



Mental Health and Recovery Services Board

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PRESS RELEASE

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Recovery Programs

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"If you want to drink, that's your business. If you want to stop, that's ours." This is the wording on a card I received from a local Alcoholic Anonymous (AA) member a few weeks ago. She stopped at our office to discuss challenges that local AA groups are facing when dealing with people recovering from opiates. She was concerned that many individuals struggling with opiates do not fit well in the local AA groups. While individuals recovering from alcoholism understand the power of addiction, opioid addiction appears to be different. We had a great discussion, with lots of questions on my end. The reality is that lives are being lost from both alcohol and opioid addiction. And, family members dealing with an alcoholic struggle as much as family members dealing with an opioid addict.

There are still a few differences when comparing the two addictions. Alcohol is obtained legally, while heroin is an illegal substance. A substance purchased legally gives the individual a better understanding of what they are consuming, while a substance purchased illegally offers zero reliability. Most of the time, alcohol abuse decomposes an individual over a longer period of time, while heroin and other opioids show a very fast, downhill decline. In most cases, families struggling with an alcoholic receive many more warning signs versus the sudden death of a heroin abuser.

"An addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live." This is the message that I received from Central Ohio Area of Narcotics Anonymous. Narcotics Anonymous approach makes no distinction between drugs, including alcohol. At the Board's office, we continue to receive requests for assistance from family members. And it may appear surprising to some, but there are many reaching out to us for a loved-one struggling with alcohol addiction. Regardless of the addiction, willingness and the strength to change is needed from the individual before treatment and support services can make a difference. I will finish by sharing a quote I received from a local judge, "Addiction is a family disease... one person may use, but the whole family suffers."

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