

1-20-2016

# Living in Recovery: Perceptions of Health Care and Comorbidities in Rural New England

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## Recommended Citation

Cisu, Theodore; Doughty, Elizabeth; Gentyala, Rahul; Olson, Kathleen; Patel, Kishan; Wolfgang, Taylor; Yun, Richard; DeCarolis, Gary; and Jemison, Jill, "Living in Recovery: Perceptions of Health Care and Comorbidities in Rural New England" (2016). *Public Health Projects, 2008-present*. 233.

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# Living in Recovery: Perceptions of Health Care and Comorbidities in Rural New England

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## INTRODUCTION

### Alcohol and Drug Abuse:

- In the USA, abuse of tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs is costly, exacting more than \$700 billion annually in costs related to crime, lost work productivity, and health care.<sup>4</sup>
- 9% of Vermont residents and 8% of US residents report alcohol or illicit drug abuse, and 10% of US adults consider themselves to be in recovery from drugs or alcohol.<sup>1,6</sup>

### Health Care and Recovery:

- Persons with drug addictions are approximately twice as likely to suffer from mood and anxiety disorders compared to the general population.<sup>5</sup>
- Aside from mental health disorders, other common comorbidities include dental problems, insomnia, and migraines.<sup>5</sup>
- The majority of people in recovery report having a primary care physician, but they receive fewer preventative health care interventions compared to the general population.<sup>2</sup>

### The Turning Point Center of Chittenden County

- The Turning Point Center is a non-profit organization that provides a safe, substance-free environment and peer-to-peer recovery activities to assist in recovery from addiction.

## OBJECTIVES

- What are the demographics of clients at Turning Point Center?
- Explore the significant barriers to health care encountered by persons in recovery from addiction in Burlington, VT.
- Explore the perceptions of health care as it relates to recovery from drug/alcohol addiction.

## METHODS

- A 65 question Health Assessment Survey was developed based on a previous model to assess the following (9):

- Drug addiction of choice
- Frequency of health care visits
- Feelings towards health care providers
- Barriers to seeking health care
- Current medical conditions



- Subjects were recruited at the Turning Point Center where surveys were administered via one-on-one interviews with medical students.

## RESULTS

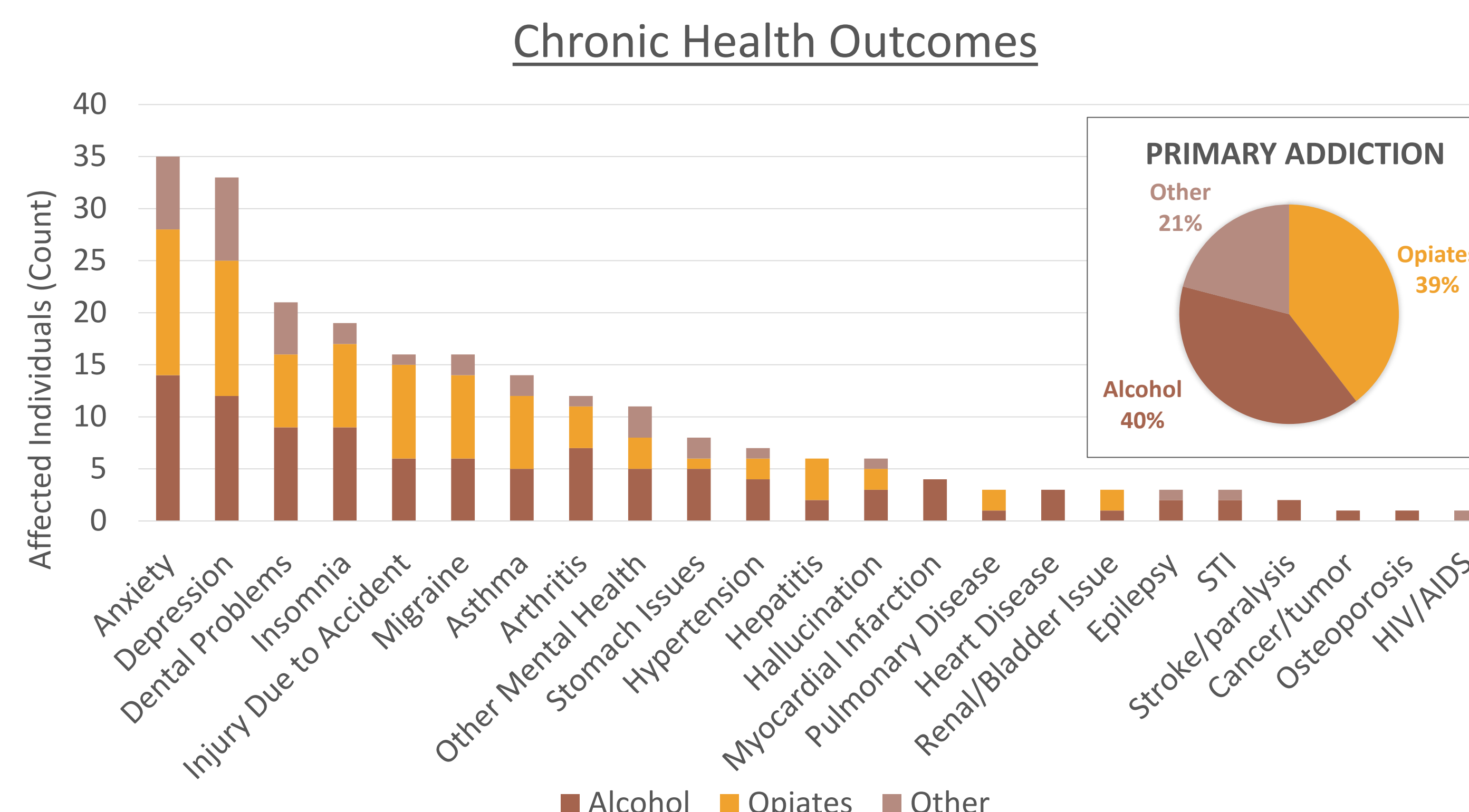


Figure 1. 97.1% of the sampled population reported having at least one chronic comorbidity. The most common comorbidities were anxiety, depression, and dental problems.

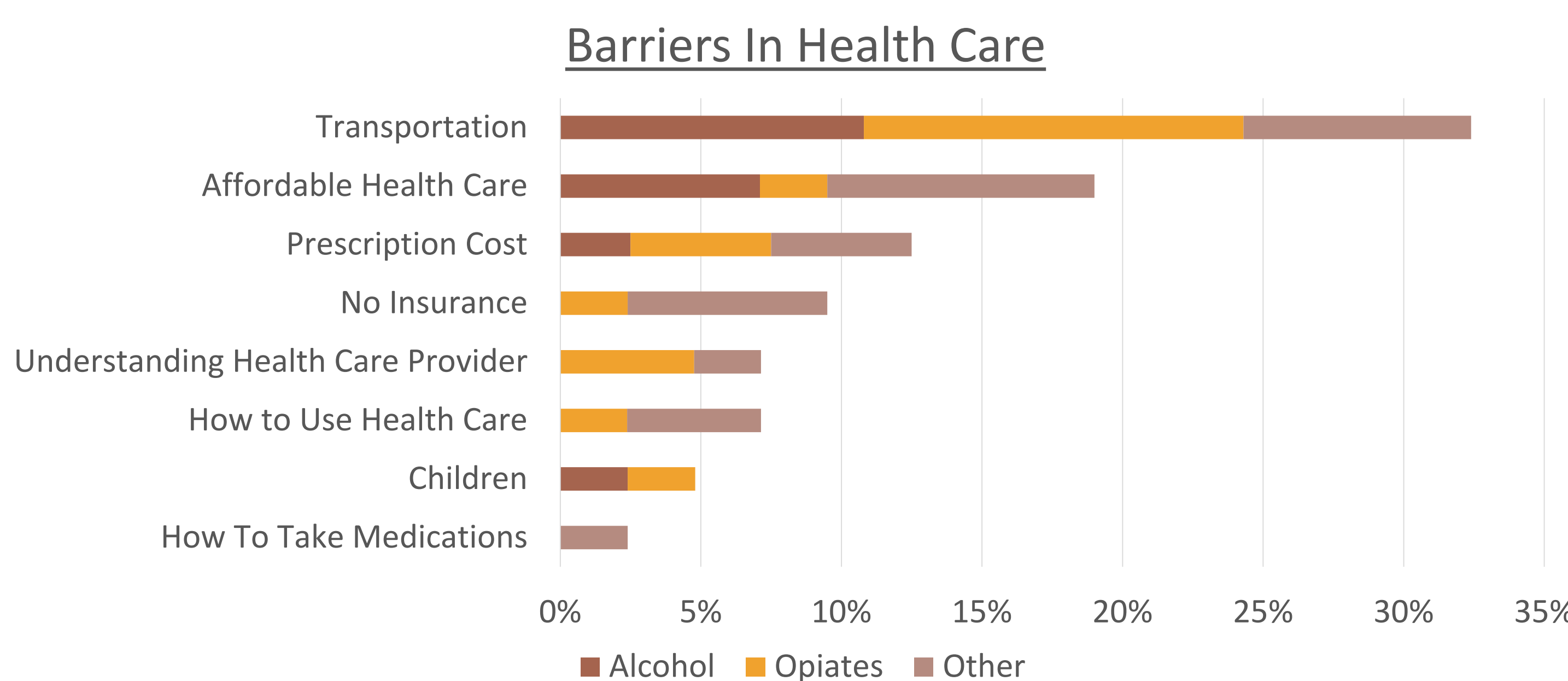


Figure 2. Over half reported having at least one barrier to accessing health care with transportation being the most common barrier affecting 33% of the population.

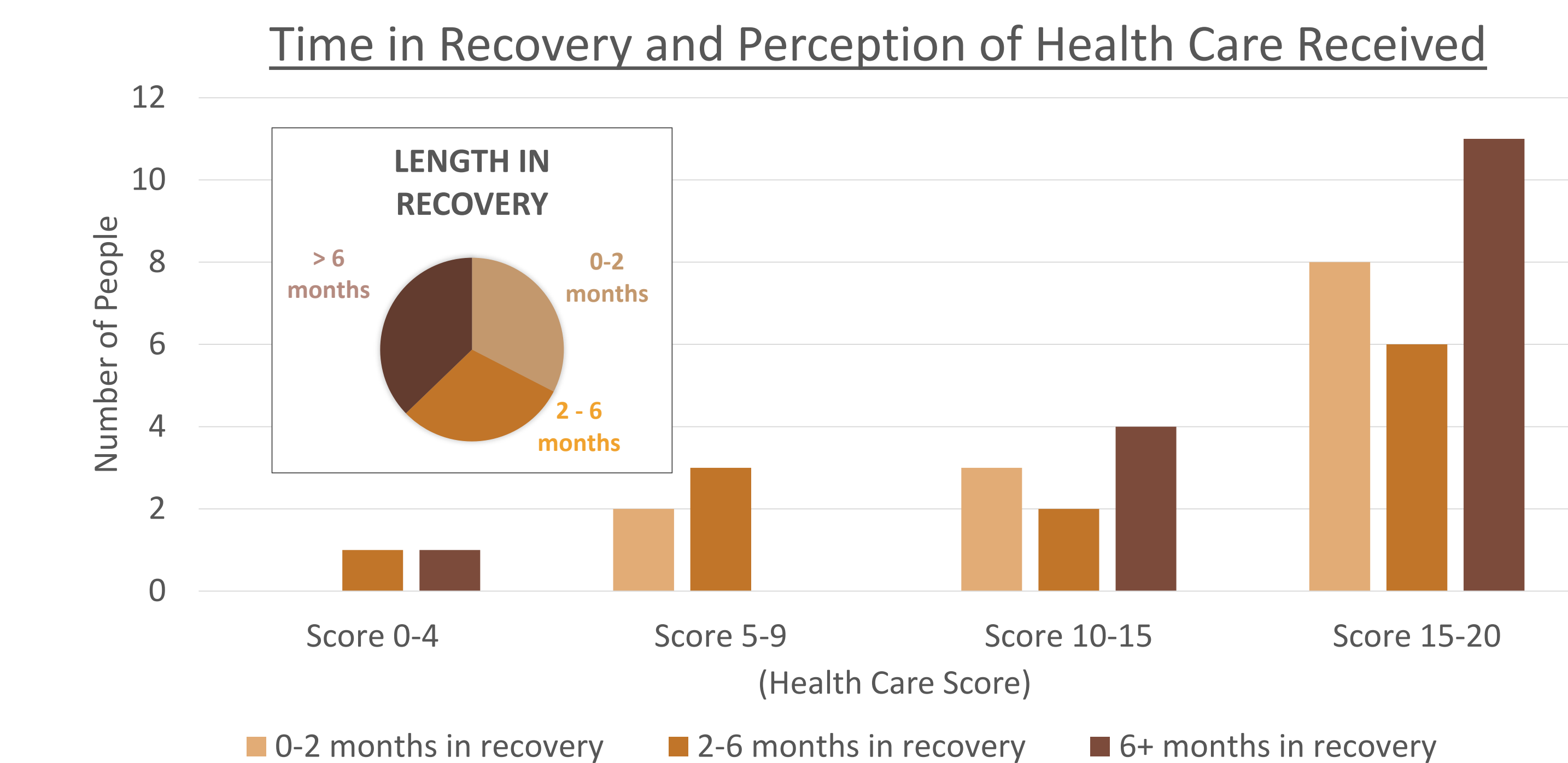
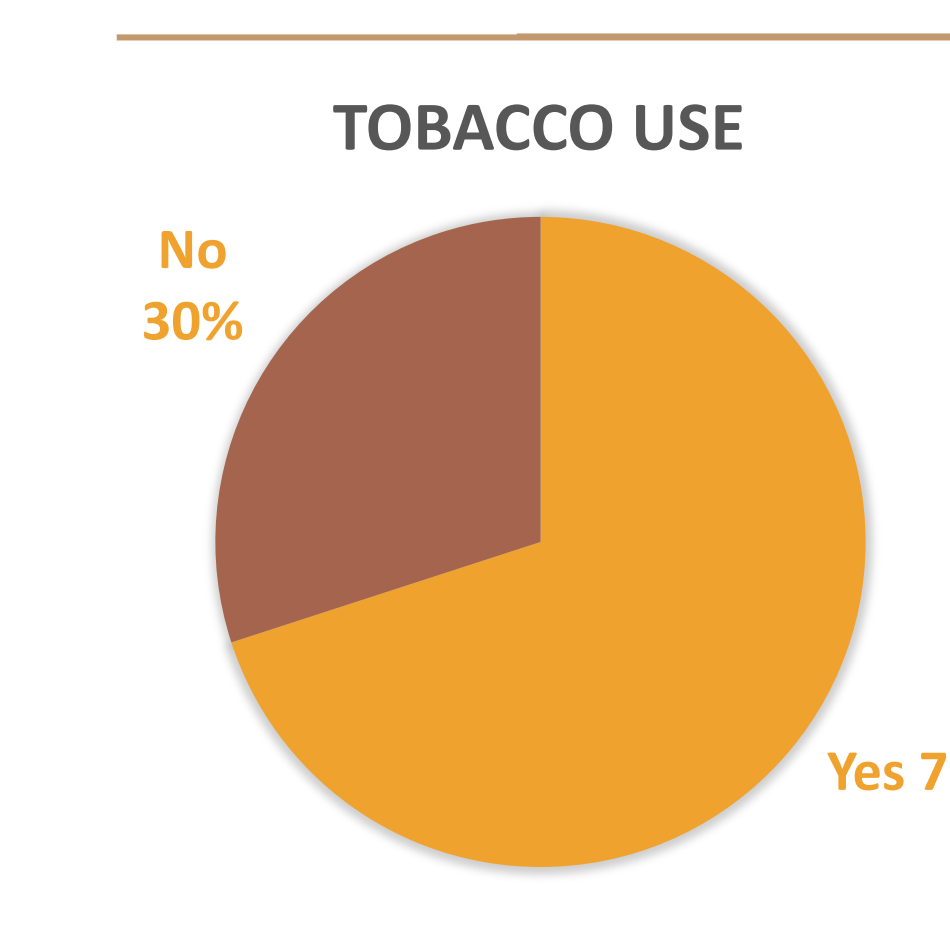
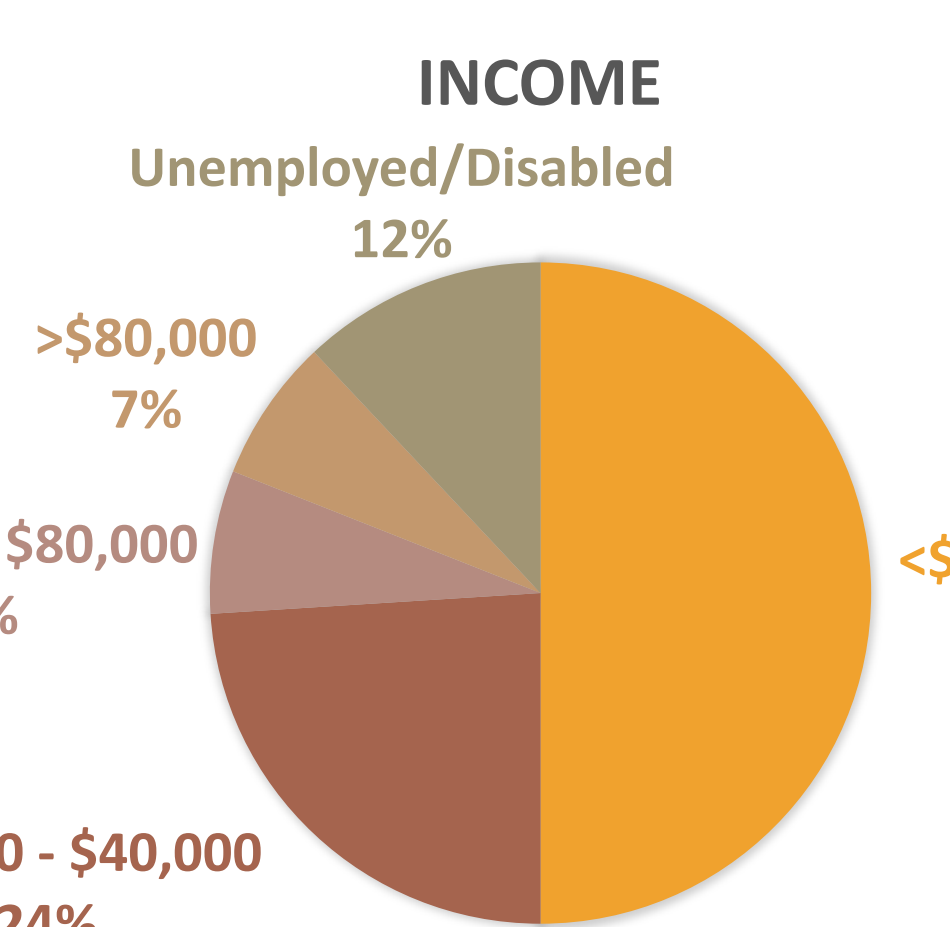
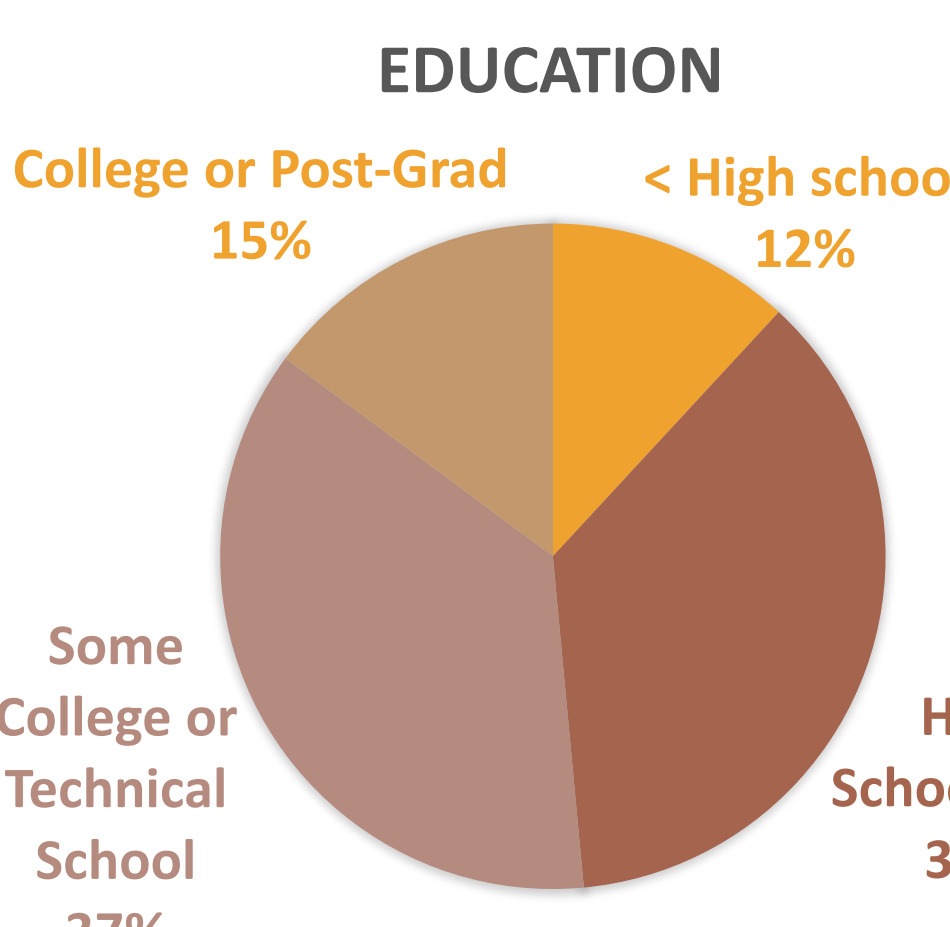
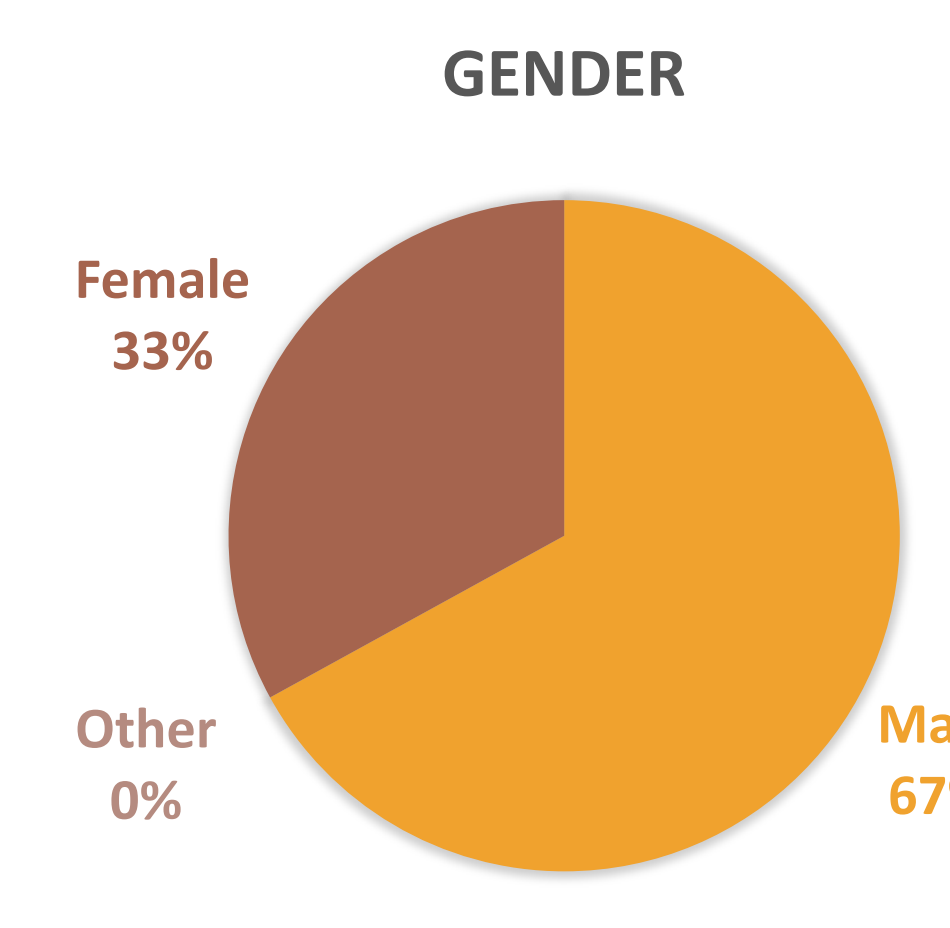
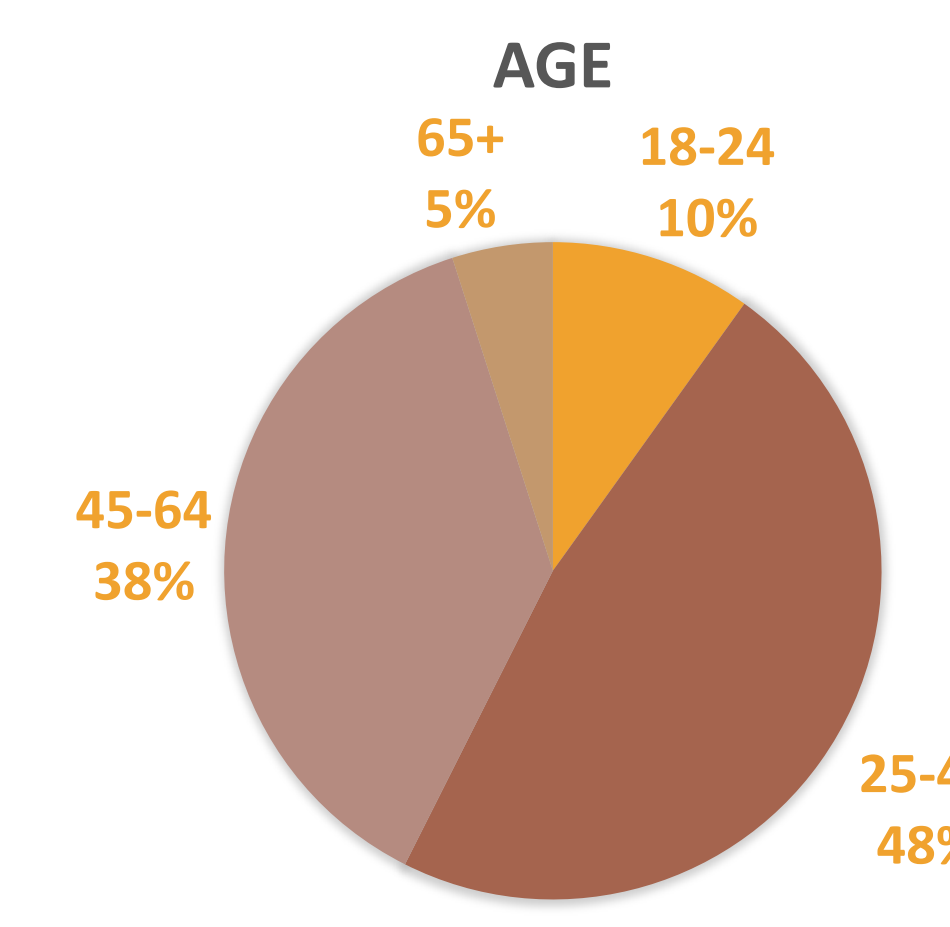


Figure 3. A majority of individuals in longer periods of active recovery had favorable perceptions of their health care provider. A higher score denotes greater satisfaction of health care received.

### Demographics

A total of 42 surveys were collected.



## DISCUSSION

- Almost all persons in recovery in this study have at least one chronic comorbidity compared to 54.7% of Vermont residents.<sup>7</sup>
- Transportation barriers to health care affect a third of recovering addicts, 6 times higher than percentages reported nationally.<sup>8</sup>
- A majority of people polled nationally report favorable perceptions of their health care provider and these findings were mirrored in this study's population.<sup>10</sup>

*"My provider is proud of my success and acknowledges my determination."*

## CONCLUSIONS

- Potential Turning Point Center interventions could include:
  - Educating the recovering population about common comorbidities to ensure that preventative measures and health concerns are addressed
  - Providing transportation resources to improve access to health care
  - Encouraging continuity of care to maintain positive perceptions of health care.
- For future investigations, expanding the study population would provide data for a more robust analysis of the impact of comorbidities and barriers on recovery from substance abuse.

*"I would like information on how to access mental health services at Turning Point."*



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