



Engaged Aftercare for Substance Use Treatment Is a Critical Predictor of Long-term Success

Coppell, TX (Aug. 24, 2021) — Recovery from substance use disorders (SUD) isn't easy. Within the first year of recovery, [The Journal of American Medical Association \(JAMA\)](#) estimates that between 40% and 60% of individuals who receive treatment will experience a relapse.

[Heritage CARES](#) the leading virtual support program designed to help individuals struggling with stress, substance use, and/or suicidal ideation, believes individuals in recovery who receive the proper aftercare treatment don't have to experience relapse. Active, engaged aftercare treatment, such as that provided by the Heritage CARES program, is one of the biggest factors in SUD treatment success and reduced rates of relapse and re-admission.

CARES is an acronym for Comprehensive Addiction Recovery Education and Support. The virtual program from Heritage provides participants and their families convenient access to support from licensed health care professionals on any mobile device at any time, significantly increasing the potential for long-term recovery success for patients who have been through SUD treatment programs.

According to [drugabuse.gov](#), "Unfortunately, when relapse occurs, many deem treatment a failure. This is not the case: successful treatment for addiction typically requires continual evaluation and modification as appropriate, similar to the approach taken for other chronic diseases."

The Heritage CARES model was involved in a 2020 study conducted by Clemson University, Prisma Health, University of South Carolina School of Medicine and FAVOR-Greenville. The study found that "SUD is a chronic, relapse-prone disease, and the most critical factor for predicting improvement at 5 years post-discharge is ongoing engagement (Weisner et al., 2003)." Over a 6-month post-discharge period, 84% of the participants stayed on track with a recovery coach vs. 34% of the participants who received a traditional standard of care without a coach.

Heritage CARES EVP and Executive Director [Rich Jones](#), MA, MBA, LCAS, SAP, echoes the vital importance of an engaged aftercare program. "In reality, SUD treatment is short-term and acute in nature, but recovery is a process—not an event," says Jones. "The *event* of SUD treatment is merely the start of the process, and aftercare programs are a vital part of SUD recovery. Statistics show that continued engagement is the key to staying in recovery, and with insurance reimbursement getting tighter and moving toward a value-based foundation, insurers will scrutinize outcomes like never before."

Aftercare coaching and a guitar

Just as the name suggests, an individual enters an aftercare program following their initial treatment discharge. An effective program generalizes and sustains the progress made while in treatment. Aftercare programs keep the momentum going. Where needed, program professionals will step in to help the individual in recovery get back on track. Good aftercare comes in all shapes and sizes. The best programs find a way to work with ambivalence and resistance.

Heritage CARES' aftercare program helps patients maintain a positive recovery journey after they complete their inpatient treatment. Before leaving a facility, care managers connect patients with specially

trained Assertive Community Engagement (ACE) Peer Coaches who remain involved throughout the individual's recovery journey. Assigned peer coaches use *yourn*, the most extensive online, on-demand video recovery library available. *Yourn* includes a collection of personal SUD journeys that help motivate and engage program participants—think Netflix for recovery.

ACE Coaches encourage recovery by helping those in the SUD recovery program to develop new behaviors, increase family support and take personal accountability through proactive outreach and education. Each Heritage CARES peer coach has successfully completed the treatment program themselves, so they know with precision what the individual is going through. Heritage CARES coaches emotionally connect with participants and are available as long as the individual in recovery needs their support.

"A favorite story of mine involves a Heritage CARES ACE coach who was working with someone who didn't want to be involved in the program at all," says Jones. "But our coach hung in there, keeping the conversations going, looking for a way to connect. During one session, he noticed a guitar in the background and asked about it. The participant admitted he always wanted to learn to play but never got around to it. The coach, who played the guitar, offered lessons during their sessions and, just like that, the door for engagement and trust opened."

Why is aftercare treatment necessary?

While some may question the need for aftercare, Jones says it is a vital part of the recovery process. "By the time someone enters a treatment program," he explains, "that person is pretty much at rock bottom with no structure in his life. Then that person immediately comes into a very structured environment with rules and processes in place. Following their completion of a treatment program, patients are typically discharged without any form of professional support. It's no wonder that the relapse rate is so high. But with aftercare treatment programs like Heritage CARES, individuals have access to a team of professionals providing evidence-based programs. Aftercare programs are a game-changer."

The average length of stay in inpatient rehab is up to 30 days. The average length of time in an intensive outpatient program is 8 to 12 weeks. There are longer treatment models and programs that involve care for up to a year, but they are typically very expensive, and most people do not have the time to check out for recovery for an entire year. Aftercare programs are in place to continue treatment programs while the individuals move back into their jobs, families and communities.

"Heritage CARES believes that peer support and long-term recovery coaching are the most critical pieces in the aftercare treatment puzzle," says Jones. "If the person in recovery has a consistent presence in his or her life, the recovery process is much more likely to advance in a healthy direction. Our aftercare program provides someone to gently redirect the person back onto the recovery pathway rather than leaving the patient alone to wade through challenges or wait for things to unravel completely. That simple addition to the continuum is likely to make a huge difference in people's lives."

Heritage CARES partners with leading inpatient facilities across the country. To learn more about Heritage CARES, visit <https://heritagehealthsolutions.com/heritage-cares-for-addiction-support/>.

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About Heritage CARES

Heritage CARES (Comprehensive Addiction Recovery Education and Support) is a comprehensive program that provides support tools for substance use disorders (SUD), stress management and suicide prevention and intervention to participants and their immediate family members. The platform also includes tools for wellness and mental health as well as anxiety issues and is available for use 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There are three components to the program: peer coaching, education and care management. Heritage CARES is available for companies, rehabilitation centers and first responders. For more information on Heritage CARES, visit [Heritage CARES](#).

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