

WRA 2025 Support Item Legislative Priorities

Beyond Recovery Advocacy Day priorities, the Washington Recovery Alliance (WRA) also creates a list of legislative and funding support items so that our community members can advocate for these issues with the backing of the WRA. The WRA Public Policy Committee recommends the following legislative and funding support item priorities for the 2025 Washington State Legislative Session:

HB 1574: Protecting access to life-saving care and substance use services

Expands protections for a person seeking medical assistance for someone experiencing a drug-related overdose or who experiences a drug-related overdose and needs medical assistance. HB 1574 adds health care facilities to the list of entities that are not prohibited from distributing or using public health supplies, including syringe equipment, smoking equipment, or drug testing equipment. The bill ensures that cities and towns only pass ordinances that are consistent with state law around regulating drug paraphernalia to avoid patchwork local laws that can stymie access to services. These necessary changes will ultimately help better serve community members seeking substance use services and reduce the risk of overdose.

Sponsors: Macri, Davis, Parshley, Mena, Goodman, Simmons, Ormsby, Scott, Doglio, Pollet, Salahuddin, Reed, Nance, Kloba

Bill Status: Passed the House on 3/12/2025 and is now moving to the Senate for further consideration

HB 1432: Improving access to appropriate mental health and substance use disorder services

This bill aims to strengthen mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) care by ensuring health plans provide consistent, medically necessary coverage. The bill revises the definition of mental health services, requires utilization reviews to be consistent with generally accepted standards of mental health and SUD care, and mandates that health carriers approve coverage for mental health and SUD services if timely responses to grievances or prior authorization requests are not provided. It incorporates updated federal rules from the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act, requiring insurers to offer equal benefits for mental health and SUD care. Additionally, the bill grants the Insurance Commissioner authority to impose penalties for violations and ensure compliance with parity standards.

Sponsors: Simmons, Eslick, Rule, Davis, Macri, Stearns, Reed, Goodman, Salahuddin, Pollet, Timmons, Santos

Bill Status: Passed the House on 3/11/2025 and is now moving to the Senate for further consideration

SB 5219: Concerning partial confinement eligibility and alignment

Seeks to improve opportunities for individuals in the Department of Corrections by expanding access to partial confinement programs. This bill allows individuals to participate in these programs during the final 18 months of their confinement, offering a crucial opportunity for reintegration into the community. By modifying eligibility and requirements, SB 5219 provides a pathway for individuals to gain stability and transition back into society. This approach supports successful reentry and aligns with recovery principles by offering individuals more time and resources to prepare for life after incarceration.

Sponsors: Wilson, C., Frame, Lovick, Nobles, Wellman

Bill Status: Passed the Senate on 2/19/2025 and is scheduled for a public hearing in the House Committee on Community Safety at 4:00 PM on 3/18/2025

HB 1583: Concerning Medicaid coverage for traditional health care practices

This bill would require the Health Care Authority (HCA) to apply for a Section 1115 waiver from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to provide coverage of traditional health care practices. It also requires the HCA to provide coverage, upon approval from the CMS, for traditional health care practices received through the Indian Health Service facilities or facilities operated by Tribes or Urban Indian Organizations. Expanding Medicaid coverage to include these practices would ensure that people have access to diverse recovery options, promoting better mental and physical health outcomes and supporting long-term recovery for those with behavioral health needs.

Sponsors: Lekanoff, Wylie, Stearns, Macri, Parshley, Doglio, Pollet, Reed, Kloba, Davis

Bill Status: Referred to the Rules Committee for further review on 2/28/2025

Create in-between spaces, especially housing, for people in recovery who experience return to use or who practice a non-abstinent recovery approach

Creating in-between spaces, particularly housing options, is vital for individuals in recovery who may experience a return to use or who follow a non-abstinent recovery approach. Effective housing modalities include substance use disorder peer respite, harm reduction models, and peer accountability housing, which can provide supportive environments that acknowledge diverse recovery paths. These options will help ensure that individuals have safe places to live while receiving the necessary support and understanding during their recovery journey.

Ensure equity in recovery services

To ensure equity in recovery services, there is a pressing need for greater availability of culturally responsive behavioral health services and modalities that specifically support queer and TGNC communities, along with an increase in access to beds and a decrease in client costs. Policy discussions must delve deeper into the needs of underserved groups, including LGBTQIA+ individuals and older adults, to create inclusive protections. Additionally, promoting and funding peer organizations that serve BIPOC communities through targeted grants is essential for enhancing representation and support within the recovery landscape.

Filling in the harm reduction gap by expanding state funding for health engagement hubs

To address the harm reduction gap exacerbated by local ordinances that create barriers to accessing services, it is essential to establish accessible locations where individuals can seek support. Connecting people with low-barrier support, such as health engagement hubs, is crucial for enhancing public health practices, particularly in rural communities.

Health engagement hubs serve as an all-in-one location where people who use drugs can access a range of medical, harm reduction, and social services. Increasing access to this public health service will provide vital resources for those in need and promote safer environments for all.

Support efforts to better integrate substance use disorder and mental health services

There is a pressing need for the integration of mental health and substance use disorder services to effectively address co-occurring behavioral health conditions. Recovery communities throughout the state have expressed the need for a more holistic approach that recognizes the interconnectedness of mental health, substance use, and societal conditions such as homelessness, underscoring the urgency for integrated care solutions for dual diagnoses. By prioritizing policies that support this integration, we can better meet the complex needs of individuals facing these challenges.

Support policy recommendations from Safer Supply Work Group report

Safe supply is defined as a legal and regulated supply of mind or body altering substances that traditionally have only been accessible through illicit markets. Research has shown that safe supply reduces the chance of overdose for those who receive it, promotes safer use over time, increases prosocial engagement with their communities, and reduces theft, petty crime, and syringe litter in certain models. The Safe Supply Work Group was established by the legislature in 2023 to examine potential models for safe supply services and produced a final report in September 2024 with recommendations on the inclusion of a safe supply framework in the Washington state substance use recovery services plan to provide a regulated, tested supply of controlled substances to individuals at risk of drug overdose. This priority supports the report recommendations including removing barriers to the implementation of a randomized clinical trial of hydromorphone for people with opioid use disorder in Washington, proposing state legislation that establishes a scalable safer supply pilot program, and enhancing existing harm reduction and substance use disorder treatment services statewide. Supporting these policies not only aligns with harm reduction principles but also fosters a more compassionate approach to substance use challenges, emphasizing recovery and well-being.

Support recovery friendly workplace legislation

A recovery friendly workplace (RFW) is an environment that supports employees in their recovery from substance use disorders, mental health conditions, and co-occurring challenges by providing resources, understanding, and policies that promote wellness and inclusion. This priority supports the various legislation that can be created to expand RFW across the state. One approach would be to create a state-led RFW support program that protects businesses that complete the program from liability when hiring people in recovery, shielding them from legal repercussions related to their supportive policies for employees in recovery. Another means to increase this modality is to promote recovery friendly workplaces by providing guidance and resources for employers to support employees in recovery from substance use disorders. These approaches aim to encourage businesses to adopt policies that foster a supportive environment and offer incentives for businesses that participate in the program. By doing so, it seeks to reduce stigma and improve job retention for individuals in recovery.