

WRA 2025 Recovery Advocacy Day Legislative Priorities

Recovery Advocacy Day (RAD) is the Washington Recovery Alliance's (WRA) annual citizen action event, where we bring together hundreds of people in the recovery community from across the state to engage their lawmakers in conversations about legislative changes that would improve our behavioral health system. In order of highest priority, the WRA recommends the following three legislative and funding priorities to advocate for at RAD on February 6, 2025:

Quality recovery housing expansion through creating a capital budget fund

Living in recovery housing for six months post-treatment increases the chances of sustained substance use disorder recovery by as much as ten times. Unfortunately, the demand for recovery housing in Washington far outpaces supply. While Washington state has made significant investments to expand access to recovery housing under the operating budget, there has been no investment in recovery housing using capital budget funds. Many recovery residences are owned by private landlords and rented by recovery housing providers. This priority proposes to use the capital budget to fund the acquisition of properties for recovery housing so that financial equity can be built and used to purchase more properties for this purpose.

Expanding access to peer support services system-wide

Expand access to peer services (especially youth and family peer services) by creating and enforcing network adequacy standards, lowering barriers to insurance billing, maximizing billing for current programs to expand services and ensure sustainability, and investing in wellness programs and professional development for the peer workforce. Peers are the only profession within the behavioral health workforce where we have not a shortage, but a surplus of willing workers. Access to peer services significantly increases treatment engagement, adherence to treatment plans, and longevity in treatment. Given the massive behavioral health challenges our youth and young adults are facing, we cannot afford to have peer services underutilized and to have inadequate access to peer services.

Generate targeted revenue to fund behavioral health services

Given the need to both sustain existing services and increase funding for needed behavioral health system improvements, we support various potential means to generate targeted revenue to help fund behavioral health services. This revenue could be generated by closing the pharmaceutical warehouse distributor tax preference, levying an opioid impact fee, and increasing liquor license and beer fees. Pharmaceutical warehouse distributors (companies that sell large batches of drugs, including opioids, to pharmacies) are given special treatment in our tax code. That tax break increases the profits of these multi-billion dollar companies, while the state loses nearly \$20 million each year in potential funding for much-needed behavioral health services. The economic reason that led to the creation of this tax preference is no longer valid. Levy an opioid impact fee would involve a per milligram fee charged to pharmaceutical manufacturers (e.g. Purdue Pharma) who sell opioids within Washington's borders. Medications for opioid use disorder would be exempt from the fee. Another means to generate revenue is to increase liquor license and beer fees, some of which have not been increased in decades. This revenue could be used to expand funding for the recovery navigator program, transportation, and housing services for recovery communities.