

Recovery Coach Role Boundaries and Distinctions

From: White, W. L., et al. (2007). *Ethical guidelines for the delivery of peer-based recovery support services*. Great Lakes Addiction Technology Center.

The recovery coach (RC) is not a:	You are moving beyond the boundaries of the recovery coach role if you:
Sponsor (or equivalent)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☹ Perform AA/NA or other mutual-aid group service work in your RC role ☹ Guide someone through the steps or principles of a particular recovery program
Therapist/counselor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☹ Diagnose ☹ Provide counseling or refer to your support activities as “counseling” or “therapy” ☹ Focus on problems/”issues”/trauma as opposed to recovery solutions
Nurse/Physician	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☹ Suggest or express disagreement with medical diagnoses (including psychiatric diagnoses) ☹ Offer medical advice ☹ Make statements about prescribed drugs beyond the boundaries of your training and experience
Priest/Clergy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☹ Promote a particular religion/church ☹ Interpret religious doctrine ☹ Offer absolution or forgiveness (other than harm done specifically to you) ☹ Provide pastoral counseling



Counselor, Recovery Coach, & Sponsor

Adapted from: White, W. L. (2006). *Sponsor, recovery coach, addiction counselor: The importance of role clarity and role integrity*. Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Mental Retardation Services: Philadelphia.

	Counselor	Recovery Coach	Sponsor
Foundational Knowledge	Emphasis on formal education (theory and science); Vetted by the profession	Emphasis on experiential knowledge and training; Vetted by the community	Emphasis on experiential knowledge; Vetted by reputation within the community of recovery
Organizational Context	Works within organizational hierarchy of treatment agency and with direct supervision	Organizational settings span treatment, allied service, and recovery community organizations; Varied degree of supervision	Minimal hierarchy and no formal supervision
Service/Support Framework	Works within a particular organizational treatment philosophy	Works across multiple frameworks of recovery via the choices made by those with whom they work	Works within beliefs and practices of a particular recovery fellowship
Service/Support Relationship	Significant power differential; Extreme separation of helper/helpee roles; Explicit ethical guidelines	Minimal power differential; Ethical guidelines being developed; Moderate external accountability	Minimal power differential; Support is reciprocal; Relationship is governed by group conscience; No external accountability
Helping Style	Formal, personally guarded and strategic	Variable by organization setting but generally personal and informal	Informal, open and spontaneous
Use of Self	Self-disclosure discouraged or prohibited	Strategic use of one's own story; Role model expectation	Strategic use of one's own story; Role model expectation



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Temporal Orientation	Considerable focus on past experience	Focus on present; What can you do today to strengthen your recovery?	Variable by fellowship and stage of recovery of sponsee
Duration of Service/Support Relationship	Brief and even briefer	Measured in months or years via Recovery Check-Ups	Variable but can span years
Role of Community in Recovery	Intrapersonal and interpersonal focus; Minimal focus on ecology of recovery; Minimal advocacy	Focus on linking to community resources and building community recovery capital; Significant advocacy work	Intrapersonal and interpersonal focus; Minimal focus on ecology of recovery; Minimal advocacy
Documentation	Extensive and burdensome	Minimal but growing	None
Money	Works as a paid helper; Client or third party pays for service	Works in paid or volunteer role; Service may be paid for by a person being coached or a third party	Provides support only as part of one's own service work; No fees paid to sponsor or recovery fellowship

