BC CONSTRUCTION HEALTH & SAFETY CONFERENCE · COQUITLAM · OCTOBER 29, 2026

The Peer Support Recovery Navigator Story, the Science Behind It, and Why Construction Needs Safety to Lead the Next Cultural Shift

You changed safety culture. Now do it again?

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BCCSA BC Construction Safety Alliance

PSRN PEER SUPPORT RECOVERY NAVIGATOR

Disclosures

Practice	30+ years addiction & occupational medicine in BC; IMEs, expert opinion
Academic	Clinical Assoc. Professor, UBC; UoA, SFU CARMHA research partner, passion for evidence-based recovery science
Support	BCCSA, WSBC, Air Canada, Seaspan, Unifor, BCRB & HCA. No treatment, testing, cannabis or pharma ties
Views	My own

BUILDING ON THE LAST SESSION

A credential isn't competence.

Competence is built on the job, with the people around you, over time.

Thirty years ago, safety refused to accept that accidents were inevitable.



Named the hazards



Trained the supervisors



Built accountability As a culture



Saved lives

It didn't come from a regulation. It came from people.

SAFETY FIRST — FOR GOOD REASON

To protect safety, we built the traditional approach.

Detect → **Discipline** → **Refer**

Built to address risk — and on the medical model of its day.

Built for one moment.

ZERO TOLERANCE

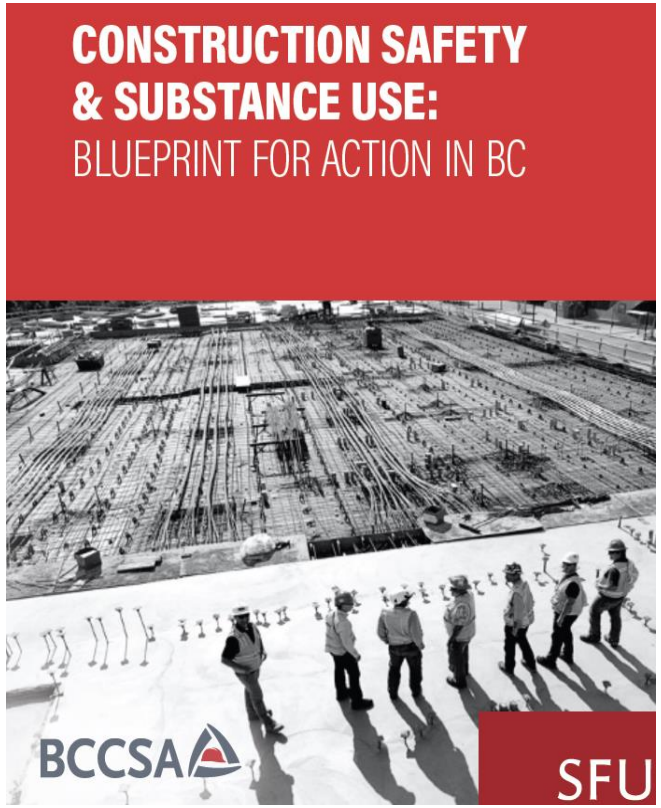
For impairment on a safety-sensitive jobsite:



Yes.
Non-negotiable.

Nothing in this presentation changes fitness for duty.

We asked 639 BC construction workers.



Alcohol and cannabis were most reported at work.

‘Recovery’

Somers J, Farnan P, et al. Construction Safety and Substance Use: Blueprint for Action in BC. BCCSA & CARMHA, SFU, 2023. n=639; 35 industry leaders interviewed.

THE FINDING THAT RESHAPED THE PROGRAM

1 in 8

described themselves as living in recovery.

On a crew of 40, about five people. Mostly invisible

Blueprint for Action in BC, 2023 (12.4% of 639).



THEY POINTED TO EACH OTHER

Their crew helped them recover.

60%

said their work community helped START their recovery

60%

said it helped them KEEP it

The workplace isn't peripheral to recovery. It's central.

Social Identity Model of Recovery (Prof. David Best)

Blueprint for Action in BC, 2023.

"I would talk to a trusted coworker before going to HR or EAP."

"I don't want to be seen as a problem worker."

"Support systems are for late stage."

Blueprint for Action in BC — worker engagement, 2023.

THE PARADOX

Used alone, zero tolerance drives the problem underground.

55%

who worked after using hid it

58%

felt safe telling a manager

39%

of managers felt untrained to step in

A hidden hazard is an uncontrolled hazard.

McIlwaine S, Meister S, et al. Workplaces and Substance Use: Construction Industry. CCSA Research Brief, July 2025.

THE MEDICAL MODEL

Remission is not recovery.

Remission

Defined by what has stopped

Recovery

Defined by the person — what has grown, keeps improving for years

The traditional approach can see remission. It can't see recovery.

American Psychiatric Association, DSM-5-TR, 2022. Kelly JF, Greene MC, Bergman BG. Alcohol Clin Exp Res, 2018.

WHAT WE MEAN BY RECOVERY

"A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and strive to reach their full potential."

— SAMHSA working definition of recovery

Not just abstinence. Not just remission.

Recovery is the expected outcome.

50–70%

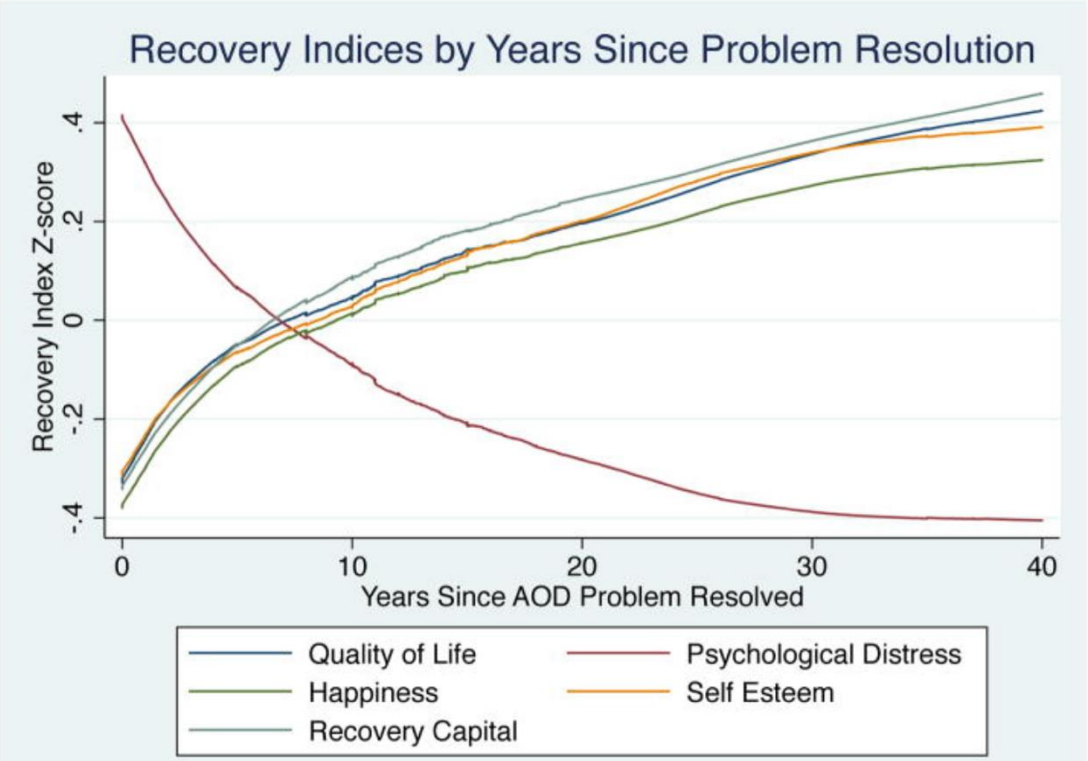
achieve long-term recovery

"Better than well"

Paid taxes on time: 43% → 77%

Regular medical check-ups: 34% → 83%

Active addiction → recovery. CCSA, Life in Recovery from Addiction in Canada, 2017.



Kelly, J. F., Greene, M. C., & Bergman, B. G. (2018). Beyond Abstinence: Changes in Indices of Quality of Life with Time in Recovery in a Nationally Representative Sample of U.S. Adults. *Alcoholism, clinical and experimental research*, *42*(4), 770–780. https://doi.org/10.1111/acer.13604

WHAT DRIVES RECOVERY

Five conditions that drive recovery

C	H	I	M	E
Connectedness	**Hope**	**Identity**	**Meaning**	**Empowerment**
A crew that checks in	*Visible peers in recovery*	*Tradesperson first*	*Work that matters*	*A say in the plan back*

Every one of them is shaped at work.

Leamy M et al. Conceptual framework for personal recovery (CHIME). British Journal of Psychiatry, 2011.

THE PROTECTIVE FACTOR YOU CAN INFLUENCE

Four kinds of Recovery Capital

Personal	Social	Community	**Workplace**
Health, skills, self-belief, hope	Family, friends, a supportive network	Housing, services, mutual aid	Psychological safety, supervisors, peers — and a job

Only one of them is fully inside your fence.

White W, Cloud W. Recovery capital, 2008. Granfield R, Cloud W, 1999.

“You don't do recovery to people — people do recovery with people.”

Recovery is contagious — when it's visible.

To want recovery, you have to see it.

“To be it, you have to see it.”

— Billie Jean King. Workplaces decide whether recovery can be seen.

ZERO TOLERANCE, REVISITED

Zero tolerance was written for impairment.

In practice, it drifted to cover people.

ZERO TOLERANCE

For a worker who asks for help:



No.

‘Asking for mental-health support should have the same legitimacy as asking for first aid.’

Sean Yeulet, PSRN Grad, Cohort 4

Asking for help is the safest thing a worker can do.

ZERO TOLERANCE · THE KEY POINT

For workers in recovery:

No longer.

Their history is not a hazard. Their recovery is a strength.

Canadians in recovery surveyed 2017 told us what changed.

79%

steadily employed — up from 53% in active addiction

4%

frequently miss work — down from 61%

1 in 3

still face stigma in recovery

Recovery shows up at work. So does the stigma.

McQuaid RJ et al. Life in Recovery from Addiction in Canada. CCSA, 2017 · ccsa.ca/life-recovery-addiction-canada-technical-report

Workers in recovery are an asset.

Safety

Early help, before an incident

Retention

$15–50K to replace a skilled worker

Productivity

10.9 vs 15 absence days a year

Hope

Living proof that recovery works

NSC absence data; Canadian industry replacement-cost estimates.

THREE ZERO TOLERANCES

Keep the first. End the other two.

Impairment on the job	Keep
Asking for help	End
Workers in recovery	End

THE FIRST CONVERSATION

Anyone can start it.

1

Notice

Mood, attendance, near misses

2

Ask

“You don’t seem yourself. I’m worried about you?”

3

Listen

Don’t fix. Don’t lecture. Let silence work.

4

Connect

EAP, their doctor, a navigator — then follow up

You don’t need to diagnose. You need to care enough to ask.

LANGUAGE

Words that open doors

Closes the door

Addict
Clean / dirty
Abuser
Failed test

Opens it

Person in recovery
Negative / positive test
Person who uses substances
Returned to use

Language is a control measure too.

THE PSRN STORY

From a question to a peer program

The ask

BCCSA: how should construction respond to substance use issues?

First

We asked workers: the Blueprint

The answer

Peers. Recovery. Navigation.

Oct 2025

PSRN launches with BCCSA

Canada's first construction-specific, peer-led recovery navigation support program.

ROLE CLARITY

What a navigator is — and isn't

Not

A counsellor

HR or a supervisor

A crisis worker

A drug tester

Part of any fitness-for-duty decision

A new hire

Is

A trusted coworker

A resource reservoir

A listener

A bridge to the right help

Visible hope

Culture change agent

The safety role handles impairment. The navigator role handles voluntary disclosure.

THE TRAINING MODEL

One day to start. A community to sustain it.

1 → 2 → 3

Development Day

Community of Practice

PSRN Network First Annual Forum

Policy, EAP and clinical care start after something happens. PSRN starts at the first quiet concern.

ONE YEAR LATER

A year ago, I asked this room for something.

Here's what you did with it.

12
cohorts

125
navigators

84
organizations



WHO STEPPED FORWARD

Most of the people who stepped up were people like you.

67% of PSRN graduates work in safety roles.

ORGANIZATIONS ALREADY IN THIS WORK

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Progressive Leaders Across BC Construction

A&T Project Developments
ADOR Properties Group
AECON Group Inc.
Aerial Roofing
All Roads Construction
Allied Plumbing, Heating & AC
Amrize Canada
Arctic Construction
Aryze Developments
Ascension Safety Consultants
BCCA
BC Insulators Local 118
Beedie Construction
Berto Contractors
Best Personnel
Brega Contracting
BCIB
BuildStrong
CIF Construction
Canadian Turner Construction
Coastal Mountain Excavations
CLRA
Continental Roofing
Downs Construction
Eagle Valley Holdings
EllisDon Corporation
Enermax Mountain Manufacturing
Formula Contractors Piling & Bridge
Fraser Crossing Partners (FCP)
Eagle West Crane & Rigging
Gama Safety Canada
Geotech Drilling Services
GES Geotech Inc.
Giglio Construction
Greyback Construction
High Definition Roofing
Ideal Welders
Inland Comfort AC
ITC Construction Group
Keith Panel Systems Co.
Kelowna Ready-Mix
Kindred Construction
Kinetic Construction
Ledcor Power Group
MAC Reno Design Build
Mack Kirk Industries
Mainroad Group
Marex Constructors
Marine Roofing
TAKT Construction Services
Miller Capilano Maintenance Corp
Mint Traffic Solutions
Mott Electric
Norland
NRCA
On Side Restoration
Pain BC Society
Peak Construction Group
Plan Group Inc.
Polygon Construction Management
Professional Mechanical
Rebo Beton Pumping
Red Barn HomeBuilders
Robinson Roof Solutions
Rocky Mountain Solutions
Ross Rex Industrial Painters
Scott Construction Group
Sentrax Mechanical Contractors
Signature Site Services
Silver Springs Concrete Services
Smith Bros & Wilson
Streetwise Traffic Controllers
Sunrise Flagging
Systematic Mill Installations
The FORGE Contractor Alliance
TNT Crane & Rigging
TomTar Roofing & Sheet Metal
Trans Western Electric
Transwest Roofing
Turner Construction Company
Unitech Construction
United Earth Contractors Corp.
Viking Construction
Villa Roofing & Sheet Metal
WestEdge Safety Consulting
Western Industrial Contractors
Western Roofing (Master Roofers)
Yard At A Time Concrete

These organizations did not write a new policy. They identified the right person, supported their training, and are making their presence visible at the workplace.

EMPLOYERS ARE ASKING US IN

The journey to a recovery-inclusive workplace

LEVEL 1

Policy Compliant

Zero tolerance – for impairment

LEVEL 2

Recovery Aware & Informed

LEVEL 3

Recovery Inclusive

Each level adds to the one before. We'll help you take the next step.

Psychological safety is becoming part of the safety system.

419 → 2,613

accepted psychological-injury claims a year, before 2015 vs 2025

"...leader in promoting psychologically safe and healthy workplaces and compassionate recovery."

— WorkSafeBC Mental Health Strategy, 2024

Recovery belongs in your psychosocial risk assessment. PSRN already delivers part of the answer.

WorkSafeBC claims data. WorkSafeBC Mental Health Strategy, 2024. Proposed OHS Regulation Part 4.1 (consultations paused during the provincial election).

WITH OR WITHOUT PSRN

You're often the person a struggling worker will trust.



Check your policy



Train the first conversation



Add recovery to your risk assessment



PSRN Network – First Annual Forum Oct 28, 2026

Navigators · Organizational champions

THIRTY SECONDS

Think of one person people already go to when things are hard.

Write down their initials.

BELIEVE IN RECOVERY

Recovery is more than not using.
People in recovery are often better than well.
Many want to give back.

Give them the chance.

THE ASK

The right person is likely already on your payroll.

Talk to them.
Ask them if they might be interested in enrolling.

Zero tolerance for impairment.
Zero tolerance for discrimination against people in recovery.

You changed safety culture.
Now please do it again.

Thank you.

Questions

1 Zero tolerance
Yes for impairment, No for asking for help. No longer for workers in recovery

2 Recovery is the expected outcome
The workplace is where it grows

3 The right person
Is likely already on your payroll

Enrol in PSRN training

Next cohorts: Nov 5 · Dec 5

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BACKUP

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