
Update on the Recovery Ready Communities Certification Program
Joint House and Senate Standing Committees on Health Services
1/19/2022

The 2021 Kentucky General Assembly passed HB 7, sponsored by Rep. Adam Bowling, which established the Recovery Ready Communities Advisory Council (RRCAC) and tasked the council with creating a certification program to measure the quality of treatment and recovery services offered in communities across the Commonwealth. The certification program's statutory mandate also includes assuring citizens and businesses that a city or county is committed to ensuring the availability of high quality recovery programs in its community that can help lead to a highly skilled community workforce. Volunteers of America Mid-States was contracted by the Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet to assist the Recovery Ready Communities Advisory Council in developing and establishing the Recovery Ready Communities Certification Program. The VOA Recovery Ready Communities (VOA RRC) team consists of Dallas Hurley as Senior Project Director and Sue Fox as the Community Engagement Liaison. The VOA RRC team is bolstered by on-demand access to VOA's experts in direct client services and grants management. The team immediately went to work meeting with RRCAC members, public health officials, government officials, treatment providers, transformational employment specialists, chamber of commerce representatives, and community stakeholders to garner input for the draft certification program criteria. The VOA RRC team was able to conduct 29 meetings with over 140 stakeholders representing all 120 counties from August 8th 2022 to September 30th 2022.

The VOA RRC team gathered all the comments from the stakeholder meetings and began to synthesize the responses into a draft certification criteria. The stakeholder input was combined with the latest recovery science research with the goal of having the draft certification criteria bolster the recovery-oriented systems of care in any community that adopts the criteria. The recovery-oriented systems of care model is designed to create a person-centered coordinated network of community-based services. The model is designed to strengthen the resilience of people, families, and communities by improving the health, wellness, and quality of life of individuals at-risk for or recovering from substance use disorder. The VOA RRC team along with VOA's senior leadership team presented the draft criteria to the RRCAC for the members' input.

The VOA RRC team continued to meet with community stakeholders and experts to review the initial draft criteria presented at the RRCAC meeting on September 28th, 2022. RRCAC members were asked to provide all feedback on the initial draft proposal to the RRC team by Oct. 18th, 2022. After all the feedback from RRCAC members was received and consolidated by the VOA RRC team, they met with Executive Director Ingram to review the comments provided by RRCAC members and incorporate those suggestions into the draft criteria.

The updated draft criteria were finalized and the VOA RRC team, in consultation with Executive Director Ingram, settled on four population-based categories designed to offer maximum flexibility to cities, counties, or groups of both to apply for certification under the program. Originally, a meeting for the final adoption of the revised criteria by the RRCAC was being planned for early December, but Executive Director Ingram had the foresight to request that the revised criteria and scoring be tested in every population category prior to presentation to the RRCAC for final approval.

The VOA RRC team worked with community leaders, advocates, and providers to conduct beta tests of the proposed criteria and scoring in Jefferson, Kenton, Calloway, and Clay counties. The objective of the beta tests was to determine if the criteria struck the proper balance between being aspirational yet attainable for communities in every category. The VOA RRC team reviewed the results of the beta tests with Executive Director Ingram and Chair Darnall of the RRCAC prior to the RRCAC meeting on January 10th, 2023. The RRCAC reviewed and approved the proposed certification criteria at their meeting on January 10th, 2023. In the days since the RRCAC approved the criteria, the VOA RRC team has been working with Executive Director Ingram to launch a website where interested communities can get more information about the program and apply for certification. If you or any of your constituents have any questions, please contact info@rrcky.org.