Steps Together Trainings:**

#### **In Person Training in Worcester**

- 3/24, Family Recovery Support Specialist Day
- 5/5, All FIRST Steps Together Training

#### **Learning Community Calls, Tuesdays at 9:30 *via zoom***

- 2/4, Supervisor and Clinician Call
- 2/11, Family Recovery Support Specialist Call
- 2/18, Working with DCF in Navigating Removal & Kinship Placement

#### ***Optional In Person Training***

- 2/25, Supporting LGBTQ/T Families: Moving from Tolerance to Cultural Humility, at Bay State, Quincy

2/11, [Helping Local Implementing Agencies to Support Families Facing Critical Challenges: Homelessness, Teen Parenting, and Incarceration](#), webinar, [Home Visiting-Improvement Action Center Team](#)

2/17, [Separation & Loss: The Developmental Impact on Children and Families](#), webinar, [Minnesota Association for Children's Mental Health](#)

3/9, [Annual 2020 Breastfeeding Conference](#), Boxboro, [Boston Association for Childbirth Education and Nursing Mothers' Council](#)

3/18-20, [21st Annual New England Fathering Conference](#), Newport, Rhode Island, [New England Fathering Conference Planning Committee](#)

4/16, [Women Recover Conference](#), Norwood, [Bureau of Substance Addiction Services](#) *registration not yet available.*

4/18, [2nd Annual Conference on Trauma and Embodiment](#), Cambridge, [Justice Resource Institute](#)

4/29/20 [Understanding Bias: White Fragility and How to Overcome It at Work](#), Natick, [Wayside Youth & Family Support Network](#)

5/13, [Improving the Care of Mothers, Infants and Families Impacted by Perinatal Opioid Use: A Massachusetts Statewide Initiative](#), Norwood, [Perinatal-Neonatal Quality Improvement Network of Massachusetts \(PNQIN\)](#)

The [Bureau of Substance Addiction Services](#) and [AdCare](#) have multiple trainings coming up that may be of interest. Please find their calendar [here](#).

