

# **8<sup>th</sup> Annual Substance Use Disorder Symposium 2024**

## **A Simple Program for Complicated People: AA, Community Self-Help, and the Clinician's Role**

**Presented by: Patrick DeLeon, LCSW-C, MAC and Cara Burton, LICSW**  
**11 SEPT 2024; 1300-1630 EST via ZoomGov**

### **Description:**

Individuals with alcohol use disorders are frequently encouraged to attend Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), and court systems continue to mandate regular attendance at meetings for those engaged in the legal systems as a result of their drinking and drug use, but *why*? With all the available advancements in the fields of psychotherapy, psychopharmacology, and neuroscience, why is a nearly century-old self-help program that claims to be non-organized, non-professional, does not promote itself, is unstructured and not affiliated with any outside enterprises, and where meetings are led by individuals with no formal training at all, still promoted and often preferred for treating alcoholism and drug addiction?

Through this workshop, we will explore various community recovery programs, like AA, for the treatment of alcoholism, drug addiction and process addictions. We will review the latest available research comparing AA with treatment as usual and hear the personal stories of two brave clients whose lives have been positively impacted by engaging in community recovery. Lastly, we will help provide insight around some of the common barriers that keep clients from engaging in community recovery and how to address these barriers in a skillful and supportive way.

### **Objectives:**

By the end of the training, attendees will be able to:

- 1) Define community recovery; differentiate various community recovery programs from one another; describe their purposes and potential benefits.
- 2) Review the available literature on AA's effectiveness and understand core principles, traditions, and practices of that program.
- 3) Hear first-hand accounts from two individuals who have actively engaged in and benefited from community recovery and hear how their lives have changed as a result.
- 4) Explore common barriers to engaging in community recovery, such as "AA is a cult", "I am not religious", "I don't want to drink right now so why do I need to go to meetings?", "I don't have time".
- 5) If time allows, become familiar with other 12-step programs, such as Al-anon, Al-ateen, Adult Children of Alcoholics and Other Dysfunctional Families (ACA), Codependents Anonymous (CODA).

### **Agenda:**

**1300-1330:** Introduction, review of evidence base for Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)

**1330-1400:** Overview of community recovery programs (AA, SMART Recovery, Refuge Recovery, Celebrate Recovery); A brief history of AA: What are the 12 steps? What is sponsorship? What is a home group and a service position? How is AA portrayed in the media and pop culture?

**1400-1430:** Personal story# 1 and questions

1430-1445: BREAK

**1445-1530:** Common barriers to engaging in community recovery and how to get our clients to go!

**1530-1600:** Personal story #2 and questions

**1600-1630:** Other questions/discussion, if time: "Sister" programs to AA (Al-anon, ACA, CODA)