



# FY25 STRATEGIC PLAN SNAPSHOT

## OVERVIEW

Recovery is defined as a process of change through which an individual makes a commitment to improve their health and well-being, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential. Although an estimated 400,000 south suburban of the nearly 700,000 residents are in recovery from a substance use disorder, recovery is often misunderstood. Recovery is a highly personal endeavor, and the exact process is unique to each individual.

The South Recovery Coalition conducted hundreds of surveys and listened closely to hundreds of people with lived experience of recovery and used their thoughts and expertise to guide this plan.

Recovery is more than clinical treatment, although treatment can be a component of recovery. Recovery is about reclaiming a person's everyday life. People in recovery need stable housing, purpose, health, and community support. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) defines these as the four pillars of recovery, and this plan builds on those pillars.

This two-year strategic plan for FY23 - FY25 sets forth a vision of a system of care that supports individuals and families impacted by those suffering from addiction throughout their lives, and that vision will guide us as we focus on next steps to improve recovery resources. The Southland Recovery Coalition is committed to making the work in this plan happen, and we look forward to partnering with people and organizations across the Southland region to give all residents the opportunity to improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and reach their full potential.

## Southland Recovery Coalition Partners



## **Recovery Awareness Amidst a New Society (i.e., gender equality, social justice, Gen Z & Y)**

The world is entirely different today than it was in 2020. SRC aims to increase public awareness surrounding mental health and addiction recovery. We seek to initiate policy through community outreach and education, programs, and presentations with a recovery focus and ensure the voices of individuals in recovery are represented.

### **SRC FY25 Goals**

- Host more pop ups in the Southland to raise recovery awareness.
- Increase opportunities for recovery for underserved and under-resourced populations and communities including BIPOC, youth, older adults, and the LGBTQIA+ community.
- Identify health disparities in high-risk and vulnerable populations and ensure equity for recovery support services through partner agencies (i.e., UMARC as our RCO).
- Expand awareness about best practice models that help recovery providers and advocates implement holistic, self-care strategies to improve recovery outcomes.
- Re-establish SRC's in-person Recovery Conference to increase recovery awareness.
- Re-establish SRC's in-person, monthly ROSC Council meetings on a quarterly basis.
- SRC will amplify the voices of those in recovery by bringing back its newsletter and "upping" its social media presence (especially during the upcoming holiday season). This allows their stories to inspire others and helps foster resilience and hope in recovery.

This strategic plan outlines three objectives essential for building up the Southland's capacity to support recovery in all its forms.

### **Create a Recovery-Oriented System of Care .**

This focuses on building a foundation to support a recovery system in the Southland.

### **Provide Access to Recovery-Oriented Clinical Care.**

Recognizing that many people with substance use disorders do access treatment, SRC seeks to connect them with recovery supports during pre and post treatment for recovery success.

### **Equip Communities with Recovery Supports.**

Finally, recovery happens in communities and through community-driven leadership. This helps equip communities and local leaders — such as law enforcement, city councils, and public health agencies — to use this plan to strengthen their local recovery system.

This plan will move the Southland Recovery Coalition to build a community that is working together toward a common understanding of recovery — while recognizing that recovery is a personal, individualized experience. **All Pathways Lead to Recovery** is the motto of SRC. Through our involvement in various civic and community groups, the Southland Recovery Coalition is working to educate the public about Mental Health & Wellness, Addiction Disease and Recovery. We focus on engagement and empowerment by removing the stigma of recovery in our community. Those in long term recovery have become productive, contributing members of Society. Through our involvement with community coalitions, we will participate in forums and workshops in schools, churches, barber/beauty shops, companies, and partner organizations. In short, we meet people where they are. We work with people with lived experience to help us advocate for "the voiceless".

A primary focus is on the **Community Needs** to equip neighborhoods and towns with a range of recovery support services for their residents. This document lays out a plan to address those needs. It is the Southland Recovery Coalition's strategic plan for recovery. Recovery is a process, not an end state, and often people undergoing this process need more continued support than they are getting. Community members in the South region focus groups indicated that communities of color have a disproportionate burden of health problems. The ongoing long-term divestment in the South region was considered a serious problem by several residents. Participants stated that African Americans, Latinos and immigrants were more likely to live in low-income neighborhoods with fewer job opportunities.

Residents emphasized the need to give locally owned businesses incentives to establish in low-income neighborhoods. School districts in low-income communities of color were often described as substandard. In addition, many of the survey respondents from the South region indicated that they had experienced discrimination in their daily lives. From high unemployment to incarceration and recidivism rates, the south suburban region contains some of the most impoverished areas in the nation. Moreover, crime rates oftentimes coincide with some form of undiagnosed mental illness and/or addiction that an individual is trying to "feed" by committing criminal acts to supplement the habit. The Southland Recovery Coalition strives to create a more caring, understanding, and supportive environment for those in recovery by raising awareness about substance use as well as working collaboratively for systems to change.

With the staggering number of Opiate Overdoses in recent months, the use of Narlozone (Narcan) has been instrumental in saving lives. We provide training in the administration of this life saving medication. We are out in the community, reaching out to those that need us, and to those who want to help. We help raise recovery awareness through outreach, pop-up events, and SRC's speaker series. This includes SRC's Word Up podcast and our Cultural Connections panel discussions featuring a licensed clinical practical counselor and community members participating to provide tips to practitioners and members to help those in recovery cope, and Mental Health & Wellness in Recovery.

## **Structural racism and systemic effects of social and economic determinants of health**

In all of the assessments, the social and structural determinants of health were identified as underlying root causes of the health inequities experienced by communities in south suburban Cook & East Will County communities that, unfortunately, also make up a population of displaced workers, households in food deserts, and poverty. Disparities related to socioeconomic status, environment, safety and violence, and structural racism were highlighted in the Southland region as being key drivers of health outcomes.

The Southland Recovery Coalition's geographic area of focus is the south suburban region, which includes the southeastern suburbs of Cook County and the Eastern corridor of Will County. Once a vibrant manufacturing community, the south suburban region has experienced severe disinvestment over the last decade. Further, layoffs, foreclosures, lack of access to resources and mental health issues have pushed the region into leading the rise of substance use and alcoholism, particularly with adult males ages 40 and up. Minority youth in this region are also showing high rates of substance use, contributing to the opioid crisis in the targeted areas. Substance use has greatly decreased the life expectancy for those living in disinvested areas of the Southland. Further impacting the ability of individuals to achieve a quality of life are the multiple modalities faced along with trying to manage their sobriety. Data shows the mortality rate of those in smaller communities as a stark contrast to Chicago's rate of 77 years of age.

## **The Formation of a Coalition out of Crisis Needs Related to Substance Use Disorder**

Southland Recovery Coalition was formed in 2018 to stop the excessive trends of opioid addiction, lack of responsiveness to those in recovery, and poor infrastructure within the south suburbs to fully support those impacted by substance use. Within the proposed service area, a quick Google search as well as the use of several mapping technologies, turn up "zero results" when looking for behavioral/ mental health providers, recovery communities, and/or agencies that are equipped address the multiple modalities that occur for those in recovery.

With the strength of its partners' experience in providing recovery support services as well as being PRSS Providers, SRC has the capacity and ability to provide a range of recovery- oriented services that can be expanded to reach our targeted communities on a deeper scale. True recovery is about much more than whether someone is taking a substance or not. It is about a person's life: physical, psychological, spiritual, and practical. It can be about healing the hurts of the past and finding an attractive future and they believe in. SRC will be a strong advocate for those in recovery and those impacted by substance use.

From advocating for better public transportation with lawmakers to ensure that people can get to treatment providers to providing a network of services and supports—SRC plans to address the full spectrum of substance use problems, from harmful use to chronic conditions. Through education, communities are strengthened by recovery-oriented activities that can prevent addictive behaviors and mental crises from occurring.