

2021



Individuals with Substance Use Disorder



A look at individual experiences in
the Lexington, Kentucky area



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About Community and Innovation Lab (CIL)

The Community Innovation Lab (CIL) explores, applies and examines innovations associated with local, national, and international communities. It is part of a multidisciplinary network comprised of academics, community members and community-based organizations. For the past year Drs. Bryan and Kristina Hains have worked through the lab to Pilot a collaborative initiative course between an 1862 and an 1890 land grant institution. Professor Tiffany Thomas at Prairie View A&M University joined forces with Drs. Hains and students at the University of Kentucky to develop diverse leaders who will enter the agricultural workforce as culturally aware ambassadors who are trained to engage with and recruit from communities not currently being served.

Mission and Vision

Members of the lab seek to cultivate, apply and reflect on scholarly work associated with social innovation in diverse communities.

In our work, we seek to:

- Partner with residents to help drive inclusive social change
- Drive a more civically active and engaged community
- Forge cross-sector, public and private partnerships for scalable outcomes
- Assist community organizations in using novel approaches toward achieving their mission

The CIL is designed to be a collaborative space where ideas and initiatives are generated, supported and challenged in a collegiate and respectful manner. Within the lab, participants develop personally and professionally as co-researchers, co-learners and co-educators. We believe principles of good practice are pivotal for CIL team members and affiliates when collaborating with diverse communities.

Preface

Fall of 2020 the Community and Innovation Lab (CIL) partnered with the Lexington Mayor's Office Special Projects Director, Mrs. Andrea James, to complete a qualitative study. The study consisted of interviewing a purposive sample of seven civic leaders who are personally impacted by substance use disorder (SUD). Ten guiding questions were asked through the interview and were conducted via Zoom. Researchers annotated verbal and nonverbal cues during six sessions to examine civic leader perspectives of individuals with SUD and knowledge of community resources for treatment and rehabilitation.

All participants recognized SUD can impact anyone, however, each had individual perspectives when generalizing. Participants expressed a lack of knowledge of current resources, policies, and actions taken by government entities in Lexington, KY. Finally, leaders agreed further communication was needed among civic agencies and services to enhance community rehabilitation and recovery.

CIL consultants concluded there is not enough communication between civic leaders, individuals with substance use disorder, and public resources and agencies. Additionally, community leaders are passionate about helping those who suffer from substance use disorder; however, they need civic support and enhanced communication channels to provide better service. **Finally, multi-disciplinary research is needed to *obtain the voice of individuals with substance use disorder as well as those who serve individuals who use substances on the front line. These important concepts must be addressed to improve the quality of life for everyone within a community to increase the efficiency of life.***

Purpose Driven Research

Literature states:

Drugs negatively impact the quality of life in the "transmission of disease through intravenous needles and increased morbidity and mortality" (National Academies of Sciences, 2017). Drug abuse and drug addiction are no longer considered poor coping mechanisms, in recent years, it has been recognized as a disease. Today, the appropriate terminology, substance use disorder (SUD), is defined as a disease impacting an individual's brain and behavior and can lead to an inability to control the use of legal, illegal drugs, or medication (Mayo Clinic, 2020).

CIL Fall Recommendation:

Research is needed to *obtain the voice* of individuals with substance use disorder.

Spring Objective:

Objective 1: Describe Fayette County Drug Court (FCDC) participants' experience with substance use disorder.

With permission and waivers from Fayette County Drug Court and participants, host a series of individual interviews for those with substance use disorder to pinpoint personal experiences of substance use. Participants will have the opportunity to anonymously describe their experiences to the CIL consultants. Participants will not be recorded, only observed by the CIL consultants who will develop reports of results, findings, and recommendations for solutions or further research as it concerns individuals at the FCDC with SUD, the City of Lexington, individuals with SUD, and CIL. Reaching out to individuals with substance use disorder will allow the CIL and City of Lexington to hear the voices of those currently facing or recovering from substance use disorder. In the long term, these perspectives will assist the City of Lexington in furthering initiatives regarding substance use disorder. The outcome of these results will be compiled into this documentation as a resource for the June treatment and recovery provider conference, a presentation for Mrs. James, and recommendations for the CIL consultants of Fall 2021.

Demographics of Participants

Participant 1 : Mike

Mike is a white male in his mid 50s. He is divorced, has 2 kids, and works as a handyman.

Participant 2: Sully

Sully is a white male in his early 50s. He is divorced, has 2 kids, and owns a tree removal service.

Participant 3: Gabby

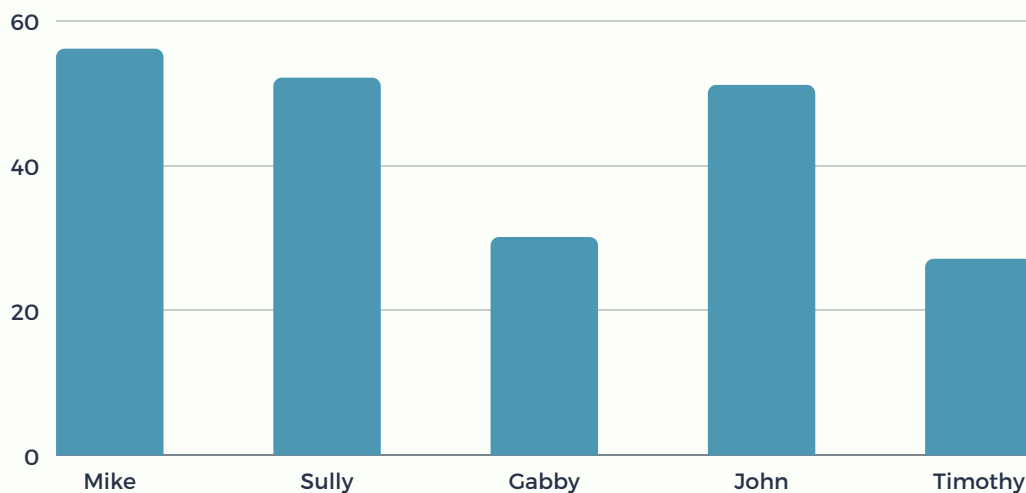
Gabby is a white female in her early 30s. She is unmarried, has a baby, works, and is in active recovery.

Participant 4: John

John is in his early 50s. He is a white male. He is divorced and is a master carpenter.

Participant 5: Timothy

Timothy is a Central American Male. He is in his late 20s and in active recovery.



Substances Discussed in Interviews

- Tobacco
- Alcohol*
- Marijuana
- Oxycodone
- Heroin

*ALL participants mentioned alcohol use

Questions Asked

QUALITATIVE ZOOM INTERVIEWS 2021

Listening and understanding individual voices of those with SUD

1

History- Tell me about yourself. What is your experience with SUD or using substances?

2

Hindsight- If you could go back to any time in your life and give yourself advice, when would you go back to and why?

3

Resources- Are there any resources you have used in Lexington to help you stay clean or decrease your substance use?

4

Strategies- What strategies or hobbies do you participate in to decrease your substance use?

5

Reflection- Is there anything you would like to add to this interview, emphasize to your community or service providers?

KEY THEMES

Interviewees were 30–60 years old, from Kentucky, and are currently participating in the Fayette County Drug Court. All participants are at least six months sober. Participants had experiences with a variety of substances ranging from alcohol, marijuana, prescription medication, and illicit drugs. Participants explained their experiences there were macro-themes and micro-themes. Here are some of the macro themes found:

COMPLEX TRAUMA

Interviewees recalled the start of their misuse of substances at major life events such as a friend or family member dying, divorce, or physical pain.

COMMUNICATION

Participants highlighted the need for connection, communication, and fellowship as a major contributor to being sober.

HOPE CENTER

Participants credited the Hope Center as a contributor to sobriety and legal success.

Participant History

Quote Evidence: 4 out of 5 interviewees shared the beginning stages of their substance use as being a teenager or in their early 20s. Misuse leading to SUD started after major life changes.

"I'm from Lexington, I'm 56. I don't really have a history with substance use, I was just in the wrong place at the wrong time."

"So I pretty much work for myself Since 09. So back in 03. I got depression. You know, back in '03, I started drinking a little bit and then drugs. Then, I went off the deep end. "

"My addiction really started when my best friend got in a car wreck. It was a DUI in 2011. I'd get high, with my older brother and sister. My older brother died six years ago. And my sister is doing a life sentence in prison for murder because of drug abuse like she killed a man on drugs. "

"I started doing drugs when I was 14, living in Brea. I didn't catch a charge until I was 50, so I had a pretty good run. I went to 30-day treatment up in Georgetown back in 07, but I was kind of going through a divorce and I just I took a couple of years off smoking weed, drinking and everything like that and everything came back. Quick and easy. So that became my decade of decline."

"I started using when I was 16. I started drinking at 16. And at that time it was only on the weekends. And then I got a car. At 16, that's when it really progressed. I started not coming home. In college, I ended up getting kicked out. I started selling heavier amounts of marijuana and pills to pay my bills. I ended up getting charged with trafficking marijuana in controlled substances."

HINDSIGHT THEMES

Themes found in various life stages of an individual with substance use disorder.

Youth/Teen Years

Most participants would like to go back to a time and give their self advice like, "listen to your role models," and "Don't make rash decisions."

Early Adulthood

Participants experienced trauma such as divorce, death of a loved one, depression, and unemployment. Which initiated what 2 participants called, "the decade of decline." "I mean, it started back smoking weed, drinking, beers led to benzos and then by the end of that decade which culminated in 2019 I had 21 charges in three months."

Adulthood Enrolled in Fayette County Drug Court

Participants stayed sober longer than when they check themselves into rehabilitation and service centers due to the high accountability. "These folks who wanna get fixed up in 30, 60, 90 days, it don't [sic] . . . work like that. If you look at all these folks who got their stimulus checks and left the Hope Center, they're either in jail or back at the Hope Center, 'cause it just don't work like that. It takes time. There's a reason it's 192 days. And then another six months of aftercare."

Recovery

Participants who have been sober for at least 2 years have sincere regret for the strain in relationships and have found ways to manage their addiction. Interviewees all gave credit to sponsors who increased their sense of belonging in a group meeting, God and their Faith for something to trust, and helping others as a coping strategy to combat selfishness.

RESOURCE KNOWLEDGE

Interviewees were familiar with several Lexington-based treatment centers and service providers. Listed below are the centers interviewees would recommend to others. Many of these resources can be found at gethelplex.org.

RESOURCE RECOMMENDATIONS

NA

Narcotics Anonymous was recommended by 4/5 participants

AA

Alcohol Anonymous was recommended by all 5 participants.

The Hope Center

Used by all participants & recommended by 4/5 participants.

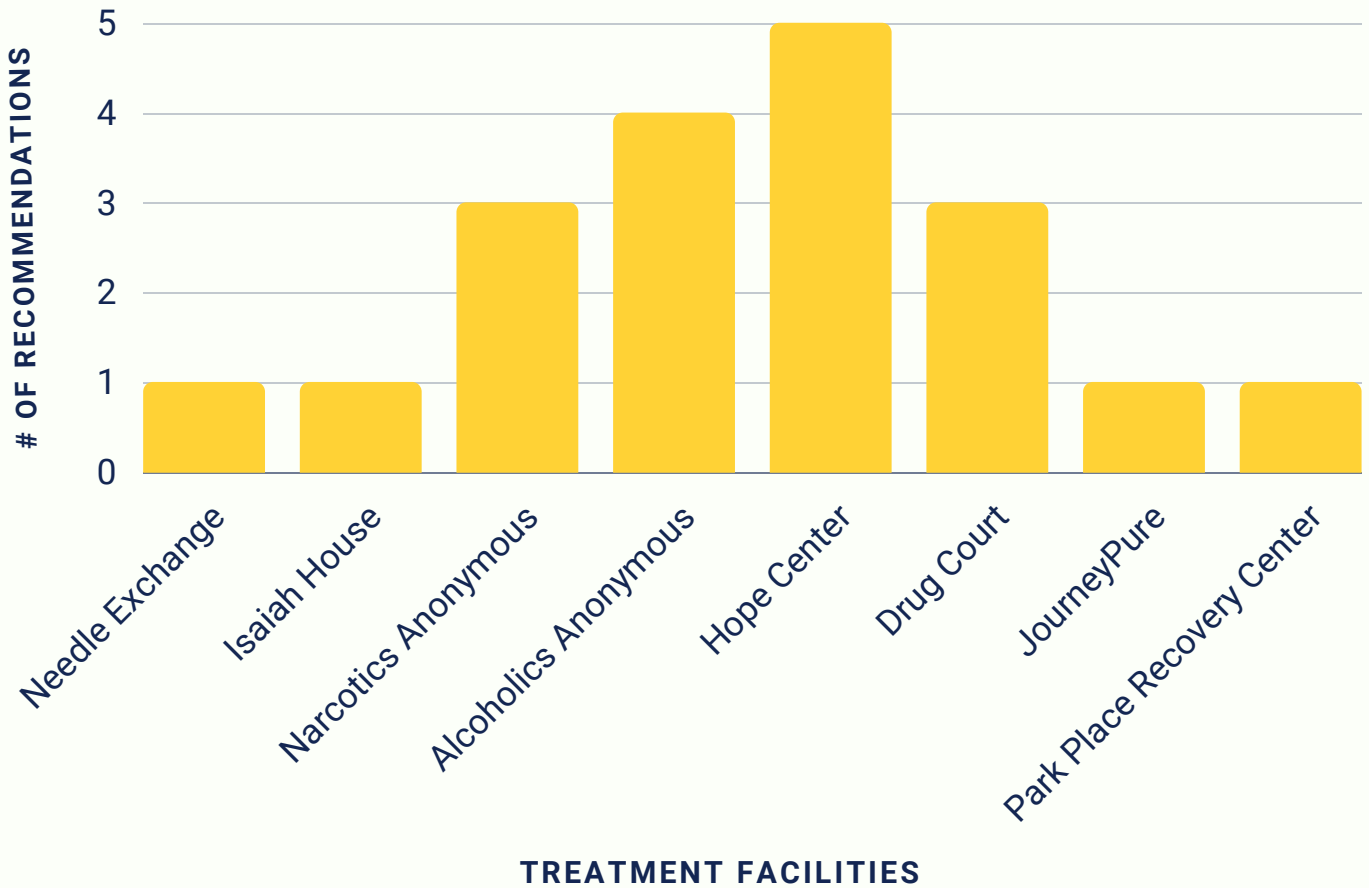
Isaiah House

Recommend by one participant for its faith based implementation.

Needle Exchange

Recommend by one participant for welcoming aid.

PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDED TREATMENT & RECOVERY CENTERS



Strategies for Coping

Meditation, Counseling, Hobbies, Faith

Do you have any strategies that help you stay clean or use less frequently?

"No, it's like I said I was in the wrong place at the wrong time. I don't really use that often."

"Zoom meetings are helpful on Sundays. The church is live. I listen to Steve Furtick. He's a preacher. He's a really good guy. He's a super preacher. He's really good! He's on Sundays live and he has a lot of videos already posted so I can watch him every day if I need to. And that pretty much keeps me going through the week. That message on Sunday, that keeps me going."

"I speak with my sponsor every week. I meet with her. And I was told, find God clean house and help others and I've had several sponsees. Like That helps me. Like giving back, giving back, and helping somebody. It helps remind me that my life really ain't that bad."

"Yeah, I hear a lot of people talking about what they can't do. I choose to go half full, half empty I choose to focus on the things I can do now. I can save money now. I can be responsible now. I do as I say, and I say as I do. I can look at myself in the mirror."

"They taught us about emotions and how to handle those. Yeah, I like meditation, it helps. They have meetings. Just talking to another person about my problems helps me a lot. That's one of the biggest things I've learned is how to open up and talk about and tell other people when something bothers me. So I won't let it sit there and bother me like I used to. I can actually tell somebody about it now, whether it's my mom or a friend of mine. Finding those emotional support groups is really important."

Reflections

Four Participants at the end of the interview stated these quotes as what they hope community members, service providers, and civil leaders would hear and understand.

"Remembering the past and how bad it was. That's always gonna be there. Whenever I think about using... I think about the consequences and that truly impacts your life. Using impacts, not just myself but everybody. My Momma, my kids. I always thought it just affected me, but *it impacts everybody in my life.* So I like helping people. I like communicating with people now. And I just want to keep it that way."

Sully

Reflections

**"Life, it's our journey.
And we're going to learn
whether or not we're
ready. They [people
helping] can preach it
and preach it and preach
it, but if they're
[individuals with SUD]
not listening, then they're
not going to hear it.
You know what I'm
saying?"**

Gabby

Reflections

"... People need to get it, you know, *you need fellowship*. They'll get involved in some way shape or form all this zoom stuff is OK, but there's nothing like in person you know what I mean ... There's nothing ... to get you involved in Zoom court I mean, I can play Online chess while I do that. But *if you're in person, it's just that interaction*. I think you hang around positive, sober people, and that stuff like that, who you hang around will rub off on who you are. *You are who you hang out around*. So that probably biggest thing, stay positive, find healthy new things to do start looking at checking your bank account every morning there's actually money in there."

John

Reflections

"...Take the time to relax... take up meditation, and go to counseling. In finding hobbies-- like going to the gym. And it's really *important to work with someone who is like me. People don't choose to be an addict. So having someone who can be there and understand and gets it is helpful.*"

Timothy

So What?

A brief interpretation of findings

The literature says drug use negatively impact the quality of life in the "transmission of disease through intravenous needles, and increased morbidity and mortality" (National Academies of Sciences, 2017). Drug abuse and drug addiction are no longer considered poor coping mechanisms, in recent years, it has been recognized as a disease. Today, the appropriate terminology, substance use disorder (SUD), is defined as a disease impacting an individual's brain and behavior and can lead to an inability to control the use of legal, illegal drugs, or medication (Mayo Clinic, 2020).

Many of the quotes already highlighted in this documentation support those claims. While these particular pieces of literature are newer, the problem is old and needs to change.

Recovery from any disorder is a lifestyle change. Individuals with SUD are not ever cured, but can successfully recover. Timothy said it best, "People don't choose to be an addict." SUD is a battle to stay sober.

As a community we need to listen and take the advice Gabby gave when it comes to judging, "Maybe you should take a look at your own shit and stop trying to take my inventory." Only through cultural and emotional intelligence of empathetic understanding can communities be really ready to help with individuals who are seeking help. When individuals find service providers willing to help, the service needs to extend at least into a 90 day period covering coping mechanisms, emotional development, and skills training.

Limitations

Qualitative Research

1

Rapport- It is difficult to have sensitive conversations with someone who is not well known. Trying to quickly build a relationship while inconveniencing someone with an interview about their personal story of substance use is challenging. It makes the conversations awkward and short. One of the limitations of this study is information collection because the researcher had a very shallow rapport with the participants.

2

Sample Size- This study used a convenience sample of 5 individuals contacted through the FCDC. While this could be a representative sample of FCDC members, it does not capture the voices of all individuals in Lexington with SUD.

3

Time- Another limitation was time, in that there was not enough of it to interview more individuals and assess a sample which may a better representation of the population.

4

Developing Researchers- As consultants of the CIL part of the objective of the course is to develop applicable skills through experiential learning. Navigating the proposal of the project and narrowing guidelines with Mrs. James, CIL, and graduate student restraints was time-consuming. Making new connections with the FCDC as community consultants also took time and was challenging to navigate as non-native Lexington researchers.

Recommendations

Next steps for the Mayor's Office, FCDC, Individuals with SUD, and CIL consultants:

Mayor's Office

- One way the Mayor's Office could assist community members with SUD is through educational awareness. Implementing a campaign or a PSA breaking down the stereotypes would help with diagnosing SUD. A PSA could look like these examples:
 - <https://youtu.be/cYUuGDoPlg4>
 - <https://youtu.be/icn4eYQmL6M>
 - <https://youtu.be/cYUuGDoPlg4>
 - <https://youtu.be/G0NxG2ss3gk>
- It may be beneficial as a community to host free educational training on emotional and cultural intelligence. This would likely implement better collective practices where substance use disorder is concerned.
- Both interviews with civic leaders and FCDC participants revealed a need for more communication between government agencies and community members. Creating a liaison position with the Hope Center or Fayette County Special Court would increase communication between government agencies, service providers, and individuals with SUD.

Recommendations

Next steps for the Mayor's Office, FCDC, Individuals with SUD, and CIL consultants:

Fayette County Drug Court

- Fayette County Drug Court could help in breaking down stereotypes of individuals with SUD by collecting participants' reflections and anonymously publishing them within the community. Participants would be able to see value in the work they are doing and provide the community with relatable life experiences that would point out SUD to someone who might not realize they experience it.
- Another recommendation would be to allow FCDC participants in the after-care recovery to mentor minors in the juvenile FCDC program. This would give both mentor and mentee a purpose while allowing meaningful connection which was emphasized as an important step in recovery.

Recommendations

Next steps for the Mayor's Office, FCDC, Individuals with SUD, and CIL consultants:

Individuals with SUD

- Keep talking about your life experiences. It helps the recovery process and gives others the chance to recognize SUD in their own life.
- Keep striving for recovery! It is a process and it takes a lifetime. Keep working towards clean and sober living.

Lexington Community Members

- Be willing to start and have hard conversations. Ask questions to civic leaders about what SUD is and why it is undiagnosed in 9 out of 10 people.
- Be willing to listen without judgment when people share their experiences of SUD.
- When listening to others' stories, be mindful of biases which could reduce empathy.

Recommendations

Next steps for the Mayor's Office, FCDC, Individuals with SUD, and CIL consultants:

CIL Consultatnts

- Negotiate a proposal and create a PSA for the City of Lexington to further break down negative stereotypes that prevent treatment for SUD. See links for PSA examples in recommendations for the Mayor's Office. The PSA should capture the findings of both semesters. The central message should describe, "Substance Uses Disorder doesn't have a 'look'."
- Civil leaders pointed out childhood trauma as a commonality in individuals with SUD. Three out of five participants in the interviews this semester spoke to childhood trauma as a stressor increasing their misuse of substances. Future research could be done by look at SUD in children and what prevention measures can be taken.
- Timothy mentioned one of the most helpful aspects of the Hope Center was the educational portion on emotional intelligence and understanding the development of his brain with substance use. One preventative measure the CIL could help host would be an educational program run like an extension program for the community on coping skills and emotional intelligence.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions/Implications and general recommendations

1. Resources

- All interviewees recommended the Hope Center and AA as treatment services.
- All interviewees listed sponsors and strong relationships with support groups as major contributors to their sobriety.
- All interviewees mentioned the Drug Court program as a high level of accountability that helped them.

2. Advice to younger self

Most participants mentioned regret or were remorseful in their reflections on what they would tell their younger self. Their advice was :

- "Slow your roll, sleep on it."
- "Listen to your parents or at least think about it, don't make any rash decisions."
- "Get help. Therapy is an option."
- "You are who you hang out around."

3. Information

Gethelplex.org list all the service providers mentioned by interviewees.

4. Various stages

While there were interviewees in various stages of recovery, many referred back to problems in their early teens where interventions would have made a difference. Future research should look deeper at youth and early teen interventions for preventing substance use disorder.

5. Coping mechanisms

Communication, Fellowship, AA, NA, Sponsorship, Church, Court meetings

Appendix

Transcripts

Interview 1

Introductions-

Can you start us off by telling us a little about yourself?

Yeah, my name is Mike. I'm from Lexington, I'm 56. I don't really have a history with substance use, I was just in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Could you tell us a little bit about your experience with substances?

Oh yeah, it's kind of like I said. Don't use very often. I just happened to get caught this time. I probably wouldn't go back and change anything. I don't regret it. I'd do it over again I'd do the same thing.

Do you have any experience with resources in Lexington to help reduce the need for substance use, like The Hope Center?

Yeah, I have experience within AA and NA.

Of the two, which would you recommend to someone who needed a meeting?

I'd recommend NA over AA. I just liked it better.

Do you have any strategies that help you stay clean or use less frequently?

No, it's like I said I was in the wrong place at the wrong time. I don't really use that often.

I think that's all the questions we have for you. Thank you so much for this interview.

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Transcripts

Interview 2

Introductions-

I think that's just about it for introductions. Do you mind just starting us off with a little bit about yourself? Where you from?

Yeah, sure. Hey, I'm Sully, Grew up in Frankfort. I live in Owensboro, KY. I moved to Frankfurt back in '99 and got married. And had a kid. That's where my momma and her husband lives in Frankfort, so I moved up here so she could help me with the kids now and then if I need it. Since I'm a single dad. So mom she helped me with the kids. Well, I'm a single dad. Single dad since 03. Been raising my kids. Their mother kinda took off. Got pregnant with somebody else. Haven't heard back from her. No phone calls or birthday cards and nothing for the kids. I have a 20 year old girl and 22 year old boy And they're in BCTC going to college. Yeah so I started my handyman work and tree business back in '09. So I started my tree business and that progressed into handyman work over the years. So I pretty much work for myself Since '09. So back in '03. I got depression. And then I got the Dark Depression. You know, back in '03, started drinking a little bit and then drugs. I went off the deep end. But drug court is the best thing that ever happened to me. I have been sober for a couple years. And so now it's totally different world in a different life and I love it. I love my life now. Everything's going great.

That's great to hear that everything is going great, if you don't mind touching on this little bit, Could you talk about your experience with substance use?

It's been pretty bad. You more or less stay broke all the time. Just communicating with people is really difficult, you know.

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Transcripts

Low self esteem makes it feel like you're not worthy to talk to people and it is very easy to isolate yourself. Then it affects my family and raising my kids and just impacts everything. It was pretty bad. The relationship with my mother and my kids all really started going downhill. But now everything's going great. I'm extremely happy. Today.

If you could go back in time and give yourself any advice or a piece of advice, when would you go back to and what would you say?

I would have started back when my wife left. I think I would make different choices. I might try to go to therapy and doing things a little differently. Instead of trying to kill the pain with drugs. I just kind of made the wrong decisions and... Just try to get a temporary fix. It definitely wasn't the right choice and I'm starting to realize that. That reality is starting to set in.

OK are there any resources that you use to help address your substance use?

Actually, I checked myself into the Isaiah house. To rehab and I stayed sober for nine months after that. And I went to a few other rehabs and checked myself into that so I could self help. I checked into Bluegrass care. And, I got a sponsor in 2012 and he's really helpful and he keeps track of me and we talk every other day. And I joined a small group. And my mom and my mom's husband support me and my kids of course. Having that support group is the most important. And communication is a whole lot better now than when I was out running amok. Communication is really important.

Of those resources, which do you think you would recommend to someone else who needs help?

Well, the Isaiah House is a Christian, faith based recovery house. And I'd highly recommend that because that's the main thing is finding yourself and getting in contact with your higher power.

Appendix

Transcripts

And it's really important for yourself esteem, and to feel more confident and to not feel alone. That's the main thing is to keep in contact with people who are going to give you good advice. I don't know. It's hard to explain, it's just you start finding yourself when you start reading the Bible. It's good therapy. And it gets you to where you need to be. Mentally.

Yes Sir. Do you have any strategies that you currently use Regarding your substance use?

Zoom meetings are helpful on Sundays. The church is live. I listen to Steve Furtick. He's a preacher. He's a really good guy. He's a super preacher. He's really good! He's on Sundays live and he has a lot of videos already posted so I can watch him every day if I need to. And that pretty much keeps me going through the week. That message on Sunday, that keeps me going.

That's about all the questions we have for you. Just the last question here. Is there anything that we didn't ask you that you'd like to add or anything you'd like to emphasize that we make sure we capture in your story?

Nothing off the top of my head, but remembering the past and how bad it was. That's always gonna be there. Whenever I think about using or something like that, I think about the consequences and that truly impacts your life. Using impacts, not just myself but everybody. My momma, my kids. I always thought it just affected me, but it impacts everybody in my life. So I like helping people. I like communicating with people now. And I just want to keep it that way.

Thank you so much for interviewing with us.

Appendix

Transcripts

Interview 3

Introductions

[baby in the background making noises. Off screen.]

Sorry, my baby is in the bouncer.

No, it's totally fine. How old is she?

She's a month old. She's just having herself a good old time.

Well, like we were saying, if you don't have any questions for us if you'll get a started just by telling us a little bit about yourself. And then Tara will take over with the questions.

Well. I'm 30.

I'm From Lexington.

I've been clean 2 1/2 years. I was a Heroin user and I drank alcohol.

I'm a open book. I'll answer anything you ask me.

You mentioned this a little bit, but could you clarify a little bit about? What your experiences are with substance use and substance use disorder?

Well, I have a twin that's not a alcohol user or drug addict. My addiction really started when my best friend got in a car wreck. It was a DUI in 2011. And in 2012 I had just had my son. And it was all downhill from there. I'd get high, with my older brother and sister. My older brother died six years ago. And my sister is doing a life sentence in prison for murder because of drug abuse like she killed a man on drugs. In consequences of my own actions, I got HIV. Because all this getting high and doing stupid shit.

Thank you for being so honest and sharing your experiences with us. They say Hindsight is 2020. If you could go back and tell yourself anything, when would you go back to and what would you tell yourself?

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Get it girl.[Talking to the baby.]

When I was 17 and my mom and Dad tried to stop me from making a rash decision, they were right about. I wouldn't change anything. Like everything I've been through made me the person I am today. And it's just I'm where I'm supposed to be at. I was supposed to go through them things. The shit I went through.

Yes, ma'am. So what resources have you used in the Lexington area to help you decrease your substance use?

Like what did I use? like the needle exchange?

Yes ma'am the needle exchange would be an example, narcotics anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous Would be examples.

Yes AA and NA. At the Hope Center we would start out by going to NA And AA and I started gravitating towards NA. But AA was where I was supposed to be.

Do you have any current strategies you use to stay clean?

I speak with my sponsor every week. I meet with her. And I -- I was told, find God, clean house, and help others, and I've had several sponsees. Like That helps me. Like giving back, giving back and helping somebody. It helps remind me that my life really ain't that bad.

yes ma'am yes ma'am

I just wanted to go back and ask another question. It sounds like you really found your fit in AA was there something about a that group that was different from the NA meetings that kind of drew you to that group?

My sponsor. it was the. --She made me feel welcome. A lot of the old timers judge you, but the way she was like, fuck it. If you go back out, you go back out. Either way I'll be here.

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Transcripts

I'm not gonna judge you. And when I told her my news when I was six months clean and I found out I had HIV and she was just right there with me every step of the way, she showed up at the Hope Center and she met with me extra. She made sure I never felt alone. She she. --I wouldn't have made it without her. Her understanding. --Just her--fuck them. fuck them-- Don't worry about them--I'm here for you.

I'm really glad your sponsor really helped you feel that sense of belonging and helped you in that way. Those were our main questions. Our last piece of reflection, is there anything else you would like to add that we didn't ask you about? About service providers. About how the community. Is with substance use disorder. Anything you would like us to emphasize?

I mean -- I don't know. -- a lot of people... Life, it's our journey. And we're going to learn whether or not we're ready. They can preach it and preach it and preach it, but if they're not listening, then they're not going to hear it. You know what I'm saying?

Yes, ma'am.

I can preach until I'm blue in the face, but if they don't want to hear it. But if they don't want it, it's not happening. Like I wish a lot of the old timers weren't so judgmental towards us. Because OK, yeah. My main drug was heroin. But if I didn't have it yeah, I was gonna be drinking alcohol. So they're like, well, you ought to be in NA. But I'm like. Well, you should've seen me on the nights I didn't have Heroin to shoot. I was drinking liquor. So that makes me an alcoholic too. It's just the judgment. The judgment! That said, how can people help more?

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That is their own shit I've learned. Like there's a reading in the Big Book on Page 417 that's called acceptance is the answer. There's people, places, and things that I'm not gonna like. But but I have to accept it. For what it is and keep it moving as long as my side of the streets clean, I'm good. So if somebody is judging me off my past shit. What's really the issue? Because who are you to judge me? Maybe you should take a look at your own shit and stop trying to take my inventory. Yeah. Sorry for the profanity.

Thank you so much for the interview.

If you need anything else. Let me know.

Interview 4

Hello!

Hello, let me plug in the truck so I can hear you better.

Give me just a second.

[Talking to people outside the call.]--Guys, you shouldn't say about the scaffolding in the plugs. Alright, I'll be right back. [--Leaves the construction site hops in his truck. Plugs phone in.] Can you hear me now?

Now we're through the truck speakers. We're in business.

Introductions

Thank you so much for your time. Tara is gonna take over asking questions, but if you want to get a started would just tell us a little bit about yourself for this interview? We would appreciate it.

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Yeah, I had a look up with the Fayette County Drug Court. Well I'm 52. I started doing drugs when I was 14, living in Berea. I didn't catch a charge. Until I was 50, so I had a pretty good run. I had a pretty good run I reckon. I went to 30 day treatment up in Georgetown back in '07, but. I was kind of going through a divorce and I just I took a couple years off smoking weed, drinking and everything like that and everything came back. Quick and easy. So that became my decade of decline. You know? I mean, it started back smoking weed drinking, bears tickets, benzos and then by the end of that decade which culminated in 2019-- 21 charges, three months. Yeah it was bad side, done things I said I'd never do like start using needles. All that other shit. And spent 55 days in jail, got clapped out drug court since last January. Sat at the Hope Center for six a half months during COVID. But it was suggested I needed to take a longer period of time since I had for about 3/4 of my life I've done drugs and drank. You know what I mean, so sit somewhere long enough to kinda Get my feet underneath me. So now I've got like 16/17 months clean. I guess my clean date is December 4th, 2019. Sober day. So I've got like 16 months or something like that.

Yes, Sir, yes Sir.

The drug court is a High level accountability so, I did some kratom and got sent back 90 days 'cause. I got a hip replacement in October 8 and I was supposed to get it bad. My grand scheme was go to the Hope Center and then get a medical discharge. When I get my hip replacement and then do IOP. Well, God had a bigger different plan. You know what I'm saying, then they cancelled the fucking elective surgeries. So instead of having my hip in May I got it replaced in October. And like I said, it was supposed to be so.

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Any who I got out of the Hope Center graduated there on 31st July the first week in August. I went back to work and I'm master Carpenter and I do. As you can see. All kinds of stuff and. I was struggling with hip pain so I got online and I was trying CBD Gummies and somebody said, you might still want to try kratom. And I didn't get it was like an amendment to the banned substances in drug court. It was like a flyer that was in my packet. Started Googling it looking up on drug War and all start that. Long story short, so I had to come clean because it was sending false positives. If I like something, I wanna do it all the time. So I was doing kratom morning, noon and night, and it was helping with pain. But it was also standing false positives on my drug screen. I'm gonna do it all the time. Kratom morning, noon and night and it was helping with pain, but it was also sending false positives on my drug screens for fentanyl. So eventually, like the third time, the drug came up, the judge said something and I had to tell my counselor invest and complain and they sent me back 90 days instead of going through court in 18 months I will be done at 21. So, but you know, I mean that the judges Wednesday by the time they ask about something and you know, kind of what's up. It's kind of like a detective, you know. They've got a pretty good idea and just want to hear from you. And so the best thing to do is just be brutally honest 'cause you start lying and stuff and where does that end? They can't believe anything you said, you know?

Yes Sir.

Every now and then I get snippets of recovery, sometimes it comes to the forefront. Sometimes I try my own way and God laughs at me, man teaches me a lesson.

Yes, Sir. Thanks. Well, thank you for being so open about your experiences. That is really helpful. You know, they say hindsight is 2020 and if you could go back into any point in your life and give yourself a piece of advice, when would you go back to and what would you say?

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Probably back to '07 or '09 'cause I had about 2 1/2 years Clean and sober. And then I decided to smoke a little weed. And a little weed. Lead to. Some beer and Xanax, which lead back to my. Opiates work at a you know who doesn't want to feel like Superman, especially when you do construction I had a flooring business for like 20 years so. Not feeling any pain sure doesn't make you feel invincible or whatever you know. Spinning wheels, doing drugs, but. So back in '09 I would have said I would've slowed my roll. Maybe, you know I mean. So maybe smoking a little pot. Isn't a great idea. But in my head, I had never gotten anything or been in trouble with the law. So only thing I've done is personal, personal and professional. You know, I mean sabotage, so to speak, but I always get- I always got that back. Always got another girlfriend. Always made money. You know? Always made money. But this time around I got so strung out that I couldn't. And I couldn't keep my license. And I started renting my truck out to the drug dealer. I-- I guess I hit my bottom So to speak. So if I I could go back and give myself some advice. And go back to '09. And tell him to sleep on it. You can always smoke tomorrow.

You mentioned the Hope Center, was that were there any other resources you used to help address your substance use, or was it primarily the hope center?

Well. Well, the Hope Center, and AA meetings and sponsorship. Drug court, it gave me a high level of accountability. I was drug tested once every week or two at the Hope Center and then I was drug tested. Accordingly, at drug court. So like phase one is 3 times a week, so sometimes I was getting drug tested when I was first getting started four times a week.

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And then it was three times a week. And then it was once or twice a week. And now it's once a week and now I'm starting aftercare here soon so it'll be drug testing whenever they feel like it, I guess. Accountability keeps you honest.

So between AA and the hope center, which would you would recommend to somebody. And why?

If you have a long history or some legal problems you might want to try out the Hope Center because it's got a good name. But if you've partied for as long as I had then you might need to sit somewhere for awhile. And these folks who. Wanna get fixed up in 30, 60, 90 days, it don't fucking work like that. If you jump back. And you look at all these folks who got their stimulus checks and left the hope center either in jail or back. Hope Center, 'cause it just don't work like that. It takes time. The Hope center- It takes 192 days. There's a reason it's 192 days. And then another six months of aftercare. So I'd say people can do it in AA I did it in AA. I did it on my own. I drove myself to recovery place and sat there and did it myself for 30 days. And then did AA and NA meetings for a little while and that worked for a little while. It's up to the individual. I don't like to hear people say 'try' because they're either gonna do it or not. Like I've had Sponsees tell me they're gonna try and I've just told him that's bullshit. You're either gonna do it or you're not. You're gonna do it, or you're not. If you're gonna just try, you might as well go back out 'cause you.. That's what you wanna do anyway. You either gotta do it or don't. You know what I mean? But for hardheads like me, maybe the hope center. AA works, meetings work, sponsorship works. Volunteering, giving back helps... you know what I mean? I'm a pretty selfish individual, so if I do a little bit for somebody else, it makes me feel better.

Do you have sponsees?

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Yeah, I've had a few. I've got one right now on at home incarceration, so he's pretty easy to keep tabs on. He was on probation and he picked up a DUI. So they put him in jail and then they put him on ankle bracelet. So now he gets to slide out for a couple of meetings a week. I've had a couple sponsees, but they've all gone back. What can you do? The only thing I can tell him is what works for me. And if they don't wanna do it, then I don't lose any sleep over it. That's their party. Everybody's got their own journey and they gotta figure it out. You hope they live through it.

[Do you have any other strategies or hobbies for staying clean or help addressing staying clean?](#)

Yeah, I hear a lot of people talking about what they can't do. I choose to go half full, half empty I choose to focus on the things I can do now. I can save money now. I can be responsible now. I do as I say, and I say as I do. I can look at myself in the mirror. There's family and friends that start to come back. You know you lose them in buckets, but they come back in drops. You accumulate the drops, form a stream, into a River and you don't get it all back at once, but it feels good for people to trust you with money and keys and responsibility. I've had a company credit card. In doing a flip for a guy, one of the investors I work for, he gives me credit for whatever I need at Home Depot and I go pick up whatever I need. And it used to be that I- in the old days, would I buy something up on it or take it back take cash for the charge you know I mean all that screwy shit and it's lot easier just doing what you're supposed to do. And the more you do it, the easier it gets. That positive momentum. Just builds. I sleep good at night I go hard all day. I got my help. I got hepatitis C cured from all the bullshit I was doing.

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I got a full hip replacement and I paid nothing you know what I mean I got like \$200,000 in medical shit and I think I paid \$30 'cause they gave me some oxycontin which I didn't even take all- what's that about right? I actually flushed some so.. I talk about I needed it after the surgery well 5 milligrams that was only thing I paid for myself and I have part of that script of oxycodone 5 milligrams \$30 to get like a \$200,000 worth of you know I mean that's a blessing. That's the Hope Center. But staying sober. You know I wouldn't know that wouldn't have happened if I had said fuck it. And not stayed clean or stayed at the Hope Center. The longer you stay clean and sober and people start to see that you know good things start to happen less likely to self sabotage.

This has been really helpful. Is there anything you would like to add to this interview or really emphasize in your story?

I'll probably emphasize that people need to get it you know you need fellowship. They'll get involved in some way shape or form all this zoom stuff is OK, but there's nothing like in person you know what I mean.

Yes, Sir.

You guys know that school and whatnot. There's nothing I mean to get you involved in Zoom court I mean, I can play Online chess while I do that. But if you're in person, it's just that interaction. I think you hang around positive, sober people. And that stuff like that, who you hang around will rub off on who you are. You are who you hang out around.

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So that probably biggest thing, stay positive, find healthy new things to do start looking at checking your bank account every morning there's actually money in there

Yes, Sir. Well that's all the questions we have for you. We thank you for your time.

Y'all stay away from the hard stuff.

Yes Sir, thank you so much.

Interview 5

Introductions

To get this started, why don't you tell me a little bit about yourself?

I was born in Guatemala but I have always lived in Lexington. That's where I'm really from is Lexington, I'd say. And right now what I do for living is I work for the Hope Center on the homeless center side. Not the service center side. With the homeless people. That's what I work with. Gotcha.

And we just provide them with a place to say housing stuff like that. Can you tell me about the Hope Center? And your job.

Sure. So there are two sides to the Hope Center. The emergency side and the homeless center side. The emergency services side. Is people coming in off the streets- Who aren't looking to get into recovery- They're just looking for a place to stay. And we provide them. With housing. Either they can stay in the housing or the trailers if they are still actively using. And they don't want to get clean or anything like that. Or at least hide it, if that makes sense.

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So they come in at night in they're asked to leave in the morning. And then there are the ones that are GP clients and they stay in the homeless center part of the Hope Center in the Big Dorms. And we feed them. Most of them get a job. They'll go to work and then they come back at night. Free to come and go. There are other people who come in off the streets and ask to get in the program and There's a recovery side. If somebody wants to get on the program, they have to go through detox, which can be... three days to a week. If they get through detox then we admit them to the program. And then they get sent to the recovery side of the program and that is a six month program inpatient program. Where they can go to meetings and classes that are Monday through Friday. And really, what we teach is a different way of living. How to be a productive member of society. The Hope Center teaches less about addiction and more about what causes the addiction. Really getting down to the root causes. Of why we are that we are.

What is your experience with substance use?

I started using when I was 16. I started drinking at 16. And at that time it was only on the weekends. And then I got a car. At 16, that's when it really progressed. I started not coming home. Until very late at night because I was staying out drinking with friends. At apartments from 16 to 18, drink on the weekends with that friend. When I turned 18 over to college and started getting into drinking and using weed. Using Marijuana and taking pills. In college I ended up getting kicked out. I moved back home for a little bit. I started selling what I used. Which I smoked weed. And then I sold pills. To provide for my habit with marijuana. And then I eventually moved out of my parents house because I was tired of getting kicked out. I decided to move out. And I started selling. Heavier amounts of marijuana and pills to pay my bills.

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I ended up getting charged with trafficking marijuana and controlled substances. I got put into drug court and I've been in drug court. For 2 1/2 years since I was 20. 2018 I got my first charge due to using. I've started, I got caught burglarizing somebody's home. Since I turned 20, I'd get clean for about six months and then I'd go back to what I was doing before, which was heavy drinking and run into misdemeanor charges. Thefts. DUI. I've gone through three different treatment centers. The Hope Center is the last one for now.

Can you tell me more about the treatment center you went to?

I went to JourneyPure. It was a sober living intensive outpatient treatment facility. I didn't really learn anything. I felt forced into it at that point. I went to court one day and they told me why I wasn't going back home, or with my parents, so they told me I had to go with the people at the sober living house. And I didn't like it there. I wasn't used to any of the rules. I didn't know how to follow rules. And the director he tried to force his rules on me and I didn't like that. I've worked with him multiple times. At the end of the day, he discharged me and at the parking lot of the sober living house I begged him to give me another chance. Because I only had a couple of weeks left there. And he gave me another chance. And I followed the rules as best as I could at that point. And then I went to Park Place at Bowling Green. And it was a 30 day treatment facility sober living house. I really like that treatment facility. I learned a whole lot about Addiction. What they taught there was really step following. That life is unmanageable. I realized at that point my life was unmanageable. But it just wasn't long enough treatment. I dried out and ahead of little bit of tools that they taught me coping skills. Such as finding hobbies. They said that like the biggest thing is trying to find something you did as a little kid.

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Then go back to those things. We hadn't done things like that since we were young. And asked me what mine was and I said I like basketball and bowling and fishing and playing games since I was little kid. And they said that I should try some of that again. So when I got back home, I tried that for a little while and it worked for a little while. But I didn't... But I still didn't know how to handle certain situations. Such as having girlfriends, things like that. I didn't know how to handle my emotions properly. And then the Hope Center when I came here I went through the jail program. 'cause they have a jail program. Through the Fayette County detention center. And through that they taught me how to handle my emotions. He taught us how things don't go our way since our mentality isn't developed like a normal person since we used substances so we're likely at the same age when we started using or just a little bit above. So we are still developing, and it's not developed properly yet. So he called it little boy issues. So when we didn't get our way, we'd throw fits about it. So he explained that we have little boy issues. But that there are proper ways to deal with things he taught us how to deal with our emotions. And they talked about emotional barometer. So when things aren't going right in my life and I realize that they're not going right in my life I know that my Emotional barometer fills up, so I have to take time to deal with that. I can take the time to deal with it. So let's say my car breaks down today and then on my break, my girlfriend breaks up with me. And then my dog dies all within the same week. Those things go into my emotional barometer and it fills up, and if I don't know how to handle them, I'll go back out and use again. Or even little things like someone getting an attitude with me. And it makes me really mad. Well, why not go get a drink to calm myself down? So they taught us about emotions and how to handle those. Yeah, I like meditation, it helps. They have meetings. Just talking to another person about. My problems helps me a lot.

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That's one of the biggest things I've learned is how to open up and talk about and tell other people when something bothers me. So I won't let it sit there and bother me like I used to. I can actually tell somebody about it now, whether it's my mom or a friend of mine. Finding those emotional support groups is really important.

The Hope Center also really helped me get down to root causes as to why we do certain things. Really getting down to the root cause.

If you could go back in time and give yourself any advice, when would you go back to and why?

If I could go back in myself. Any advice? I'd go back to when I was 18 headed to college and I just tell myself to make wise decisions. I tell myself to listen to my role models in my parents. And just to do right? Even if no one else does? And if I could emphasize anything, it's at the Hope Center. Help me find strategies to take the time to relax. To help me take up meditation. And go to counseling. In finding hobbies like going to the gym. And it's really important to work with someone who is like me. People don't choose to be an addict. So having someone who can be there and understand and gets it's helpful.

Appendix

Contacts and PSA Information

FCDC

Joanna Goods- JoanneGoods@kycourts.net

Audrey Collins- AudreyCollins@kycourts.net

John Hill- johnchill@uky.edu

PSA Information

The Lab should consider using CornerStone and other community partners to develop this PSA. It will help build community partners, develop networks, and promote the PSA to the community of Lexington.

CornerStone Contact:

Studio Time Contact:

Equipment Resource:

<http://video.ca.uky.edu/videos/>

Photo Waiver Resource:

https://communications.ca.uky.edu/files/photo-image_consent_form_acs.pdf

"...Take the time to relax... take up meditation, and go to counseling. In finding hobbies-- like going to the gym. And it's really *important* to work with someone who is like me. *People don't choose to be an addict. So having someone who can be there and understand and gets it is helpful.*"

TIMOTHY
INDIVIDUAL WITH SUD IN
ACTIVE RECOVERY



SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER: LEXINGTON, KY

COMMUNITY AND INNOVATION LAB

ABOUT US

The Community Innovation Lab (CIL) explores, applies, and examines innovations associated with local, national, and international communities. It is part of a multidisciplinary network comprised of academics, community members, and community-based organizations.

WHAT WE DID

The consultants of the CIL collected data from 5 interviews with participants of the Fayette County Drug Court program.

KEY THEMES

COMPLEX TRAUMA

Interviewees recalled the start of their misuse of substances at major life events such as a friend dying, divorce, or physical pain.

COMMUNICATION

Participants highlighted the need for connection, communication, and fellowship as a major contributor to being sober.

HOPE CENTER

Participants credited the Hope Center as a contributor to sobriety and legal success.

RECOVERY

Participants who have been sober for at least 2 years have sincere regret for the strain in relationships and have found ways to manage their addiction. Interviewees all gave credit to sponsors who increased their sense of belonging in a group meeting, God and their Faith for something to trust, and helping others as a coping strategy to combat selfishness.

OUR VISION

- To increase awareness of Substance Use Disorder (SUD).
- To break down negative stereotypes often associated with SUD.
- To obtain and publish individual's voices who have SUD.

RECOMMEND TREATMENTS

- Hope Center
- Drug Court
- Alcoholics Anonymous
- Narcotics Anonymous
- Isaiah House
- Needle Exchange
- JourneyPure
- Park Place
- Others can be found at GetHelpLex.org

DID YOU KNOW?

Kentucky has one of the highest opioid-related deaths in America

There were 1,316 overdose *deaths* in 2019



9 out of 10 individuals suffering from Substance Use disorder go **Untreated**

If you or someone you know suffers from substance use disorder and are attempting to seek help, please visit GetHelpLex.org

Imagine you see a person who suffers from substance use disorder...

What do they look
like?

How old are they?

How are they
dressed?

What do they do
for a living?

In Reality,

Substance Use Disorder does not discriminate
and affects every race, gender, age, and financial
status

Save a Life, Be open minded

Substance Use Disorder

Noun

A Brain Disorder that is manifested
by compulsive substance use
despite harmful consequence

Visit [GetHelpLex.org](https://www.gethelplex.org) for more information