



24/7 Newsletter

The number of hours we spend making Houston better

DECEMBER 2024



2024 Was a Banner Year

HRC experienced a lot of activity and success over the course of the year. Here are just a few of the highlights.

- The year began of course with the 2024 Chevron Houston Marathon and our HRC Run for a Reason running team. Thanks to all for your support. It's time to do it again. To support this year's Run for a Reason team, you can donate here. <https://register.hakuapp.com/donations>.
- HRC hosted the U of H's police department and Cougars in Recovery for a visit and tour of the Sobering Center.
- In March, Leonard spoke to the National Black Law Students Association (NBLSA) in a panel discussion about the issues surrounding substance use and what HRC is doing to combat this problem.
- The Houston Recovery Center and it's TTOR team, Chad Armstrong, Calita Payne and Melissa Tucker, sponsored an April, Unity in the Community Networking event bringing together people from a variety of organizations that serve the substance use community.
- Leonard joined HBJ's State of Giving and Non-Profits panel discussion last month. The panel of nonprofit leaders discussed the challenges, opportunities and best practices they see within the nonprofit industry.
- Nidal Moukaddam, M.D. Ph.D., a Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the Baylor College of Medicine, the Director of



Psychiatry Outpatient Clinics at Ben Taub Hospital, began working with HRC to better understand how to get patients with co-occurring mental health and substance use issues to HRC for recovery. This program offers in-house mental health assessments and prescriptions.



- The Houston Recovery Center and Justice Forward welcomed the 2024 National Sobering Center Collaborative Summit to Houston. Facilitator Suzanne Jarvis from HRC introduced a variety of speakers including Devin Anderson of Justice Forward, Harris County Sheriff Ed Gonzalez, and Mayor Annise Parker.



- **One of this year's major highlights must be**, Leonard's selection by the Houston Business Journal as one of the Top CEOs in Houston. Those selected made an indelible mark on their organization's financial success, work culture and contributions to the community.



- HRC was selected by **Empowered hosted by Meg Ryan** to produce and distribute, an educational short documentary about HRC and the work its staff are doing to address the problems of alcohol and substance use. Shot in October, the final 6-minute video and a 30-second commercial will be aired on PBS and local TV stations in the first quarter of 2025.



- HRC closed out the year by winning an **International Silver Anthem Award** for "Problematic Substance Use: Community Collaboration Impacts this Public Health Crisis" in the nonprofit Health, Public Service category. The silver award in this category honors the best in class product, innovation or service created by federal, state, local government or council to act as a solution or have impact in the Health space.



- **Of course, the true measure of HRC's success is the impact it has made on the hundreds of people being helped in recovery and on the entire Houston community.**



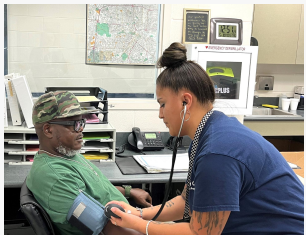
Holiday Luncheon

The HRC staff got together to kick off the holidays with food, fun and games at this year's holiday luncheon. Everyone was a winner at this year's event. Hope ya'll had a wonderful holiday and a safe and joyful New Year.



Meet the Team FRONTLINES

Houston Recovery Center, Houston Fire Department, Houston Health Department, and Baylor College of Medicine came together on FRONTLINES in 2019. This program teaches first responders how to recognize opiate misuse and overdoses, and administer naloxone. Houston Recovery Center's Peer Recovery Specialists are contacted by the EMT call center to visit overdosed individuals and start building a relationship and engage them in medicated-assisted treatment and recovery options.



Sobering Center Annual Service Count

Sobering Center Admissions	New Sobering Center Admissions	Homeless	Clients Requested Clinical Services	Clients Placed	Clients Waiting	Male Case Manager Clients	Female Case Manager Clients
3,373	2,330	1,682	1,325	769	348	2,491	1,121



On the Run Donation Event

On the Run shoe store has been a generous supporter of HRC donating shoes to the Sobering Center for those clients in need. Every month the store hosts a friends and family get together complete with food, fun, and games. HRC was invited to join the fun this past month and collect donations for its January, jacket drive for the homeless. The store had a great turnout and through the generosity of their patrons HRC collected a mountain of donated jackets, shoes and other clothing for distribution. All greatly appreciated. **Thanks, On the Run.**



Annual Senior Holiday Luncheon and Resource Fair

This December, Rodney Ellis hosted the Annual Senior Holiday Luncheon and Resource Fair to honor our seniors. This event is more than a celebration, it's a comprehensive resource fair complete with vaccinations, health screenings, and social services. The Houston Recovery Center was proud to be a part of the event and to provide information about our critical, life-changing work, and to distribute life-saving boxes of Narcan.



Hoopla Station Prep. It's Marathon Time



That's right it's Marathon time again. The Houston Recovery Center's Hoopla Station team will be out cheering our runners and all the participants in this year's Chevron Houston Marathon. Hopefully it will be warmer than it was last year. See you there.

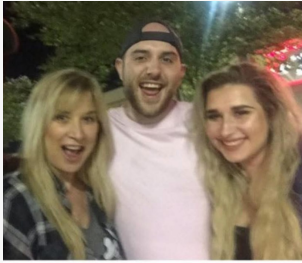
Recovery Story

Sherri Gallatin

This is a mother's story. This story is about having a family member, in this case a son, struggling with substance use and the impact it has on all those trying to help, particularly a mother.

Sherri's story is not our typical HRC recovery story, but is one that is unfortunately very common to many people and families who are or have struggled with alcohol and substance use and the effect it has on the family and friends, and this is a story that needs to be shared.

As you might have guessed, this is not a recovery survival story. Sherri's son, AJ was 27 years old when he overdosed and passed away. For the most part, he was a bright, outgoing young person. AJ struggled with addiction from the time he was 14 to he was almost 30. Shortly before his death, once again AJ was trying to get clean, was going through withdrawal and trying to get into a recovery program. This latest time Sherri and her son visited several recovery facilities hoping to find help "now" for her son's withdrawal from heroin. Unfortunately, at that time AJ didn't have any heroin in his system which was required in order for him to be admitted into a recovery program. Finally, AJ went on a crazy 2-day binge, was tested again and with Houston Recovery Center's help went into a treatment program. Finally, everything seemed to be working. Two days later, AJ was found dead in a hotel room. He had been with someone that day, but no details about the circumstance were ever made available to his family.



Sherri's continuing recovery

With the death of her son, Sherri became aware of just how much grief and regret had been part of her everyday life, and how much of those feelings continued. Without her son and his addiction, she had nothing to focus on except her own sadness and loss. "What do I do NOW that he, his addiction and his needs are gone? I should be able to focus on my remaining family, on the 'survivors,' but I can't seem to." What Sherri didn't expect was the final irony, her guilt. Her feelings of guilt for feeling relief because she no longer had to struggle with AJ's troubles.

In Sherri's case she has been lucky enough to have good, understanding friends and family to help her through the most trying times of her continuing "recovery" journey. The feelings of loss, grief, regret and even some remaining "survivors" guilt still remain, but they do not own her days completely. While these feeling will probably never go away completely they do recede and will allow her to go on with life and enjoy what family and friends remain.

NEWS

Warning Labels Urged for Alcoholic Drinks

Houston Chronicle, Tuesday, January 7, 2025

The U.S. surgeon general has issued an advisory that says alcohol consumption is a leading preventable cause of cancer, and called for alcoholic beverages to carry warnings about the risk.



U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy's advisory says studies have linked alcohol consumption to an increased risk of for at least seven types of cancer, including breast and colon. It is the third-leading preventable cause of cancer behind smoking and obesity, and contributes to an estimated 100,000 cancer cases and about 20,000 cancer deaths annually.

"The more alcohol consumed the greater the risk of cancer," the advisory says. The point of this is not to make anybody feel guilty for the behaviors that they're undertaking, but rather to raise the awareness so that individuals can make the best choice for themselves and their family."

Cigarettes have carried health warning labels since 1965 and the prevalence of cigarette smoking has steadily declined to an 80-year-low among Americans last year. Increased awareness of the risks of alcohol could lead to a similar decrease in drinking over time, which could help lower the prevalence of cancer.

January is the Perfect Time to Pursue Treatment for a Substance Use Disorder

By: Sylvia Las, M.P.H., Public Health Analyst, Center for Substance Abuse Treatment

"New year, new me!"

This common phrase, echoed each year in January, embraces the air of change that comes with a new year. While it is not necessary to wait until a new year to make changes for our health, January is a time for fresh starts.

SUD Treatment Month is an opportunity to reflect on our relationships with substances, learn about SUD and effective treatment options, and connect to resources. Recovery is possible. Almost 75 percent of those who have ever had a substance use problem considered themselves to be in recovery or to have recovered from their drug or alcohol use problem, according to the 2023 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH).

Treatment can look different for everyone, depending on the severity of their SUD, their other health needs, and resources available to them. There are many options in terms of the setting, such as specialty SUD or integrated mental health and SUD outpatient or residential treatment facilities. Some people may start their treatment in a general hospital setting or in an emergency department. SUD treatment is increasingly available in primary care or other outpatient medical practices. There are even mobile units that bring treatment services to where people are, rather than waiting for them to come to a clinic. The type of care can also vary, depending on the individual's needs, but often includes counseling and therapy; medications for opioid, alcohol, or tobacco use disorder; recovery supports; and overdose prevention, education, and services to reduce substance-related harm.

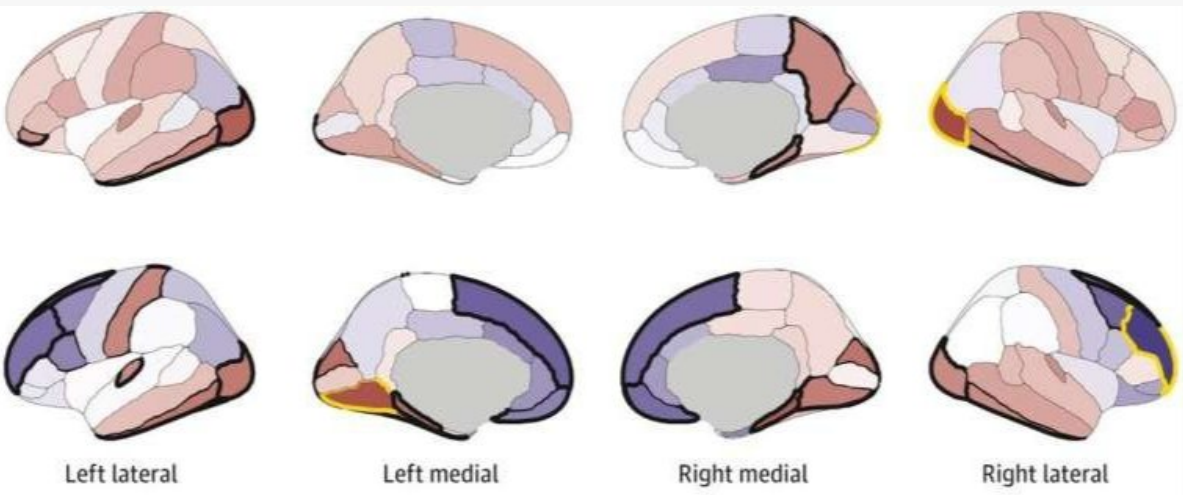
It is never too late to take control of your health, seek help, and receive the treatment you deserve. Sometimes all it takes to make a big change in your life is a small first step. Treatment works. Recovery is possible.

Read the complete story at: [January, perfect time to pursue treatment](#)

Brain structure differences in teens may signal early substance use risk

A study of nearly 10,000 adolescents has identified distinct differences in the brain structures of those who used substances before age 15 compared to those who did not. Many of these structural brain differences appeared to exist in childhood before any substance use, suggesting they may play a role in the risk of substance use initiation later in life, in tandem with genetic, environmental, and other neurological factors.

"This adds to some emerging evidence that an individual's brain structure, alongside their unique genetics, environmental exposures, and interactions among these factors, may impact their level of risk and resilience for substance use and addiction," said Nora Volkow M.D., director of NIDA. "Understanding the complex interplay between the factors that contribute and that protect against drug use is crucial for informing effective prevention interventions and providing support for those who may be most vulnerable."



The researchers identified five brain structural differences at the global level between those who reported substance initiation before the age of 15 and those who did not. These included greater total brain volume and greater subcortical volume in those who indicated substance initiation. An additional 39 brain structure

differences were found at the regional level, with approximately 56% of the regional variation involving cortical thickness. Some brain structural differences also appeared unique to the type of substance used.

While some of the brain regions where differences were identified have been linked to sensation-seeking and impulsivity, the researchers note that more work is needed to delineate how these structural differences may translate to differences in brain function or behaviors. They also emphasize that the interplay between genetics, environment, brain structure, the prenatal environment, and behavior influence, affect behaviors. Future studies will be crucial to determine how initial brain structure differences may change as children age and with continued substance use or development of substance use disorder.

"The hope is that these types of studies, in conjunction with other data on environmental exposures and genetic risk, could help change how we think about the development of substance use disorders and inform more accurate models of addiction moving forward."

This story was originally published on Medical Xpress. To read the entire story go to: [Brain structure differences are associated with early use of substances](#)

FORWARD TO A FRIEND

The mission of Houston Recovery Center is to provide compassionate care to underserved individuals affected by substance use through early intervention and community care coordination to help them achieve lifelong recovery.

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